

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AN EXAMINATION OF KEY FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR PASTORAL  
IDENTITY AS FOUND IN THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary  
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By

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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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## ABSTRACT

### AN EXAMINATION OF KEY FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR PASTORAL IDENTITY AS FOUND IN THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

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The challenges of pastoral ministry can be seen since New Testament times. Studies reveal that an alarming number of pastors leave the ministry each year. Those that remain in ministry often see their families in turmoil as a result of the hardships of ministry. The Apostle Paul's ministry challenges are detailed and described for today's pastor through the New Testament. Today's pastor can learn a great deal from Paul's example in regard to how to finish the race of ministry. Through an examination of Paul's writings, writings about Paul in the book of Acts, surveys with pastors, and a review of relevant literature, this project will seek to identify key foundational elements in Paul's pastoral identity that allowed him to finish the race of ministry.

Abstract length: 126 words

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## INTRODUCTION

While training for ministry, there are times when one will hear that ministry is challenging. Occasionally, someone may quote a variety of statistics that illustrate the challenges of being a pastor. It is almost certain that advice will be given as to how to will handle situations or perhaps prepare for the challenges ahead. As a result, it is not a surprise that ministry is challenging. It is definitely something that is expected.

On the other hand, it seems that it is impossible to fully understand those difficulties until they become personal. For this writer, that time came one year into a solo pastorate. Having served two churches in various and unique associate roles, the challenges of ministry in light of those positions were clear. Still, it is easy to that that being the leader will make things different. That is why it took a little while as the leader for this writer to realize just how hard ministry is.

The moment of truth came at the end of summer that first year. Training for this role had been good. The classes taken and the professors who led had offered sufficient equipping for ministry. Books and resources abounded to assist in ministry. There had also been some great experiences to offer training along the way. In previous church settings opportunities came to serve on staff at a mega-church as well as being part of a church plant. Both churches were highly successful. The facts lined up to assure that the necessary preparation was in place to successfully lead a small rural church to grow in fulfilling the Great Commission.

That late summer afternoon was the moment of truth. One year into this pastorate,



things were not going as expected. What was expected? From previous experience, it was easy to expect that this church would have guests come into the doors regularly. That had been the norm in previous places of ministry. It was soon clear that it would not be the norm here. There rarely were any guests at all. When a new face did appear, it was an out of town family member, or a guest that really had no intention of regularly attending this church.

When it really comes down to it, what was expected was just unspiritual. It is too easy to expect that if the right principles in various church growth books are followed that the church will grow. To put it another way, a pastor can think that if certain things are done, then the church has to grow. Perhaps a pastor can twist God's arm or just come up with a code that produced growth. This was probably not as unspiritual as it sounds. The truth is, successful churches can ride the tide and make sure they are doing certain things well. Stagnant churches try to do some of those same things well, but discover that things like great signage do not make a church successful.

This writer's story is like that of many other pastors. In reviewing year one at a ministry post, efforts are made to determine if things are successful. Most churches are trying to do things right. Often, the principles of church growth are being applied. Still, apparent success is lacking for many. What is the success that many churches are looking for? It is first and foremost found in what one pastor says when a fellow pastor looks them in the eye and asks, "How are things going at church?" How is a pastor supposed to answer that question? It seems that the easiest and most respected answer is to be able to say something like, "There were \_\_\_ people in church this week." Even better would be to say, "Giving is \$\_\_\_ above budget this year." Of course, the best response would be to

say, “There have been \_\_\_ salvations (or baptisms) this month.”

These are the marks of success in our culture and it becomes so clear when that simple question is asked, “How are things going at church?” Are those really the marks of success? The answer is not so simple. Yes, they certainly can be marks of success. There is no denying that all pastors want to see the church grow and people come to Christ. To be well off financially, especially in tough economic times, is a great blessing from God. On the other hand, there are numerous questions pastors must ask on the journey to this route of success. First, are these markers prescribed in the Bible as the mileposts of success for the pastor? In Scripture, it is clear that pastors must recognize the command of the Great Commission and the exhortation to “do the work of an evangelist.”<sup>1</sup> The requirement to do the work of an evangelist does not describe results as if the evangelist can force someone to accept Christ. Rather, this command describes the action of sharing Christ with others

Second, if these are the markers of success, what explanations can be made of men in the Bible who could not be deemed successful? While the Old Testament office of a prophet is not identical to the office of pastor, there are some similarities. A pastor’s pulpit ministry could be easily compared to that of a prophet’s ministry. Can success be used to describe the ministry of prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah? Isaiah volunteers for God’s assignment only to be told that he is going to give messages that will be ignored and that destruction is on the horizon.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Jeremiah has few listen to God’s Word

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1. 2 Tim. 4:5 (Holman Christian Standard Bible). All Bible quotations will come from HCSB unless otherwise stated.

2. Isa. 6:9-13.

through Him. He wants to give up, yet finds that he cannot.<sup>3</sup> It seems that the common standards of success cannot be applied to men like Jeremiah and Isaiah.

A third concern would be what impact success has upon the modern preacher. One could argue that mankind's response to these varieties of success produces another problem. On the one hand, it is easy to become egotistical when you are experiencing these forms of success. One must fight the temptation to think it is about them or to puff their chest while answering the pastor question of how things are going. On the other hand, perhaps the greatest reason that many pastors struggle in ministry is because they do not feel successful. It seems that what defines a person is revealed in such times. That is exactly where this writer found himself that summer afternoon.

The work for the week was complete. Everything was ready for Sunday. There was nothing that had to be done, but office hours remained that must be used faithfully. Being faithful in quiet times is one thing, but seeking out other times to spend with God in prayer was not the norm in this stage of ministry. Without busyness as an excuse, this free afternoon was a great time for prayer. Taking a knee to pray, almost immediately an emptiness took over this writer. A review of the last year of ministry took place and feeling of failure took over because all of the rules or principles of church growth were being followed and they were not working. The answer for what was missing came in that time of prayer.

It is easy to misunderstand prayer. Prayer should cause a person to recognize his or her dependence upon God and that was what happened that day for this writer. In the midst of statements of dependence upon God, it was clear that the church required that same dependence, not good principles. During that time, the most important question

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3. Jer. 20:9.

surface: “Can joy for a pastor be found in a relationship with God if the church does not grow?” That is a tough question to answer. Every pastor should be passionate about seeing people come to Christ. There certainly should be grief over the fact that people are not coming to Christ. Yet, if a pastor is miserable all the time because this is not happening and because a church is not where he wants her to be, it seems that something is wrong. It seems that God is not enough if this is the case.

Neil Anderson helps to explain the problem facing pastors. He says, “What if a pastor’s goal is to reach his community reached for Christ? Good goal? It is a desire, but if his sense of worth and success as a pastor is dependent on that happening, he will experience tremendous emotional turmoil. Every person in the community can block his goal.”<sup>4</sup> This is the dilemma for pastors. The problem in some of the grief that comes with a lack of apparent success is that a pastor will let something other than God define him. Success in ministry can hold a pastor in its grips so tightly that they become miserable. David Fisher came to the same conclusion. He realized that it seemed that his value or self-worth was determined by the size of his congregation.<sup>5</sup> That cannot be what God intended. In Scripture, God’s intention for His children is for them to understand that He is enough. In good times or in lean times, He is enough.

That day led this writer on a journey that should never end this side of heaven. It is a journey that leads that seeks satisfaction in God first before ministry success. It is a journey for a pastor to understand identity in Christ and what that means for the role of pastor. That day, and what followed, is what has led to this thesis project. Many of the pastors that are struggling in ministry are struggling because they have not been able to

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4. Neil T. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness* (Ventura: Regal, 2000), 126.

5. David Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 183.

break free from finding their identity in their ministry success rather than in Christ. Since this watershed moment in this writer's life, two goals have surfaced. One, careful attention has been given to see identity in Christ in scripture and books. Two, overt effort has been made in reaching out to other pastors. Apart from local church ministry, this writer wants to be a part of what God is doing in His Kingdom by encouraging other pastors to finish the race.

This need for encouragement in churches around this writer is obvious, but it is also evident around the country through other books. Being a pastor is hard. This truth is seen in every direction every day. Throughout history this truth is seen. Fisher describes his experience as a pastor addressing this reality. He mentions that at a pastor's conference, he could not find a single happy pastor.<sup>6</sup> He is certainly not alone with that observation. Statistics reveal that the number of pastors who are overwhelmed by the pressures in their lives and ministry are unbelievable. Scott Thomas is another pastor who has observed this reality. In thirty years of pastoring, he has identified sixteen issues that he says pastors "hide from others and suffer alone."<sup>7</sup> This loneliness is certainly one of the biggest challenges for pastors. Focus on the Family states that 70% of pastors do not have a close personal friend.<sup>8</sup> Many pastors are solo pastors and feel very alone in their church environment.

In addition, not only is the church environment lonely, it can be outright stressful.

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6. Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 132.

7. Scott Thomas, "Why Every Leader Needs a Shepherd," Acts29network.com, July 12, 2010, [http://www.acts29network.org/acts-29-blog/why-every-leader-needs-a-shepherd/#\\_ftn1](http://www.acts29network.org/acts-29-blog/why-every-leader-needs-a-shepherd/#_ftn1) (accessed on March 8, 2011).

8. Rick Frazier, "What Pastors Want," Parsonage.org, <http://www.parsonage.org/articles/ministry/A000001238.cfm> (accessed on March 8, 2011).

Pastors inevitably report a high level of frustration in their work.<sup>9</sup> One study found that 75% of pastors are extremely or highly stressed. Krejcir says, “The results of the survey are that pastors face more conflict, more anger, and more expectations than ever before.”<sup>10</sup> This results in an awful outlook for those who are currently involved in vocational ministry and for those who are pursuing vocational ministry. Studies show that 80% of seminary students and Bible school graduates who enter ministry will leave within the first five years.<sup>11</sup> It is very likely that pastors begin the right way, but something happens to derail them and results in them leaving the ministry.

Perhaps the saddest part of the discussion about pastors leaving the ministry is the numbers who say they would like to but do not feel that they can. While it may not be surprising to know that most pastors have considered leaving ministry, 57% say they would leave if they had somewhere else to go.<sup>12</sup> One study finds that three things account for job dissatisfaction for pastors: congregational conflicts, job stress, and lack of support.<sup>13</sup> For those who are active in ministry, the statistical description is discouraging. A survey of over one thousand pastors revealed that every one of them had a friend who had left ministry for burnout, moral failure, or conflict.<sup>14</sup> Every month 1500 pastors leave

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9. Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 106.

10. Richard J. Krejcir, “Statistics on Pastors,” IntoThyWord.org, <http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=36562> (accessed March 8, 2011).

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Pastors in Transition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 17.

14. Krejcir, “Statistics on Pastors.”

the ministry for these reasons.<sup>15</sup> Interpersonal problems and problems in ministry were the primary reason people left ministry.<sup>16</sup>

It is not surprising that 77% of pastors say they do not have a good marriage. Most pastors believe the ministry has a bad impact on their family.<sup>17</sup> Some studies say that half of pastors will have their marriages end in divorce. Many children of pastors will not remain in the faith. On top of all of this, most pastors feel like they must have the ideal marriage and family and realize they do not live up to this. One final family challenge is that 31% of pastors in one study admitted to having sex with a church member other than their spouse while in ministry.<sup>18</sup> One of the biggest reasons for these results is that the ministry is time consuming. Pastors regularly work fifty-five hours a week when you consider those who are bi-vocational. Forty-two percent of pastors work sixty or more hours each week.<sup>19</sup>

Not only does the ministry have a tendency to challenge a pastor's family, it does the same to his relationship with God. Fourteen percent of pastors say they spend an hour or less in personal devotions each week.<sup>20</sup> For many it appears that their only time with God or His Word is when they are preparing for sermons.

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15. Krejcir, "Statistics on Pastors."

16. Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition*, 40.

17. Fuller Theological Seminary, "Survey of Pastors," Pasadena, 1991; quoted in Michael T. Wilson and Brad Hoffmann, *Preventing Ministry Failure*, (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 15.

