

I. Jesus chose unlikely disciples and created an unlikely team. (Matthew the tax collector and Simon the zealot?) We are not the cream of the crop by human standards. (1 Cor.1:26-31).

A. But no disciple/apostle was less likely than Saul of Tarsus!

1. He was the scourge of the early church, hard-core Pharisee, self-righteous, angry, hyper-religious.

2. Called to the despised Gentiles. **Acts 26:16-18**

a) Paul never knew that God loved Gentiles...

3. Called to the diverse Apostolic group. **Gal.2:6-10**

II. Which is why, in Romans 15:14-16:27, Paul clarifies his purpose in writing Romans...

A. His Calling in the Lord. 14-16

1. I have confidence in your growth.

a) Goodness. (moral, ethical, spiritual character)

b) Knowledge (sufficient knowledge of the gospel)

c) Instruction: noutheten = put to mind...Ability to encourage/instruct/admonish each other.

2. But I know you need reminders. 15

a) We grow deeper in the things we already know.

b) He wanted to be clear that he was not pulling rank, but neither was he overstepping his authority.

3. And you are my offering back to the Lord. 16

a) Minister (leitourgos) = a person serving on behalf.

b) Priestly service (like in the OT)

c) Gentiles offered to God by the Spirit

d) *All our service to the Lord is an offering back to Him.*

B. His Confidence in the Lord. 17-21

1. I have confidence in what the Lord is doing. 17

a) Actually, in the Lord's work through Him. Phil.2:12-13

2. To complete his calling in me--bring Gentiles to the obedience of faith. 18-19 (1:5)

a) Through word and deed.

b) Through Apostolic actions. Signs, Wonders. 2 Cor.12:12

3. And do my best (my ambition) to reach those who have never heard. 20-21

a) This is exactly what the risen Lord commanded him (Acts:26:16-18)

III. Advice on mature service to the Lord. 15-21

A. Stay in your lane. (cultivate your field) 16, 19-21

1. Paul's field was the Gentiles. He applied himself to it.

a) 2 Cor. 10:13 sphere, NIV field, kanon, standard

b) It also limited his other options. 22

c) *Be careful not to overstep your field, but don't neglect it.*

2. *A lot of stress is caused when we try to do more than we are called to do.*

B. Center everything on the gospel. 14-15

1. The "reminders" that Paul brings are all clarifications of the gospel.

a) The real meaning of it

b) The transforming nature of it.

2. The reaching of the Lost was the message of Christ. Isa.52:13-53:12

a) *Isa. 53 is the last Servant Oracle and the gospel in the OT*

3. What would "uncentered" ministry look like?

a) Something good that isn't about Jesus Christ, His Person and Work.

b) Signs and wonders? Political activism? Social gospel?

C. Let all your effort be faithful. 14, 18.

1. Meaning letting His grace toward you shape your service for him.
 - a) Working hard, yes, but then not “trusting the work” so much. Trusting the Lord’s grace instead.
 - b) *This is easier said than done.*
2. Paul trusted that the Lord was at work among these people even though he had not started the church, or even visited it yet.
 - a) The Lord has a plan for others that doesn’t include you. **Acts 20:32**
3. He also trusted that God would use his efforts in some way. What Christ has done *through me*. 18
 - a) The Lord is actually doing the work. **Phil. 2:12-13**
4. What “unfaithful” of “faithless” effort/obedience look like?
 - a) *Obedience/effort geared toward earning God’s love and grace.*
 - b) *A lot of Christian service is actually done for legalistic reasons, working to achieve the love of Christ.*
 - c) Obedience that does not trust Jesus Christ for justification. Not based on the saving Person and Work of Christ. Obedience that trusts the “self” to achieve goodness sufficient to bring us into God’s kingdom. Jn.3:1-16; Rom.3:28; Phil.3:1-21

D. Because His Grace is upon you. 1 Cor.15:58; Heb.6:10

1. Paul never forgot that he was loved and forgiven. His whole life was “in grace.” If we forget this we will become Pharisees and burn-outs.

IV. The grace and lordship of Christ is what transformed Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle.

- A. Let it transform you into the calling you have.