18. Krejcir, "Statistics on Pastors."

19. Mark Kelly, "LifeWay Research: Pastors Long Hours can come at the Expense of People, Ministry," Lifeway.com, <http://www.lifeway.com/article/169952/> (accessed March 8, 2011).

20. Ibid.

This is not to say that it is easy to explain why pastors leave the ministry. The statistics only show a conglomeration of factors to consider. Hoge and Wenger point out that pastors leave the ministry for a variety of reasons.<sup>21</sup> One unique reason they point out is that esteem and authority for pastors has decreased. Looking forward, it does not look like things are getting better. The challenges appear only to be getting worse. New challenges are on the horizon. Marriage is a hot topic. Homosexuality is another issue that is intensifying. In the United States alone, the culture is turning against Christianity. Persecution could be more prevalent all over the world.

Looking backward, you see that history is full of the same issues. Ministry has always been challenging and it is hard to argue that life in the early church was easier than it is now. The Apostle Paul quickly comes to the surface as one considers the challenges of ministry in the early church. The challenges for current pastors have been mentioned. Here is one of Paul's lists of ministry challenges:

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.<sup>23</sup> Are they servants of Christ? I'm talking like a madman—I'm a better one: with far more labors, many more imprisonments, far worse beatings, near death many times.<sup>24</sup> Five times I received from the Jews 40 lashes minus one.<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the depths of the sea.<sup>26</sup> On frequent journeys, [I faced] dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the open country, dangers on the sea, and dangers among false brothers;<sup>27</sup> labor and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and lacking clothing.<sup>28</sup> Not to mention other things, there is the daily pressure on me: my care for all the churches.<sup>22</sup>

Though the challenges of modern-day pastors are significant and unique compared to Paul, rarely would a pastor say that their list of difficulties supersedes Paul's.

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21. Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition*, 1.

22. 2 Cor. 11:23-28.



This truth leads to the question as to why this project should be completed. Challenges in ministry are not new. Every pastor will face them, including this writer. The question then is, “How do pastors stay the course?” In the words of the Apostle Paul, How do pastors assure that they can say like him: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith?”<sup>23</sup> Certainly there are things in the life of this man that can teach pastors how to finish the race in today’s society.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The number of pastors who leave the ministry, or who want to leave the ministry, is overwhelming. It would be a concern for any profession. Yet, the pastorate is not just a profession. For those in ministry it should be a calling from God, not just something they choose out of a list of occupations. Those who claim the name of Christ have been given the greatest message in the world. They have the opportunity to tell a hurting world that God sees them, He is concerned about them, and that He loves them. He has shown this by sending His only begotten Son from heaven. Jesus left the riches of heaven and became God in flesh. He died for man’s sins and rose again to offer man peace with God and life eternal.

It is not that pastors are the only heralds of this news. In Scripture, pastors are those who train “the saints for the work of ministry.”<sup>24</sup> Still, pastors are on the front lines of this work and many do not want to be there. How can the Great Commission be fulfilled and the message of Christ have any impact at all if so many of these pastors do not want to be on the front lines? This is the problem that this project seeks to address.

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23. 2 Tim. 4:7.

24. Eph. 4:12.

The goal will be to deal with some of the issues that lead pastors to want to flee the ministry. The answers for these challenges and how one stays the course in ministry will be obtained by looking at the example of the Apostle Paul.

This project will seek to answer the question, “What was it that allowed Paul to finish the race?” He was not exempt from depression, discouragement, or challenges. He had “mastered the secret of rising above discouraging circumstances.”<sup>25</sup> Answering this question will allow other pastors to learn from an example from God’s Word in order to overcome the challenges of ministry and be faithful to the very end. This will serve as an encouragement to pastors in the struggles of ministry to press on to the finish line. To this end, the project will be accomplished by thoroughly examining the writings of the Apostle Paul. In his writings, Paul reveals details about himself on many occasions. There are other times that he returns to truths and insights as he writes to others. These instructions are often repeated and taught to others implying significance in their own life. These insights fall into several overall themes that offer a foundation for ministry that can withstand the challenges sure to come. The primary theme that will be described is identity. Identity is people’s source of meaning and experience.<sup>26</sup>

Paul makes it clear what his identity is. Paul is the “biblical model for pastoral identity.”<sup>27</sup> This identity is found in his relationship with Jesus Christ. The transformation that occurred then was eternal. Paul lived out of this new identity and allowed everything to be defined by it. Identity in Christ is the most important concept to understand this

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25. J. Oswald Sanders, *Dynamic Spiritual Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1999), 55.

26. Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 6.

27. Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 161.

project and the life of the Apostle Paul in ministry.

### **Statement of Limitations**

Entire works could be written on the various components that will be explored in this writing. Yet, no works combine the various aspects of the Apostle Paul's life for the purpose of this project. As such, there are various limitations to this work. First, though this will be an examination of the Apostle Paul's writings, it will not be a thorough commentary on any of them. The purpose will not be to comment on everything in his writing, but rather to systematize key themes related to pastoral longevity. There are other works that seek to merely comment on Paul's writings.

Second, this will not be a thorough examination of everything in the life of the Apostle Paul. There are other works that comprehensively explore Paul's life. This work will simply attempt to explore the theme of Paul's life that led to him finishing the race. Third, Paul had an incredible list of challenges in ministry. While this list dwarfs the challenges that many pastors face in today's society, the challenges of today's pastors are different. For example, some of the key statistics that describe the challenges for pastors relate to family life. Statistics on divorce and the challenges of parenting are important to consider, but are challenges that Paul did not face. This truth should cause readers to consider the unique nature of these challenges and this paper will not do that.

Recently there has been an increase in works related to the Christian's identity. This subject is critical for followers of Christ to understand and grow in. Unfortunately, it is not often that you find a discipleship plan that includes this subject. Thus, many pastors enter ministry without having their identity in Christ ingrained. It will be challenging to understand one's identity as a pastor if his or her identity in Christ is not first developed.

### **Biblical and Theoretical Basis**

Biblically, the topic of this project is of utmost importance. Culturally, Americans have moved from a time when a person would work one job their entire life to a time when most people will hold several. That may be fine for the average person, but pastors should be different. For the pastor, they should not determine their occupational future by some test or a book of potential careers. The pastor is called by God first and foremost. Vocational ministry is not a manmade construction but a God ordained calling. As such, the number of pastors who do not finish the race in ministry is critically important. “God’s gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable.”<sup>28</sup> If there is a way to turn this around it is in the Bible. In all likelihood, the reason why so many do not finish the race is because they are missing something from the Bible. This paper will seek to recover that.

The primary thing that is missing is the appropriate understanding of identity in Christ. The Bible does a wonderful job of explaining God as Creator. That is important. The Bible also does a wonderful job of describing the change that occurs in the life of the person who places his or her faith in Christ and thus becomes a new creation. This new identity, and an understanding of the change that has occurred, should guide all things in the life of the Christian and thus in the life of a pastor. Paul is the ideal example for this study. Two thirds of the pastors surveyed for this project mentioned Paul in an open ended question about role models in the Bible that encourage them to stick it out in ministry.

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28. Rom. 11:29.

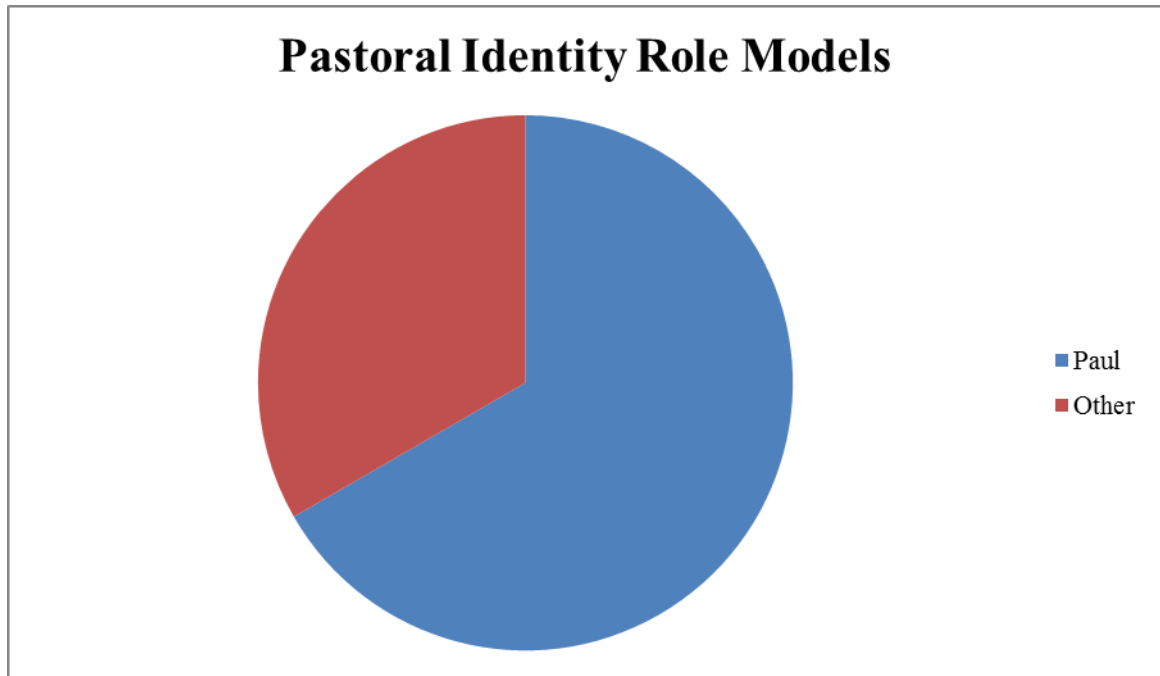


Fig. 1. Results for Pastoral Identity Role Models Graph.

### **Methodology**

The methodology that will be used for this project is a comprehensive literature review in connection with a thorough review of Pauline writings. There will also be some attention given to the narrative of Paul's experiences in Acts, though more is learned about Paul from his "indirect and unstudied references" in his writings than from Luke's writing in Acts.<sup>29</sup> Themes will be highlighted around six areas of Paul's life.

Chapter one will explore Paul's transformation in Christ. This chapter will be used to highlight Paul's unique salvation experience. This experience was life changing for Paul, as it is for all who encounter the living God. Paul never got over this experience and it grounded his identity in Christ for the rest of his life.

Chapters two and three will deal specifically with Paul's identity in Christ. First, chapter two will explore how Paul had been made right with God. Second, chapter three

<sup>29</sup>. Sanders, *Dynamic Spiritual Leadership*, 12.

will explore how Paul belonged to God. Both of these topics are components of Christian identity. As much as any New Testament writer, Paul makes it a point to talk about identity in Christ as he writes to others. He is constantly using language that describes his readers as those who are now in Christ. As Anderson says, “We need to understand who we are as a result of who God is and what He has done.”<sup>30</sup> This language lays a foundation in their lives that defines them in everyday life. Anderson goes on to say, “Many Christians are not living free and productive lives because they don’t understand who they are and why they are here.”<sup>31</sup> This is unfortunately just as true for pastors.

Chapter four examines Paul’s understanding of what he had in Christ. Paul talked about the riches that were his in Christ. This reality impacted how he lived and interacted. It changed his motivations in ministry. He did not work for a paycheck, but out of a belief that Jesus was enough.

Chapter five explores the fact of Paul’s calling. Paul makes it a constant reference to refer to the fact that God had called him into ministry. This truth was a foundation that appears to keep him going in the good and bad times of ministry.

Chapter six will continue this discussion as Paul describes what empowered him for ministry. He talks about the strength that comes in Christ for ministry. Amidst challenges, Paul found Christ strong enough to carry him through.

### **Review of Literature**

A review of the literature on this topic finds relevant works on components of this project, but none speaking directly to this research question. First and foremost, several works are available that address identity for a Christian, though none address this truth to

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30. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness*, 59.

31. *Ibid.*, 43.

the pastor. One such book is *The Search for Significance*. Robert McGee comes close to what this research is attempting to do. First, he identifies a variety of traps people can fall into. McGee warns of seeking to find identity in performance or approval from others. He also explores how to overcome blame and shame. The answers are theological. Justification, reconciliation, propitiation, and regeneration are the answers as to these insufficient paths to identity and how to assure identity is found in Christ.

Neil Anderson highlights the area of identity in his writing as much as any other writer. This topic is especially prevalent in two titles: *Victory over the Darkness* and *The Bondage Breaker*. *The Bondage Breaker* deals with spiritual warfare. In describing this battle, Anderson quickly points to truths of scripture that describe who a believer is so that he or she can fight this battle victoriously. *Victory over the Darkness* is based upon this principle as Anderson teaches that who a believer is in Christ gives victory in everyday life. Anderson also has summarized this topic in a devotional book titled *Who I am in Christ*.

*The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor* probably comes the closest to addressing pastoral identity. The author is very open in his writing about his own struggles with this question. He points out the numbers of unhappy pastors he encountered. He also approached the question from the same angle as this project, the Apostle Paul's writings, but his conclusions are far different as he focuses on exact phrases Paul uses to describe the pastor (for example, farmers and builders).

Robert S. Miller writes about the importance of pastoral identity in his book *Survival Handbook for Young Pastors*. He spends time talking about the large numbers of pastors who leave the ministry regularly. He warns, "Pastors, we are extremely

vulnerable to attack if we do not settle the issue of identity in the very core of our beings.”<sup>32</sup>

*Pastors in Transition* by Dean Hoge and Jacqueline Wenger also address the challenges of ministry. They spend some time discussing the general truth of pastors and the ministry. The core of the book examines specific reasons as to why pastors leave the ministry.

Daniel Henderson has also noticed the number of pastors who have fallen away from ministry. He addresses this problem in a book titled *Defying Gravity*. Comparing leading and ministry to flying a plane, Henderson offers advice to keep the pastor going. He even points to Paul as an example of one who finished his course and “was passionate to help us do the same.”<sup>33</sup>

Kevin Mannoia and Larry Walkemeyer wrote an effective work on pastoral ministry titled *15 Characteristics of Effective Pastors*. They obtained these characteristics through interviewing pastors. From the start they exclaim, “Godly leaders are well-formed in their identity in Christ.”<sup>34</sup>

Wayne Cordeiro writes a very personal book in his work *Leading on Empty*. As a pastor, Cordeiro almost writes this book as a journal of his experiences. In doing so, he displays the challenges of ministry, but also shows how pastors can live out of their identity in Christ to navigate these difficulties.

D.A. Carson studies the prayers of Paul in his book *A Call to Spiritual*

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32. Robert S. Miller, *Survival Handbook for Young Pastors* (USA: Xulon, 2009), 37.

33. Daniel Henderson, *Defying Gravity: How to Survive the Storms of Pastoral Ministry* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 32.

34. Kevin Mannoia, and Larry Walkemeyer, *15 Characteristics of Effective Pastors* (Ventura: Regal, 2007), 16.



*Reformation*. Carson offers great insight into the Apostle Paul through this work. He quickly points out the numbers of pastors who are struggling in ministry and points out that some of them seek to remedy this problem by working more and more.<sup>35</sup> He offers a better solution through his examination of Paul's writings. *The Ragamuffin Gospel* by Brennan Manning is helpful in this regard as well. Manning constantly points to the fact of God's love for sinners and how that should define the Christian. He appears to fight off finding identity anywhere else as a means to assure that sincere love for Christ is not vanquished in the midst of success or failure.

Resources had to be examined that looked at Paul's life also. While several books will be referenced in this area, *Dynamic Spiritual Leadership* is the most helpful. Oswald Sanders goes beyond the black and white of Paul's letters to explore the man behind the writings. In doing so, Sanders is able to put flesh on who Paul was and his motivation for life and ministry.

Daniel Harrington wrote a useful book on Paul's life as well. In *Meeting St. Paul Today*, Harrington examines Paul's writings and makes observations about Paul based upon these writings. His book assists the reader in gaining a picture of Paul through these letters.

F.B. Meyer also shows great insight into Paul's life in his book titled *Paul*. Meyer shows a passion for understanding who Paul is and brings the reader on a journey to understanding Paul better. Meyer clearly presents Paul as an example for the Christian and ministry leader in the today's society.

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35. D.A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and his Prayers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 132.

This paper will almost entirely be a study and examination of the scriptures in regard to pastoral identity. The first source to examine is Paul's three accounts of conversion. Luke details Paul's conversion in Acts 9:1-18. This account displays the change that took place in Paul's life when he met Jesus. Paul then gives his testimony in Acts 22:1-21 and 26:1-23. These accounts allow Paul to explain the change that Jesus brought about in his life. Paul also describes this change when he tells the Corinthians, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come."<sup>36</sup> This transformation really changed everything for Paul. He never got over the impact of it as evidenced by statements he made about his life before Christ. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:9 and 10 Paul points out how he is unworthy to be an apostle because of his life before Christ. He then turns this around by saying how God's grace has motivated him to serve God faithfully.

Paul explains the depth of this transformation and the work of God in accomplishing it. In Galatians 2:16, Paul reminds his readers that justification (being declared right with God) is the result of God's work and not man's. On this same line of thought, Paul points out that Jesus was given by God for our sins, but was raised from the dead for our justification.<sup>37</sup> Finally, Paul discusses how a person is made right with God through the work of Jesus when he talks about redemption and the close relationship redemption has with forgiveness of sin. For example, in Ephesians 1:7 he says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." This is God's work in making Paul right with Himself.

Paul found great comfort in these truths. He also found a home and a family

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36. 2 Cor. 5:17.

37. Rom. 4:25.

through what God had done. Paul writes to churches and quickly tells them that they belong to Jesus.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps the greatest truth in this regard is that Paul, describes believers as children of God. In Romans 8:14, he says, “All those led by God's Spirit are God's sons.” This is the great truth of what it means to belong to God and find identity in Him.

Paul’s sufferings are well-known in the Christian community. Despite these challenges, Paul considered himself rich in Christ. This is surprising because it is clear at times that he has nothing. Yet, he believed that in Jesus God would also “grant us everything.”<sup>39</sup> In fact, he says in Ephesians 1:3 that God “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ.” This belief is what allowed Paul to say, “I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.”<sup>40</sup> He made this statement from prison when it is clear that he had few of the basic necessities of life.

These truths grounded Paul. Perhaps the most critical truth for Paul that kept him going was the fact that God had called him. In Ephesians 3:7, Paul says, “I was made a servant of this [gospel] by the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of His power.” God had called him and so he could not turn back. Paul knew God had called him to preach the gospel and he wanted to go nowhere else. In 1 Corinthians 1:17, he expresses this calling by saying, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with clever words, so that the cross of Christ will not be emptied [of its effect].”

Finally, Paul recognized his challenges, but he also recognized God’s strength. He describes this dichotomy in 2 Corinthians 1:9. He points out that he thought he was

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38. Rom. 1:6.

39. Rom. 8:32.

40. Phil. 4:13.

going to die in the midst of challenges, but he remembered to rely on a God who raises the dead. That is ultimately the statement of Paul's life. He summarizes this lifestyle in chapter 12 of this same letter with these words: "But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me."<sup>41</sup> This is the truth for all believers and the reality as to how Paul and any pastor can finish the race.

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41. 2 Cor. 12:9.

CHAPTER ONE  
FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR TRANSFORMATION

One of the foundational truths in the Apostle Paul's life is that his life had been changed. There had been a critical event in his life that transformed his life forever. Who he was before that day and who he was after that day were two different men. When Paul's life is examined, it is clear to see he never got over this truth— he had been transformed by Jesus Christ.

Readers meet the Apostle Paul going by the name Saul in Acts 7:58. Stephen, the first martyr of the church, is being stoned and Paul appears on the scene when Luke says, “the witnesses laid their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.” In case there was any question of Paul's feelings about this event, Luke explains in chapter eight that

Saul agreed with putting him to death. On that day a severe persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the land of Judea and Samaria.<sup>2</sup> But devout men buried Stephen and mourned deeply over him.<sup>3</sup> Saul, however, was ravaging the church, and he would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison.<sup>1</sup>

Paul continues in this direction when Luke mentions him again in Acts 9:1 and 2. Here Paul is on mission to arrest Christians. He has permission to travel to Damascus to continue arresting followers of Jesus.

In its simplest form, these few verses describe Paul's life before coming to Christ. He offers more descriptions of himself in others places, but the simplest way to describe

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1. Luke 8:1-3.

Paul before coming into a relationship with Jesus is to say that he was a persecutor of the church. Almost everyone would be able to come to some description of who he or she was before Christ by using a simple title. Persecutor of the church is Paul's description of himself before meeting Jesus Christ.

### **Before Christ**

While this simple description describes one man's greatest shortcomings apart from Christ, there are truths that apply to every person who does not have a relationship with Jesus. Paul, as well as anyone, describes the general lot of all men apart from Christ. These descriptions that he mentions in writings are critical for the Christian to understand. These truths must be grasped in order to understand the greatness of God's transforming power in the life of a believer. In Romans 5, Paul describes the state of the person apart from Christ with several terms. These verses will serve as a starting point to understanding who a person is apart from Christ.

### **Powerless**

In Romans 5:6, Paul says that apart from Christ people are helpless or powerless: "For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly." Man needed Christ to come die in his place because man is powerless. Clearly this powerlessness is seen in the relationship between man and God. There is nothing a person can do to connect with God apart from Christ. No amount of goodness or comparisons with others will produce a single watt of power. Powerlessness is the lot of those who do not know Jesus.

## Ungodly

In that same verse Paul gives a second description of the non-Christian. He says that “Christ died for the ungodly.” Such people refuse to worship God and yet God sends His Son anyway. Paul gives a particular description of what it means to be ungodly in writing to the Corinthians. He describes to them a picture of wickedness in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10: “Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: no sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals,<sup>10</sup> thieves, greedy people, drunkards, revilers, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom.” These, and other descriptions like it, are pictures of the term ‘ungodly’ which describes all people apart from Jesus.

## Sinner

The third description that Paul offers in Romans 5 is that of sinners: “But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!”<sup>2</sup> Jesus died for sinners who were not righteous or good. Perhaps Romans 3 is the peak of Paul's writing on this subject. He pens Romans 3:23 as the climax to the truth he is presenting: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” He uses extensive quotes from the Old Testament to emphasize this truth. He expresses clearly in verse 10, “There is no one righteous, not even one.” This is the lot of all men. No one is excluded from this blistering truth. Man is wicked apart from Christ and has no hope.

## God's Enemy

Fourth, in Romans 5:10, he makes it clear that before Christ, people are enemies of God. This most likely means that God has reckoned people enemies in the judicial sense. In Romans 8:7, Paul says, “For the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God because

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<sup>2</sup> Rom. 5:8.

it does not submit itself to God's law, for it is unable to do so.” Here it is clear that people are at odds with God on their side as well.

### Separated from God

These verses express a clear truth about those apart from Christ. It is certain that a person with these characteristics is separated from God. First Corinthians 6:9 clearly makes this point. In describing ungodliness, Paul says that these people “will not inherit God’s Kingdom.” A person not inheriting the Kingdom of God means he or she will be separated from God for all eternity. By definition, this eternal separation is hell. In addition, if a person is destined to be separated from God one day, he or she is separated from God now. This is the painful truth for the unbeliever.

### Dead in Sin

It makes sense that if a person is separated from God that he or she is also dead. God is the author of life. There is no life apart from Him. That means that a person who does not have God does not have life either. Anderson says, “Being spiritually alive means your soul is in union with God and you are identified with Him.”<sup>3</sup> A person is dead apart from this union with Christ.

This death is a result of sin. In Ephesians 2:1, he describes those apart from Christ as being dead in sin. Life comes from God, thus anyone who is separated from God by sin lives in death even now. Death has invaded the present.<sup>4</sup> Wood explains this well by saying, “The most vital part of man's personality—the spirit—is dead to the most

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3. Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2000), 49.

4. Kylene Snodgrass, “Ephesians,” in *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 94.



important factor in life—God.”<sup>5</sup> Colossians 2:13 expresses the same truth that those who are separated from Christ are already dead. Garland says, “Paul portrays the Colossians’ life before they were joined to Christ as a kind of nonexistence in the realm of the dead.”<sup>6</sup> Romans 6:23 explains that the “wages of sin is death.” The just reward for those in sin is death. Of course, people have the predicament of being sinners as a result of Adam’s sin and from each person’s own sinful actions. Though alive physically, the person apart from Christ is dead spiritually in his or her sins.

### Under Satan’s Control

One of the truths that Paul presents that clearly implies this reality is that man was separate from God because he was in another Kingdom before Christ. If a person does not know Jesus, he or she is actually under Satan’s control. This is a sad, yet often ignored truth of the life of the unbeliever.

Where is an unbeliever’s citizenship? Colossians 1:13 gives the answer: “He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves.” God produces such a transformation that there is a gigantic relocation for believers. They are moved from Satan’s dominion to God’s. That is a transformation that one cannot get over. Melick offers insight on this verse by saying, “‘Rescued’ translates ‘*errusato*’, a word that means to liberate, save, or deliver someone from something or someone; that from which Christians have been rescued is a ‘dominion of darkness’.”<sup>7</sup>

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5. A. Skevington Wood, “Ephesians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

6. David E. Garland, “Colossians,” in *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 149.

7. Richard R. Melick, “Philippians, Colossians, Philemon,” in *The New American Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman & Homan, 1991).

Luke records Paul saying a similar statement in Acts 26:18. In describing what God had called him to do, Paul says God sent him, “to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” In both of these references Paul makes it clear that there are two kingdoms: God’s and Satan’s. He also makes it clear that one is either under the rule of Satan or God. Before Christ, each person is under the control of Satan, in his kingdom, and in darkness.

It is not that Paul wants to place an unnecessary guilt trip upon his listeners. He must present to them the truth of their lives apart from Christ in order for them to recognize their need for Jesus and for them to not forget the change He has made in their lives. Paul could clearly remember the description of his life before Christ. He knew the wickedness that described him and all people apart from Christ.

### **Paul’s Encounter with Christ**

Everything changed in Paul’s life on a dusty road heading to Damascus. It is hard to imagine a more obvious 180 degree turn than the one Paul experienced on this day. Luke sets the stage for this encounter: “Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest<sup>2</sup> and requested letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, either men or women, he might bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem.”<sup>8</sup> Paul had just been a part of the killing of Stephen.<sup>9</sup> His misguided zeal for God continued to press him forward. It motivated him to dedicate everything to ending what he thought to

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8. Acts 9:1, 2.

9. Acts 7.

be a Christ-following cult.

Damascus would be the next step on his journey, only God had planned a dramatic change in Paul's direction. Luke continues, "As he traveled and was nearing Damascus, a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him.<sup>4</sup> Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'"<sup>10</sup> A bright light blinded Paul and the voice of Jesus radically changed the direction of his life. God sent a faithful servant named Ananias to lead Paul to close the deal on this newfound relationship with Christ and give him the first steps on his new life in Christ. Paul was immediately and forever a changed man:

Immediately he began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues: 'He is the Son of God.'<sup>21</sup> But all who heard him were astounded and said, 'Isn't this the man who, in Jerusalem, was destroying those who called on this name, and then came here for the purpose of taking them as prisoners to the chief priests?''<sup>22</sup> But Saul grew more capable, and kept confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that this One is the Messiah.<sup>11</sup>

It took only a short time before the one coming to destroy Christians is having his own life threatened for being a Christian.<sup>12</sup> This was just the beginning of Paul's new life after being transformed by God.

Paul never got over his salvation. Grace is the impartation of new life. Grace raises someone from the dead. It is a transforming power.<sup>13</sup> He never got over the grace he had experienced. Peppered throughout his writings the reader can see Paul point back to what happens in a person's life when they come into contact with the living God. It

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10. Acts 9:3, 4.

11. Acts 20:20-22.

12. Acts 9:23.

13. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 246.

seems that the most amazing thing to Paul was that Christ appeared to him in love, not wrath.<sup>14</sup> This transformation is clearly one of the pillars of Paul's faith that always kept him pressing on in the race of his calling.

### **Those who meet God are New Creations**

The good news for the church at Rome, Corinth, Colossae, and even for Paul was that they had not reached the end of the story in that state. Though they, and all, could be described as wicked and separated from God, that now had changed. For Paul, it changed in a remarkable conversion with an incredible disclosure from Christ. In the end, it occurs for all people in a similar fashion. One way or another Christ comes into the picture and changes everything. Just like for Paul, there has to be a time in the life of all people in which Christ changes everything. This encounter is the dividing line between what someone used to be and what they are in Christ. When someone comes into a relationship with Jesus, they are radically changed. "New creation" seems to be the most appropriate description of this change.

In all certainty, Jesus divides a life into before Christ and after Christ. Perhaps Paul expressed this no clearer than he did in 2 Corinthians 5:17. There he said, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come." Timothy George expresses this transformation by describing some of what happens here:

The new creation, then, involves the whole process of conversion: the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit leading to repentance and faith, the daily process of mortification and vivification, continual growth in holiness leading to eventual conformity to the image of Christ. The new creation implies a new nature with a new system of desires, affections, and habits, all wrought through

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14. Sanders, *Dynamic Spiritual Leadership*, 28.

the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.<sup>15</sup>

To meet Christ is to be recreated in Christ. It is not God just slapping a new coat of paint on the believer. Wood explains, “It is not the former nature refurbished but a totally new creation.”<sup>16</sup> He is making all things new. While this truth is a corporate truth and points to the ultimate making of all things new, it encompasses those who have been born again. The important reminder is that Paul has experienced this reality himself. Paul reflects upon his own transformation as he writes to the churches he encounters. He is not merely describing something outside of himself. He has experienced this transformation as well:

Paul too had experienced the reality of this new creation first-hand, having been forgiven by Christ on the road to Damascus. Hence, his equating being ‘in Christ’ with participating in the ‘new creation’ reflects his own experience of the fact that Christ’s death inaugurates the eschatological new creation in the midst of the old.<sup>17</sup>

The key principle behind this transformation is God himself. George says, “No spiritual gymnastics, no twelve-step program on the deeper life, no quick-fix ‘How-to-Be-a-Better-Christian’ seminar can produce this kind of transformation. Paul’s emphasis was on the act of God in effecting a new thing.”<sup>18</sup> God is doing what only He can do to make someone a new creation. God transforms lives. It seems fitting that this truth is presented so clearly to the church in Corinth. They appear to be the most troubled church that Paul worked with. Elwell and Yarbrough declare, “The Corinthian church holds the

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15. Timothy George, “Galatians,” in *The New American Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Holman, 1994).

16. Wood, “Ephesians.”

17. Scott J. Hafemann, “2 Corinthians,” in *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 243.

18. George, “Galatians.”

dubious distinction of being the most confused congregation, or group of congregations, that Paul addressed.”<sup>19</sup> Their list of problems is long and summarized well by Craig

Blomberg:

IMAGINE A CHURCH wracked by divisions. Powerful leaders promote themselves against each other, each with his band of loyal followers. One of them is having an affair with his stepmother, and, instead of disciplining him, many in the church boast of his freedom in Christ to behave in such a way. Believers sue each other in secular courts; some like to visit prostitutes. As a backlash against this rampant immorality, another faction in the church is promoting celibacy—complete sexual abstinence for all believers—as the Christian ideal. Still other debates rage about how decisively new Christians should break from their pagan past. Disagreements about men’s and women’s roles in the church add to the confusion. As if all this were not enough, alleged prophecies and speaking in tongues occur regularly, but not always in constructive fashion. A significant number of these immature Christians do not even believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ!<sup>20</sup>

It then becomes more notable that Paul expresses the truth of a transformed life in both of his (preserved) letters to this church. As mentioned, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 becomes a clear picture of life apart from Christ. This description was a fitting description of the Corinthians before Jesus came into the picture. All that had changed though. In verse 11, Paul writes, “Some of you were like this; but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” They had been transformed by God. Lea points out that “most Corinthian believers came from degrading backgrounds, but they experienced the transforming power of the gospel.”<sup>21</sup>

The truth for the Corinthians was the same truth for Paul. They once were

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19. Walter A. Elwell, & Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 288.

20. Craig L. Blomberg, “1 Corinthians,” in *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 17.

21. Thomas D. Lea, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 410.

nowhere close to God. They were the exact opposite of those who have residence in God's Kingdom. But they had been changed. They had come into contact with God and they had been radically changed. They had been washed. They had been sanctified. They had been justified. They had experienced the change that Paul had experienced on that Damascus road. They had been transformed in Christ.

The same truth was needed in the church in Galatia, although it was needed for a far different reason. Throughout his writing to the church of Galatians, Paul deals with the issue of circumcision. It is the critical theme in those who were promoting a belief that one must follow the Law of Moses after coming to Christ. As Paul closes out his message to this church, he says these words, "For both circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing; [what matters] instead is a new creation."<sup>22</sup>

Scot McKnight explains this text by saying, "what mattered was that God had formed a new people, the church, and that this new people was an entirely 'new creation.' Salvation has nothing to do with circumcision. The only thing that matters is being made a new creation."<sup>23</sup> What matters? A new creation counts. Circumcision matters little. Outward change matters little. What matters most is inward change? That is the change Paul is pointing to. He is pointing to the metamorphosis that occurred in his life on the Damascus road. He is pointing to the change that occurs when these Galatians meet Jesus and experience the change He produces. Christians see the world in a new way and become new when they are joined to Christ. The individual's whole being, value system,

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22. Gal. 6:15.

23. Scot McKnight. "Galatians," in *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 301.

and behavior are also changed through conversion.<sup>24</sup>

The church in Ephesus also needed to be reminded of this transformation. In describing what was, Paul says, “We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and by nature we were children under wrath, as the others were also.”<sup>25</sup> Paul begins by reminding them of their state before Christ. Previously, they chose self. They followed their sinful desires. They were storing up wrath for themselves. Jesus changed all of that though: “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,<sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”<sup>26</sup> Transformation had occurred. God makes those who are dead, alive. He does this through Christ. It is God who intervened in the lives of the Ephesians to produce this transformation.

This theme only continues: “He also raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavens, in Christ Jesus,<sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace in [His] kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”<sup>27</sup> Those who were at one time dead are now raised with Christ and seated with Christ in heavenly places. In verses 8 and 9, Paul gives one of the most basic statements as to how salvation occurs. It is a gift of God’s grace. It is God intervening in the lives of those who are at odds with Him. But after salvation, those enemies are changed. Paul says, “For we are His creation—created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of

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24. George, “Galatians.”

25. Eph. 2:3.

26. Eph. 2:4, 5.

27. Eph. 2:6, 7.



time so that we should walk in them.”<sup>28</sup> Make no mistake about the fact that God is the Creator of all. Yet, the point in verse ten is that those who have been transformed in Christ have been re-created; they have been re-created with the purpose of doing good works that God has prepared for these new creations.

It is notable that Paul expresses that the truth of salvation by God’s grace removes any place for boasting. Snodgrass says,

One obvious reason why no room exists for human boasting is that Paul views salvation as God’s new creation. People do not contribute to their rebirth any more than they did to their natural birth. The emphasis on the activity of God, which began in 1:1, comes to a crescendo here. ‘We are God’s workmanship’ can well be translated, ‘We are the result of his activity’.<sup>29</sup>

God does the work. Man’s response is merely to have faith in what God has done through Jesus. Snodgrass continues, “The new creation is based in Christ’s resurrection, the creation of life in the midst of death.”<sup>30</sup>

As Paul continues in this chapter, he again must point to the transformation that has occurred. He says, “At that time you were without the Messiah, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, with no hope and without God in the world.”<sup>31</sup> Paul is speaking to Gentiles as he pens these words. Paul calls to mind their former state. They must not get over the fact that they were at one time separate from Christ. They were at one time without hope and without God.

That has now changed. Paul points this out in the following verse: “But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of the

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28. Eph. 2:10.

29. Snodgrass, “Ephesians,” 106.

30. Ibid., 82.

31. Eph. 2:12.

Messiah.”<sup>32</sup> How did this change occur? It happened through Christ. They have now been brought near by His blood. They must remember this transformation. They must be clear on what they were to appreciate who they are now. They must remember the transformation that has occurred.

Paul expresses the same thought in Colossians. He reminds them of their prior status: “And you were once alienated and hostile in mind because of your evil actions.”<sup>33</sup> They were alienated from God. They were enemies of God. But Jesus transformed that: “But now He has reconciled you by His physical body through His death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before Him.”<sup>34</sup> This transformation makes enemies and aliens holy. They are not just holy in comparison to some; they are now holy in the sight of God.

The transformation that Paul is describing not only changes the identity of the believer, it changes their citizenship. Philippians 3:20 tells us, “but our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” The word “citizenship” that Paul uses in Philippians three is only found here in the New Testament. It is a term that holds clear political overtones. Paul probably chose it carefully. Philippi was ruled by Rome rather than by native customs and they were likely proud of their Roman citizenship. Paul writes here to remind them that their fallen earthly realm is not the sum total of their existence. Their heavenly citizenship is more important. The

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32. Eph. 2:13.

33. Col. 1:21.

34. Col. 1:22.

ultimate goal of their existence will be reached when Jesus appears.<sup>35</sup>

In a political sense, these believers knew exactly what it was like to have citizenship in a far off city.<sup>36</sup> That was their exact predicament as citizens of Rome.

Immediately their thoughts would have turned to an analogy with their earthly citizenship. They were proud of their Roman citizenship, but the analogy would have conveyed more. Philippi was an outpost colony, and, interestingly, Paul was at the home base in Rome. Regularly they awaited news from the capital to know how to conduct their business. When Paul said that they belonged to a citizenship, he spoke directly to them. Though they belonged to a city, the political entity spanned several geographical areas. Similarly, the church was an outpost of an entity which had its own capital, heaven. Although “citizenship” may call to mind a place, Paul used it of a people. They awaited the Savior from that citizenship. He would come with power sufficient to subdue everything and with ability to transform their bodies to be like his. They would naturally associate subduing power with a Roman emperor, but transforming power was unique to Christ. Once again, Paul spoke of the resurrection as the climax of his Christian experience. By implication, the false teachers would not share in the resurrection of the just because their expectations were earthly rather than heavenly.<sup>37</sup>

This point should easily have communicated to these believers and was certainly in Paul’s mind as he wrote. As mentioned earlier, Paul described the reality that believers are moved to God’s Kingdom from Satan’s kingdom when they come to Christ.<sup>38</sup> Melick continues, “Thus Paul may have recalled his commission from the Lord at the time of salvation. The commission impressed him significantly since some twenty-five years later Paul wrote with vivid, verbal memory of that call.”<sup>39</sup>

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35. Frank Thielman, “Philippians,” in *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

36. Homer A. Kent, Jr., “Philippians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed. Frank E. Gaebel (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

37. Melick, “Philippians, Colossians, Philemon.”

38. Phil. 3:20.

39. Melick, “Philippians, Colossians, Philemon.”

### **After the Encounter with Christ: Living Like a Transformed Person**

The impact of being a new creation is multifaceted. Rosie Rivers suggests three things that this new birth does: it makes a person a new creature in Christ, it takes them out of the control and dominion of the devil, and it makes them a child of God.<sup>40</sup> The challenge then becomes living like a transformed person.

In his writing to the Ephesians, Paul makes a major transition from chapters 1-3 to chapters 4-6. He becomes very practical in his instructions in the latter half of the book. In this process, he points to the transformation that has occurred in the lives of these Ephesians and the need to live out of this transformed life. He says, “you took off your former way of life, the old man that is corrupted by deceitful desires;<sup>23</sup> you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds;<sup>24</sup> you put on the new man, the one created according to God's [likeness] in righteousness and purity of the truth.”<sup>41</sup> They are instructed to put off the old self and put on the new self. They have been transformed, so they should live like it. Snodgrass again says, “This new creation is viewed as a work God has already accomplished and reflects the same ideas as 2:10. Whereas the old being fit the former life of living in lust (v. 19), the new being fits with God in ‘righteousness and holiness’.”<sup>42</sup>

Christians cannot underestimate the change that has occurred in the life of a believer. The believer really is a new creation. Snodgrass continues, “Paul’s main issue

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70. 40. Rosie Rivera, *Stolen Identity: Finding your Identity in Christ* (Bloomington: WestBow, 2010),

41. Eph. 4:22-24.

42. Snodgrass, “Ephesians,” 136.

here is transformation — change of identities.”<sup>43</sup> He is exhorting his readers to be who they now are, not who they used to be. To make this change outwardly is not challenging in one sense. Philippians 2:13 says, “For it is God who is working in you, [enabling you] both to will and to act for His good purpose.” After coming into a relationship with Jesus Christ, another remarkable transformation occurs. God is now at work within the believer to lead the believer in the relationship with Him. He does not transform the believer, and then expect the believer to do everything else on his or her own. The God who justifies also sanctifies. He makes believers His own and then empowers them to live as such.

In Galatians 3:3, Paul expresses a thought that is very relevant here and for most people. He says, “Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh?” Simply put, Paul is pointing out that his readers understand that salvation is an act of God’s grace. He wants to make sure they see that they can turn life as a Christian into a work of their own effort. In Galatians and in Philippians Paul makes it clear that both salvation and sanctification are a result of God’s work first.

### **How Should Christians Remember who they were?**

Paul is many things in the history of the Christian church. Still, he first and foremost is a man who has been transformed by Jesus Christ. It all began for Paul on a road to Damascus. In the most literal way, Jesus turned Paul’s life around 180 degrees. He would never be the same after this encounter on the road to Damascus. He had been transformed. For the effective pastor who desires to come to the end of his ministry in faithfulness, he should follow Paul’s example. To get to the end in ministry, a pastor must

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43. Ibid., 234.

not get over where it all began in relationship to Christ.

Paul refers to his life before encountering Jesus on several occasions. It is clear that Paul was an outstanding Jew. His zeal ultimately led him to what he appears to be most ashamed of before his encounter with Jesus. He is ashamed of persecuting the church. It seems that this sin is the most obvious area that showed that Paul was a man in need of a Savior. One of the basic parts of Paul's testimony is that he persecuted the church. In Acts 26:11, he mentions this as he retells his story, saying, "In all the synagogues I often tried to make them blaspheme by punishing them. Being greatly enraged at them, I even pursued them to foreign cities." In Philippians 3:6, he does the same thing. This time he highlights the nature of his life before Christ when he says, "as to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness that is in the law, blameless."

He references this persecution in Galatians 1:13 as well. Paul could easily describe his life before encountering the living Christ as "persecuting the church." Yet the manner in which Paul does this is a great lesson to readers. Far too often, when Christians talk about the past, significant mistakes are made. Very often, they glamorize the past as if that was the fun part of life before coming to Christ. However, Christians turn thinking about the past into a pity party or a guilt trip. Both of these responses puts the focus on man and takes the glory from where it belongs with God.

Paul does not make this mistake. After this statement in verse 13, he points out how vigilantly he persecuted the church, yet in verse 15 he points out that God had set him apart before birth as His vessel for service. This magnifies God's grace. He does this again and more clearly in 1 Corinthians 15. In verses 9 and 10 of that chapter, Paul says, "For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I

persecuted the church of God.<sup>10</sup> But by God's grace I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not ineffective. However, I worked more than any of them, yet not I, but God's grace that was with me.”<sup>44</sup> But he turns this admission of weakness into an opportunity to magnify God's grace.<sup>45</sup>

In examining these verses, it is clear that Paul grieves over his past. He recognizes that he has no right to be an apostle. There is no way that Paul should have penned a large chunk of the New Testament. He should not even be able to be called a Christian. Paul needs no one to tell him this. He knows it better than anyone. Yet, he quickly allows his failings to bring God glory. Why is Paul a Christian? Why is he an apostle? These things are true in his life solely due to the grace of God. One of the great reasons for remembering life before Jesus is so that God can be celebrated for what He does in changing lives. This celebration should only spur believers on in a relationship with God. It might even keep pastors in ministry when they want to give up.

Paul pretty much says that. He says this experience of God's grace propels him to serve God all the more passionately. Even as he celebrates this truth, he cannot help but point the spotlight back to God. He recognizes that it is only as a result of God's grace that he serves God the way he does. Mare says, “With true humility, he attributes all his hard work for the cause of Christ solely to God's grace (v. 10)—grace that had saved him and enabled him to serve.”<sup>46</sup> God has done it all. All pastors should say frequently that they are what they are because of God's grace.

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44. 1 Cor. 15:9, 10.

45. Blomberg, “1 Corinthians,” 296.

46. Harold W. Mare, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).

As Paul describes his life before Christ he recognizes that he was in need of God's grace in light of his life before Christ. It ultimately exalts God's grace in Paul's life and he describes the impact this encounter had in his life. He seems to live intentionally as a result of the change that God has made in his life. He makes a similar statement about his view of himself as a result of this truth in Ephesians 3:8: "This grace was given to me—the least of all the saints!—to proclaim to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of the Messiah." Paul makes it a point to verbalize about his life before encountering Christ as he explains what God has called him to do. Anything he accomplished was a result of the power of God at work in him.<sup>47</sup> In doing this, he makes much of God's grace in transforming him.

One final place Paul does this is in 1 Timothy 1:15, 16. Here he says, "This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'—and I am the worst of them."<sup>16</sup> But I received mercy because of this, so that in me, the worst [of them], Christ Jesus might demonstrate the utmost patience as an example to those who would believe in Him for eternal life."<sup>47</sup> These verses come in training a younger minister. This is a great lesson for a younger pastor because remembering what a person was like before Christ and then the change that God has brought in his or her life is a critical part of serving God. Walter Liefeld observes, "Paul sees himself (emphatic *ego*, 'I myself,' at the end of 1 Tim. 1:15) as a prototype of all hostile, sinful rebels against God, whom God tolerates while patiently waiting for their conversion."<sup>48</sup>

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47. Snodgrass, "Ephesians," 162.

48. Walter L. Liefeld, "1 & 2 Timothy, Titus," in *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 72.



This time Paul says something that not only magnifies God’s transforming work in his own life, but also speaks to others. These verses should communicate powerfully to pastors dealing with people. How often someone says, “I would love ministry if it weren’t for the people.” Much of the discouragement of ministry comes from interactions with people. For one, it is hard for pastors to see any work of God in their life. Another person hears a sermon on Sunday and does the same thing that God said not to do that afternoon. Someone else seems like he or she will never change. It is hard to have hope in the face of some of these challenges.

The words of 1 Timothy apply to Paul and every ministry leader. It is possible that anyone who clearly understands who he or she was before Jesus could say this too. The glorious thing is that when they do say this, it changes how they do ministry. It changes how they look at other people. Ajith says, “Another significant inference from the fact that God takes the initiative to save the least likely people, such as Saul the persecutor, is that we cannot pronounce anyone hopeless as far as conversion is concerned.”<sup>49</sup>

God’s work in their life then becomes exhibit A of what God can do in anyone else. No person is beyond God’s ability to transform. No one is beyond His power. Everyone a pastor encounters is a potential candidate for God’s transforming power. This immediately does one more thing that is important for the pastor—it makes much of the gospel. That is what the pastor is called to preach anyway. These truths encourage pastors to believe in the power of the gospel that does change lives.

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49. Ajith Fernando, “Acts,” in *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 306.

### Application

Transformation means that every Christian has experienced a change from who they used to be. This is a critical reality for ministry. The reality of this change in Paul's life, expressly describes Paul's God-given role in ministry as well. It keeps the power of the gospel always in the forefront. It reminds the pastor that God changes lives. If a pastor is able to remember that his life has been changed, it encourages him to have that same confidence in the lives of people he has the privilege of ministering to.

There is frequently a temptation to take matters into one's own hands as a pastor. It is easy to become like Moses saying to God, "I can't carry all these people by myself. They are too much for me."<sup>50</sup> In Moses' case, the answer was additional leaders. That may be the case for the modern-day leader as well. On the other hand, it could be that this burden becomes too heavy because a leader has forgotten who actually changes lives. C.J. Mahaney says, "I have to remember that whenever I feel buried under care, the real issue is pride and my self-sufficiency."<sup>51</sup> What Mahaney is saying is that a pastor can convince himself that he must take care of these needs and he might forget to bring them to God. What pastor has always avoided this trap?

Perhaps the best solution to this inevitable pitfall is to remind oneself regularly that only God changes lives. The best way to do that is for each person to remember how He changed his or her life. The pastor must review what life is like for all people before Christ. He must remember what his life was like before Christ. This 'before and after' picture is far more impressive than photographs highlighting a diet plan.

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50. Num. 11:14.

51. C.J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2005), 76.

One of the better ways to accomplish this goal would be for one to review and share one's testimony often. Hopefully, all pastors are capable of sharing their faith story in just a few minutes. It is awfully notable that Paul's conversion story appears three times in Luke's writing in Acts. A Christian's testimony is a powerful tool in sharing his or her faith with others, but it is also a powerful tool in preaching the gospel to himself or herself. McKnight says, "Whenever an author of the New Testament reflects on his own call or conversion to Christ, it is natural for us, since we are each sinners in need of God's grace and calling, to see a reflection of our own biographies in that person's biography."<sup>52</sup>

At this point, it is easy to recognize that many people's testimony is not as impressive as Paul's. The story of Christ's work in each person's life is vastly different depending on one's upbringing. It just does not sound as catchy if someone accepted Christ age six and never had a time of wandering. Publishers do not print too many books with that story. In reality, that is an incredible story of God's work and should be celebrated, but it may not highlight the truth this chapter is describing as easily. The stories that celebrate God's transforming power require someone to live far from the Lord before encountering the risen Savior. A person who has story must celebrate it regularly. A person who does not have this story would do well to read the testimony of other people regularly to remind himself or herself of God's transforming power.

Perhaps pastors should make it a point to highlight the salvation experiences of all of their members more regularly. Some churches do this by having members write their story and making their own "Church Book of Life." In a day where video is so easy,

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52. McKnight, "Galatians."

video recordings of testimonies that could be played regularly would be easy to accomplish.

One well-known thought about what being a Christian means says, “it is one beggar showing another beggar where to find food.” This is certainly true. The pastor is that first beggar. The pastor is the one who has already experienced hunger and want. Yet, the pastor is also the one who has already found food. Now the pastor has the privilege of telling others where this unending supply is found.

The pastor then is exhibit A. The pastor could say, “If God can change me, he can change anyone.” Paul says, “This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’—and I am the worst of them.<sup>16</sup> But I received mercy because of this, so that in me, the worst [of them], Christ Jesus might demonstrate the utmost patience as an example to those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”<sup>53</sup> This reality leads Paul to the following statement of praise: “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”<sup>54</sup> It should do the same for all pastors.

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53. 1 Tim. 1:15, 16.

54. 1 Tim. 1:17.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Being made a new creation is being made right with God and by God.<sup>1</sup> Paul was a man who had experienced this transformation by the power of Christ. He had encountered the living God on the road to Damascus and he would never be the same again. It is clear that a remarkable transformation had occurred in Paul's life. How did this occur?

How does Paul go from a man who is an enemy of God to being in a right relationship with Him? How does he go from being alienated to being united with Christ? One of the key truths for the identity of the Christian is that they are right with God. This truth is the result of God's work and not the work of man. Paul was a man transformed by the power of Christ. He had been changed. He was not what he once was. He was now totally defined by this encounter and the ensuing relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Though Paul frequently does not mention specifics about himself, it is probable that Paul has first applied much of what he writes to himself before applying it to the churches that he has worked with. In fact, one of the most notable things about Paul's writings is that he seems to talk more about who a believer is in Christ than any other

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1. Christoffer H. Grundmann, "Reconciliation and the New Identity in Christ: Pneumatological Perspectives of Christian Mission in its third Millennium." *International Review of Mission* 97, no. 386/387 (July-October 2008): 257.

New Testament writer. Neil Anderson talks at length about the reality of who the believer is in Christ. In his devotional book on the subject, *Who I Am in Christ*, he includes a one page description of how the Bible describes a Christian. It is noteworthy that the vast majority of these characteristics come from the Apostle Paul's writing. It is easy to posit that Paul had these truths so ingrained that they naturally flowed in his writings. It is possible that these truths were the most foundational element of Paul's tenure in ministry. Paul expressed his great devotion to the church over and over again. Yet, he was not defined by the results of these ministry endeavors. He was first and foremost defined by who he was in Christ. Christians must determine their identity in Christ, but they must understand that the question of who they are is a question a gracious God must answer.<sup>2</sup> How God made sinners right with Himself is a key component of this identity in Christ.

### **Right with God**

The transformation that comes in Christ could not be more easily described than in the truth that those who were once enemies of God are now made right with God in Christ Jesus. Numerous places in the Bible describe this simple yet profound truth. Paul frequently expressed these truths. He clearly defines what it means to be right with God.

#### Justified

The first place to look is at the term 'justification'. Justification is one of the key concepts to grasp in order to understand what it means to be right with God after a saving encounter with Jesus Christ. Some people would say that justification means, "just as if I have never sinned." While there is some truth to this description, it does lead to the

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2. Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2000), 235.

possibility of not fully grasping this term. There is a picture to help explain this concept. It is as if a person has entered a courtroom as the defendant. God is the judge and He is sitting on the bench. The evidence has been presented and it is overwhelming. It is clear that the defendant is unrighteous, a lawbreaker, unholy, ungodly, and not fit to be in a relationship with a pure and holy God. Yet, God looks at the evidence and looks at the defendant and declares him to be righteous; this is justification. It could also be considered a forensic term. God is not changing the person; rather, He is declaring something to be true. God is not changing the person, but declaring the person to be justified.<sup>3</sup> That is what God is doing on behalf of believers in justifying them. This does not yet explain how God is just in declaring sinners to be righteous.

The most obvious place to turn to understand justification is in Paul's writings. Specifically, justification is the key doctrine of the book of Romans.<sup>4</sup> He expounds on this theme in chapter three. In verse twenty-one, Paul makes a point that is critical for the Jew. He says first that "apart from the law, God's righteousness has been revealed." That would make it clear that the law is not the way to be declared right with God. He then remarks that "the Law and the Prophets" bear witness to this truth. Even the Old Testament expresses this truth about righteousness.

Though the law is not a critical thought for Gentile believers today, the concept that Paul presents is crucial. In Galatians 2:16a Paul says, "yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ." Again, in the next chapter

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3. Douglas J. Moo, "Romans," in *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 55.

4. Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed., Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).

he says, “Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because ‘the righteous will live by faith’.”<sup>5</sup> For readers in today’s society, hardly anyone needs a reminder that justification with God is impossible based on works. It is critical to grasp that being right with God is His work, not man’s effort. As the defendant awaits a verdict from the judge in the courtroom, it becomes clear to him that the future is in the judge’s hands and there is nothing to do to change that.

Because God is extremely inclusive, it does not matter if a person is Jewish or Gentile. In verse twenty-two, Paul expresses that this righteousness is available for everyone who believes. Whosoever will come to God can come to God. The more important truth of this verse is that the only route to this righteousness is “through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe.” Paul presents this same message in Galatians two. This leads Moo to the conclusion that “The cross is no afterthought, no ‘Plan B’; it has been God’s intention from the beginning to reveal his saving righteousness by sending his Son as a sacrifice for us.”<sup>6</sup> Though God includes everyone in His invitation, there is only one way to get in. Jesus Christ is the only way for man to be justified. Again, this serves as a reminder that justification is not a result of works. It is through Jesus that man is justified.

The concept of justification can be understood as God’s act as a judge in declaring a believer righteous through Christ.<sup>7</sup> In Romans 3:28, Paul points out that this justification comes from faith and faith alone. The reality is that there is nothing a human being will ever do that will allow them to be justified with God.<sup>8</sup> This comes only in

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5. Rom. 3:11.

6. Moo, “Romans,” 126.

7. Harrison, “Romans.”

8. Moo, “Romans,” 137.



Christ. Romans 4:25 expresses the critical nature of Christ in this process by saying, “He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.” Justification comes from Christ raised from the dead. This is a critical note because it explains that Christ’s death and resurrection were crucial Him allowing man to be considered justified with God. Paul also explains the impact of justification.

Faith becomes another component to justification. Faith is not a work in this interaction. It is merely an acknowledgement and a placing of trust in what Jesus has done and not in works. The book of Romans highlights this truth as well as Galatians two and three. Faith is man’s response to God that leads to justification. This is exactly what Paul said at the start of this letter to the Romans: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.<sup>17</sup> For in it God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.”<sup>9</sup> This statement introduces the key theme of the letter. Paul points to the gospel for salvation for those who believe. He then goes on to explain how this occurs, saying that gospel reveals the righteousness of God. This righteousness comes as the result of faith.

In the following verse, Paul presents the problem by addressing sin. He says this problem is no discriminator of men: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”<sup>10</sup> This is the lot of all men. No one is exempt from the point of this statement. That means that no one is able to be right with God through works. Mankind’s sin prevents them from the righteousness God requires. How can God then declare mankind to be righteous when the truth of their sin is so clear? To do so God would have to be unjust as

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9. Rom. 1:16, 17.

10. Rom. 3:23.

a judge.

### Redeemed

This leads to the second concept that needs to be explored; not only is man justified by God, but also redeemed by Jesus Christ. Redemption has been described as the means by which salvation is achieved.<sup>11</sup> Obviously, redemption speaks of someone bought back. A price must be paid for something or someone to be redeemed. To understand this truth, look closely at Romans 3:24. There, Paul points out that not only have all sinned, but are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Immediately following the impact of sin, Paul points to the answer for sin. That answer is Jesus and redemption in Him.

Next he tells how a person can be justified in such a manner as to allow God to be just. The first answer is that God does it. Blackman says, “The possibility of righteousness (justification) for man depends, objectively, on God’s gracious initiative.”<sup>12</sup> Second, this verse says that Jesus is critical to justification. It is He who paid the price of redemption. Jesus did this by paying the price as “propitiation through faith in His blood”<sup>13</sup>

The rest of verse 25 and verse 26 are also paramount in understanding justification. Paul says, “God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed.”<sup>26</sup> He presented Him to demonstrate His righteousness at the

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11. Everett F. Harrison, “Redeemer, Redemption,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 993.

12. E.C. Blackman, “Justification, Justify,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 1029.

13. Rom. 3:25.

present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.” God revealed Himself as righteous through Jesus’ act of redemption. He did this because He had not previously punished sin. God had said that He would not leave the guilty unpunished,<sup>14</sup> yet He had done so. In Jesus, He punished all sin committed before and after Christ’s death. This proves that God is a just God. It had been in question in light of Him justifying sinners. Yet, because of the way in which He has made man righteous, God showed Himself just and became the One who would and could declare sinners as righteous.

Thus, redemption becomes a key to justification. There is a price tag on sin. According to Romans 6:23, one thing that price tag says is “death.” The just reward for sin is death. This price for sin has to be paid, but if a man pays for his sins, he dies. Could there be a way to have the penalty of sin paid for and still give a person life? Jesus became the answer to that question. Jesus came to earth for the purpose of redemption. Paul expresses this well in Galatians. In 3:13, he says, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written: Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” Jesus redeemed man from the curse of sin by becoming a curse for him. He paid the penalty to offer all people life.

In 3:14 Paul continues with talk of redemption by pointing out that Jesus offers redemption to Jew and Gentile. All people can be saved through Jesus’ sacrifice. Then in chapter four he says, “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those under the law, that we might receive

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14. Exod. 34:7.

adoption to sonship”<sup>15</sup> It cannot get much clearer than to say that Jesus was born or came for the purpose of redeeming people. Titus 2:14 again makes this crystal clear: “He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for Himself a special people, eager to do good works.” One should notice in Titus that redemption is from wickedness. Jesus redeems people from sin and its consequences. Also, it is noticeable that He did this to change people. There is a clear freedom from the curse and the domination of sin. Williams says, “As a result of His work of redemption, believers enter into true righteousness and holiness.”<sup>16</sup> Murray presents the other side of this coin by saying, “It means deliverance from sin in its guilt, defilement, power, and liability.”<sup>17</sup> Paul uses these both to describe present forgiveness of sin and future deliverance of the body. This is an incredible truth for the believer. Harrison says, “No word in the Christian vocabulary deserves to be held more precious than Redeemer, for even more than Savior it reminds the child of God that his salvation has been purchased at a great and personal cost, for the Lord has given Himself for our sins in order to deliver us from them.”<sup>18</sup> This is critical to notice because one of the truths closely connected with redemption is forgiveness of sin. Thus as readers are following the line of thought that flows from the term justification, they should recognize that forgiveness of sin is mandatory in the declaration of righteousness. In order for man to be declared righteous in the courtroom scenario, he must be forgiven of and free from sin.

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15. Gal. 4:4, 5.

16. J.R. Williams, “Holiness,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 563.

17. John Murray, “Redeemer; Redemption,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 62.

18. Harrison, “Redeemer, Redemption,” 994-995.

## Forgiven

Forgiveness of sin is actually the first part of justification.<sup>19</sup> Quanbeck points out, “Forgiveness is primarily the act of God by which he graciously takes away the obstacles or barriers which separate man from His presence, thus opening the way to reconciliation and fellowship.”<sup>20</sup> Grider observes, “No book of religion except the Bible teaches that God completely forgives sin, but there it is frequently taught (in the Bible).”<sup>21</sup> Jesus paid the penalty of sin as Redeemer and offers forgiveness in the process. This reminds believers that atonement is part of God’s forgiveness. It highlights God’s love and righteousness simultaneously.

Colossians 1:13-14 connects forgiveness to redemption as Paul says, “He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves,<sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Here, Paul appears to be using the term ‘redemption’ and the phrase ‘forgiveness of sin’ synonymously. In Jesus, a person has been redeemed and thus sins have been forgiven. Jesus’ blood offered as a sacrifice for sin buys back the believer from bondage to sin. Ephesians 1:7 expresses the same exact truth. Here Paul says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.” It is hard not to notice the point that redemption is only found in Jesus. He is the Redeemer. In fact, 1 Corinthians 1:30 clearly states that Jesus is not only

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19. J.A. Faulkner, J. Murray, and G.W. Bromiley, “Justification,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 1169.

20. W.A. Quanbeck, “Forgiveness,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 314.

21. J.K. Grider, “Forgiveness,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 460.

Redeemer, but also a Christian's redemption. Redemption is clearly the result of Jesus' sacrifice and God's grace to offer that sacrifice. God's free will and choice redeems and forgives people.

Furthermore, when one realizes that Christ paid the penalty for sin "while we were still sinners,"<sup>22</sup> one is able to grasp their complete unworthiness to be forgiven. Suddenly the words of David ring true in the life of the believer: "How happy is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."<sup>23</sup> This offer of forgiveness from God through the sacrifice of Jesus is another key element to the believer being made right with God. The sin is an affront to God, yet He removes it through Christ and thus allows peace with God. It is noteworthy that justification and forgiveness are so similar in how they are expressed in Scripture. Paul preferred to use justification in the place of forgiveness. Morro suggests, "It was better fitted to express the idea of secure, present, and permanent acceptance in the sight of God."<sup>24</sup>

### Righteous

Jesus as Redeemer is a critical part to man being right with God. It is clear that people have a big problem as they stand in God's courtroom. The sin record against them prevents God from simply declaring them righteous. If He is to do so, He must deal with their sin. Through Jesus Christ and His redemption, believers are certain they are forgiven. This forgiveness is only one side of the coin though. Forgiveness appears to put man back to even par with God. He has avoided offending Him in sin, whether that be

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22. Rom. 5:8.

23. Ps. 32:1.

24. W.C. Morro, "Forgiveness," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 342.

through thought, word, or action, or lack of action as it may be. Is that what God expects of people? Does He merely want them to avoid sin? The answer is clearly no. He expects more. In Romans three, Paul moves so quickly that it is possible to miss God's true expectations. This explains how God can be just in declaring someone who is guilty as innocent. In order to do this, Jesus had to pay the price and be considered guilty. His death then gives life. On the other hand, believers live not only because of Jesus' death, but also because of His life. God expects perfect righteousness from man. Unfortunately, not even having our sins forgiven accomplishes this on behalf of Christians. In fact, there is only one person who has ever met this standard—Jesus.

A key part to understanding righteousness is that it is describing being right in a relationship with another. Jesus is perfectly right in His relationship with the Father. Joyfully, God considers Jesus' righteousness as our righteousness. Romans four helps to understand this transaction. Abraham becomes the central figure to understanding Paul's reasoning. Again, for the Jew this is of critical importance. It shows that Abraham was right with God and that his righteousness was not because of his own works. In verse three, Paul says, "For what does Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness." Abraham did the same thing God expects of all people: He believed God. Abraham responded to God in faith.

Again in verse five, God says, "But to the one who does not work, but believes on Him who declares righteous the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness." Here it is clear that Abraham is ungodly. His righteousness is not his own, but God's. His righteousness is then imputed to the person who is justified.<sup>25</sup> God's righteousness here

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25. Rom. 4:6.

speaks to God vindicating His name in fulfilling His contract.<sup>26</sup> For Abraham and for believers in today's society this is true. Interestingly, Paul immediately quotes Psalm 32 as a reference here. That psalm talks about forgiveness of sin rather than righteousness imputed. Apparently, Paul recognized that these two components were united. In Romans 5:18, it takes Jesus' righteous act to provide justification. Jesus is central to righteousness. Achtemeier declares that the New Testament never tires of making statements in which "Christ is designated the source of man's righteousness."<sup>27</sup> There is a sense in which it is clear that righteousness is subsumed by the concept of justification. When God declares a believer innocent through justification, this happens as a result of God imputing righteousness to the account of that person. Still, it is necessary to focus on a believer's righteousness as a result of being justified.

Romans 4 makes it clear that righteousness is Christ's and comes by faith in the final verses of the chapter. Paul says, "This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.'<sup>23</sup> The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone,<sup>24</sup> but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."<sup>28</sup> Scholars do well to assist readers in understanding what it means by righteousness by pointing out that the term is relational by nature. Righteousness is attributed when a person fulfills the requirements of a relationship. Achtemeier argues that righteousness is a term that describes one's

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26. Moo, "Romans," 130.

27. P.J. Achtemeier, "Righteousness in the NT," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 95.

28. Rom. 4:22-24.



relationship with another.<sup>29</sup> God established a covenant relationship with man, but man broke his part of the covenant. God was free from his side of the covenant to save man. Still, God chose to fulfill His side of the covenant and offered a way for man to be saved and return to a right relationship with Him.

Romans 5:19 becomes a powerful picture as to how God restored this relationship and allows men to be righteous if they come to Christ. There Paul says, “For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.” God has chosen to be faithful to offer men a way to be right with Him. He has accomplished this through His Son. Being righteous then is describing one's right relationship with God.

It is also clear that there is no true righteousness apart from a relationship with God.<sup>30</sup> Paul makes it clear that no one can be righteous by works of the law in Romans 3:20. God offers His righteousness to believing sinners as a gift.<sup>31</sup> By the death of Jesus, this relationship is restored and maintained. Now man can live in righteousness through Him. Nowhere is the critical nature of Jesus in regard to us being righteous more clearly seen than in 1 Corinthians 1:30. There Paul says Jesus is “our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” God, in His wisdom, sent Jesus to become man's righteousness. In order to do this, Jesus also became man's sin. Paul expresses this as clearly as possible in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” In Jesus, believers

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29. Achtemeier, “Righteousness in the NT,” 95.

30. Ibid, 92.

31. Rom. 3:24.

are declared to be righteous. Christians are now in a right relationship with God because of Him. The righteousness of the cross defeats death and reconciles to God.<sup>32</sup>

It is not just that they are forgiven. Forgiveness implies that God has forgiven the sins committed whether wrong acts, thoughts, words, or sins of omission where there was a failure to do the right thing. Righteousness affirms that not only have sins of commission been forgiven, but also believers have been deemed to perfectly fulfill the law in Christ. Again Achtemeier says, “Thus, because of Christ a man, despite his sin in failing to obey God and thus meet the demands of the relationship, can nevertheless share in the relationship and be righteous.”<sup>33</sup> Kelly says that “the righteousness of God is the whole of His salvation of people in Christ” according to Paul.<sup>34</sup> God justifies sinners on the basis of Jesus’ righteousness. Packer points out, “On the ground of Christ’s obedience, God imputes not sin but righteousness to sinners who believe.”<sup>35</sup> This is part of the glories that believers get to experience when they find identity in Christ. The certainty of this truth is seen in Romans 8:33. There God expresses that when He declares someone righteous, no one can disagree with Him.<sup>36</sup>

### Holy

It seems then that as God declares believers righteous in His courtroom, He also declares them to be holy. Holiness in the New Testament is a reality for all believers, not

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32. R.A. Kelly, “Righteousness,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 194.

33. Achtemeier, “Righteousness in the NT,” 95.

34. Kelly, “Righteousness,” 194.

35. J.I. Packer, “Justification,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 645.

36. Achtemeier, “Righteousness in the NT,” 93.

just for a select group.<sup>37</sup> It is the result of Jesus' work of redemption. This is the meaning of 1 Corinthians 1:30; that this is genuine internal truth for the believer. In Ephesians 1, Paul lays an incredible foundation for who the believer is in Christ. Early on, he says that God chooses all believers. This is unbelievable. Yet, he takes it to another level by saying that believers are chosen "to be holy and blameless in His sight."<sup>38</sup> Skevington Wood makes the point that this is not imputed righteousness but rather it means "to be set apart for God in order to reflect His purity."<sup>39</sup>

Paul then expresses the truth as to what makes believers holy. The answer is Jesus. First, Jesus makes the believer holy. Notice what Paul says in Ephesians 5:26, 27: He says that Jesus gave Himself up for the church "to make her holy, cleansing her in the washing of water by the word."<sup>27</sup> He did this to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless." In this analogy of marriage, Paul makes it clear that it is Jesus who makes believers holy in the sight of the Father. Marriage becomes a fitting example of what Paul is communicating. When a person gets married, he or she is set apart for their spouse alone. In the same way, Jesus sets apart the believer to be holy and that holiness is for Him alone. The only way for the church to attain the type of holiness that Jesus is describing here is through purification. It requires Jesus.

The description of this truth is beautifully described in Colossians 1:22. Paul says, "But now He has reconciled you by His physical body through His death, to present you

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37. Williams, "Holiness," 563.

38. Eph. 1:4.

39. Wood, "Ephesians."

holy, faultless, and blameless before Him.” When considering this statement, it is hard to miss who the believer was and who they are now.<sup>40</sup> Previously the unbeliever had declared war against God through his sin. Now that sinner is able to be presented to a perfectly holy God as holy.

Part of this discussion is to understand the process of sanctification. When a person places his or her trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, the result is holiness in Christ. Christ’s righteousness is credited to the account of the believer and thus the believer is described as holy, having perfectly met God’s standards in Christ. Second Corinthians 5:21 describes this transaction by saying, “He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” This verse describes an unbelievable transaction. Jesus takes up the ledger of the sins of the world. He becomes sin on behalf of man. On the other hand, His ledger is sinless. Still, it is not just that Jesus has avoided sin; he has done that and more. He has also perfectly fulfilled the standards of the Father. As such, with man’s sinful ledger removed, man receives His ledger. Believers have an official standing that declares them to have perfectly fulfilled the standards of the Father.

At this point, regardless of how the person lives, he or she is holy because of being in Christ. First Corinthians 1:30 points out that Jesus is the Christian’s holiness. This is true without having the possibility for exception for the believer. Still, Paul does have to remind the believers he is speaking to that they must live according to this description. Obviously, this points to a day when these two realities become one. In the presence of God, the believer will reach a new point in regard to sanctification. In that

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40. Curtis Vaughan, “Colossians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed. Frank E. Gaebel (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

moment, what the believer is positionally in Christ will be true practically as well. This explains how Paul can use the term holiness in a variety of ways as he writes to various churches. He describes the believer as holy. He then exhorts the believer to live as a person who is holy in Christ. Then in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 he says, “May He make your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. Amen.” God made them holy. God is making them holy. God will make them holy. All of this leads to the basic reality that the believer is now right with God.

Paul uses this description as a basic description of believers, without any hesitation. At times, believers may be hesitant to call all believers in the church holy, but Paul does not have this problem because he knows that anyone who is in Christ is described this way. So in the NIV translation of Colossians 1:2, he writes to the believers in Colossae by calling them the “holy and faithful.” Paul frequently calls people holy. This is perhaps most notable with the church of Corinth. In addressing this letter to them, he declares them to be saints or holy ones.<sup>41</sup> He repeats this again in 3:17. Of course, readers of this letter would say that this church sounds anything but holy. That is a clear point that Paul is “asserting that these people are holy by virtue of their call” by God.<sup>42</sup> Another such proof is in 1 Corinthians 6:11. The fact that Paul places ‘sanctified’ before ‘justified’ “can only mean a positional holiness, something that was granted concurrently with justification but given prior mention because of the context.”<sup>43</sup> Finally, in 1

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41. 1 Cor. 1:2.

42. Everett F. Harrison, “Holiness; Holy” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 727.

43. Ibid.

Corinthians 1:1 Paul's position as a called apostle is parallel to the church's position as saints.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, one of the hallmarks of much of Paul's teaching in this area is that it is not a free pass for ungodly living; instead, Paul uses the believer's position in Christ as a motivation for how the person should live. Because a believer is deemed holy by God Paul does not excuse sinful behavior. Instead, he exhorts believers to live as God sees them. In Ephesians 5:3, he says, "But sexual immorality and any impurity or greed should not even be heard of among you, as is proper for saints." The Ephesians are God's holy people. They should live as such. To live as holy means to avoid sin, in this case, sexual immorality, greed, and any other kind of impurity. It then becomes critical for the believer to remember that God's holy people are not some special class of believer. Instead, it describes anyone who is in Christ. The point is that believers should live as if what God says about them is true because it is.

#### Blameless

With sin out of the way, the Bible says the believer will be presented as blameless to God. First Corinthians 1:8 says, "He will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." In the fight against sin, no more comforting words could be offered. In the previous chapter some of the details about the Corinthian church were revealed. This was not a church in a high time. They were in need of a revival of holiness. Yet, even with all of their failures, Paul could confidently express to them the truth that Christ would present them as blameless before the Father. This new identity in Christ could not be more exciting and comforting. Believers are right with God and He will carry them blamelessly until they meet the Savior face to face.

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44. Ibid.

### Application

These theological truths have practical implications in believers' lives. Romans five speaks to some of the benefits of justification. This is important because it communicates the reality that believers are right with God. The first result of being justified is that believers have peace with God.<sup>45</sup> This describes a general state of harmony that the believer experiences in relation to God due to being justified.<sup>46</sup>

The second thing that Paul says about the believer who is justified is that they have access into the grace in which believers live.<sup>47</sup> What this simply means is that God continues to give grace after the believer is saved and thus they continually live in this grace as a result of being justified. This is an incredible truth to the believer.

Finally, believers who are justified rejoice in the hope they now have.<sup>48</sup> The believer lives in hope because of what God has done for them in Christ. The believer lives with a certainty of hope and thus lives in hope as a result of being justified. The bottom line is that the believer has been justified in Christ. God has declared the believer to be righteous in His sight in Christ. This is a life changing experience for the believer.

As a pastor, the truth of being right with God probably goes without much thought. It is a given. There is a great danger in that reality. The pastor should work hard in ministry just as Paul did. He points out that he had received great grace in being called. Yet, he points out that God's grace was not in vain.<sup>49</sup> The key for the pastor is

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45. Rom. 5:1.

46. Moo, "Romans," 169.

47. Rom. 5:2.

48. Rom. 5:3-5.

49. 1 Cor. 15:10.

knowing that he is not striving to make God happy with him. Instead, he must live out of the reality that God is pleased with him. In Christ, he is right with God and he serves out of the joy of being accepted in the Son. He should live out of knowing the Father loves him, accepts him, and considers his righteous.<sup>50</sup>

Pastors will always be tempted to work out of their own strength. They will think that if they can do a little better, that they will be more pleasing to God. If they are not careful, they will convince themselves, perhaps unconsciously, that it is more about what they do and not what God has done. The truth of justification and its associated truths serve as great reminders that God is the one who has done great things. Manning says, “How difficult it is to be honest, to accept that I am unacceptable, to renounce self-justification, to give up the pretense that my prayers, spiritual insight, tithing, and successes in ministry have made me pleasing to God!”<sup>51</sup> It is clear that God has chosen to make believers right with Him in Christ. He offered man a way when man did not deserve one. Paul seems to barely be able to mention these truths without putting a spotlight on God.

How can pastors make sure that they allow that spotlight to shine brightly in their lives? Pastors would be wise ministers if they regularly review the truths of how they were made right with God. Rich times of praise are waiting as pastors rejoice in God as a result of these truths. The reality that God has chosen to declare sinners right with Himself and then follow through to make that a reality should bolster a believer’s view of himself or herself. While it is not about mankind, men and women might go farther

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50. Robert S. McGee, *The Search for Significance* (Nashville: W, 2003), 202.

51. Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, 83.



making it much about God if they saw in the mirror someone that has been made right with God at the cost of His Son. God is communicating a value that should not be ignored.

If God has chosen to declare His enemies and blatant sinners right with Him through Jesus, that should impact living in the here and now. If God has chosen to look at sinners and see them as righteous in Jesus, the natural (or supernatural) response should be to begin living as God sees His children. In a following chapter, God's work in the lives of believers in the now will be explored. There is also a clear confidence that God will complete this work in His children at the end. Still, changes should be seen in the lives of those whom God has made righteous.

One of the foundational requirements for this to impact lives is for a believer to have a realistic view of self and God. Isaiah and Peter both encountered the living God and recognized that they fell far short. Yet, in both cases, God did what was necessary for them to live in fellowship with Him. Manning points out, "Living by grace inspires a growing consciousness that I am what I am in the sight of Jesus and nothing more. It is His approval that counts."<sup>52</sup> Anderson agrees when he says, "Your understanding of who God is and who you are in relationship to Him is the critical foundation for your belief system and your behavior patterns as a Christian."<sup>53</sup> These truths do not just change how pastors see themselves, they also impact how they relate to others. In Titus 2:14, Paul told Titus that Jesus redeemed people in order to create a people "eager to do good works." This is a clear truth that the person who is right with God will live like it. They will show

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52. Ibid., 149.

53. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness*, 24.

the fruit of this truth by doing what is good.

One such way to do what is good is by forgiving others. In Colossians 3:13, Paul says, “accepting one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must [forgive].” It is clear that there is a certain way a forgiven person lives. They live out of gratitude recognizing the debt that has been expunged.<sup>54</sup> This is seen specifically in the lives of those who have wronged them. They are quick to forgive because they see clearly their great need for forgiveness and the cost that it took to grant it. Believers also need to make sure they receive God’s forgiveness. Manning warns, “When we wallow in guilt, remorse, and shame over real or imagined sins of the past we are disdaining God’s gift of grace.”<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, it is clear that any person who receives this gift of righteousness then pursues righteousness.<sup>56</sup> Romans 6:13 presents another clear imperative about how righteous people live. Paul says, “And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness.” It is no surprise that righteous people live in a righteous manner. He commands them to offer themselves to righteousness.

He continues this thought process in verses 18 and 19 when he says, “and having been liberated from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness.<sup>19</sup> I am using a human analogy because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you offered the parts of

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54. Rom. 4:7.

55. Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, 114.

56. D.W. Diehl, “Righteousness, Original,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 1034.

yourselves as slaves to moral impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification.” Note here that the result is holiness, which appears to be closely connected to righteousness in God’s act of justification.

Romans 8:3 and 4 express a crucial point: “What the law could not do since it was limited by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours under sin's domain, and as a sin offering,<sup>4</sup> in order that the law's requirement would be accomplished in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” If Jesus came to condemn sin, then this practice of condemning sin and living by the Spirit should be the truth of the life of one who is right with God.

Being right with God is part of being a new creation. Putting this new self on in daily living is an expectation of Paul’s for the person who is right with God. Ephesians 4:22-24 says, “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;<sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds;<sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” It is no wonder that Paul could speak like he did in Philippians 3:8-10:

What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ<sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.<sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

Being right with God will change a person’s perspective and life direction. It certainly did that for Paul and it is likely one of the reasons he stayed faithful to this new direction to the very end.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR BELONGING TO GOD

God's work in Paul's life and the life of every believer does not end in the courtroom of justification and its associated realities. If it did, one could think of salvation as a relationship between David and his son Absalom. Absalom killed his brother after he slept with their sister, Tamar. As a result of the cry for justice in response to murder, Absalom fled the kingdom. After three years, David consents to having Absalom brought back. The reunion is not what it could be though. Note David's words, "However, the king added, 'He may return to his house, but he may not see my face.' So Absalom returned to his house, but he did not see the king."<sup>1</sup> It is likely that many people view salvation in this way. God brings the believer back to Himself, but that is it: there is a limit to the intimacy a person can have with Him.

It would be totally just if God were to recreate a relationship like this for people. Joyfully, He does not do that. Instead, He invites all into a relationship with Him that is beyond imagination. The concepts that help to understand this relationship can be placed under the heading belonging to God. That has great meaning for the believer and especially the pastor.

#### **Belonging to God**

At times, Paul clearly states that believers belong to God. Declaring that "I am

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<sup>1, 2</sup> Sam. 14:24.

His” is a powerful statement of meaning and value for the believer. Paul understood this. At the very foundation of Paul’s being, he was God’s possession. This is the foundation of Christian pastoral identity.<sup>2</sup> The ultimate statement of the value of a believer comes through the truth of belonging to God. Certainly, there is a sense in which this is true for all people. No one can avoid accountability to God. On the other hand, there is more to the story in Christ. Anderson observes the importance of this truth when he says, “The only identity equation that works in God’s kingdom is you plus Christ equals wholeness and meaning.”<sup>3</sup>

This truth is so simple and certain that Paul can declare it to the church at Rome as a simple greeting. He says, “And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup> The other language that Paul uses in describing what it means to belong to God makes a clear connection to the components of justification previously discussed. In Christ, a believer has died. In that death a change takes place that makes the believer property of a new owner. Romans 7:4 says, “Therefore, my brothers, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the [crucified] body of the Messiah, so that you may belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead—that we may bear fruit for God.” Death brings freedom in this case. There is no way for a person to belong to Christ unless something happens to free him or her. Belonging to God means participating in Jesus’ death and resurrection for every believer.<sup>5</sup>

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2. Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 29.

3. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness*, 26.

4. Rom. 1:6 (NIV).

5. Harrison, “Romans.”

This change is so profound that it changes everything about a person's life. In Romans 14:8, Paul explains this by saying, "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." In life or death, a believer now belongs to God. Paul makes it clear to the church at Corinth that they belong to God. This is likely especially poignant for this church because of some of the issues they faced. There were some elements of ungodliness in the church. There seemed to be an attitude that excluded them from accountability to God. Paul wanted this church to understand the reality that it belongs to God. While this truth places a value upon the believer, it once again calls for a motivation in regard to how Christians live.

In 1 Corinthians 3 he begins this discussion revealing this truth in the midst of addressing one of the biggest issues of ungodliness in this church. They are bickering with one another about their favorite Christian leaders. You can almost hear their arguments: "Paul is fine, but Apollos, he is the best!" "No, no. You have it backwards. Paul is clearly the greatest teacher." They are missing the point completely. Paul has to address this issue throughout the early chapters of this letter. In verses 22 and 23, he addresses it in this way: "whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come—all are yours,<sup>23</sup> and you belong to Christ, and Christ to God." Everything is theirs since they are in Christ and all belongs to Him. There is no reason for Christians to fight. No Christian has something that another does not. All believers have everything. Still, Paul reminds his readers that God is the one who is ultimately over all. Believers belong to Him.

The key point in this discussion is that to belong to Christ means to belong to God. The Corinthians were missing the mark completely. They were arguing about their

favorite teachers when they could have been rejoicing that they were God's. Imagine God talking like the Corinthians for a moment. Imagine God saying, "That one is mine." He does just that but in reference to each believer.

In 1 Corinthians 6, he again mentions this truth as Paul is discussing another issue within the Corinthian church. There was unholiness in the church in the form of sexual immorality. Apparently, the church did not get it. They did not see this as an issue. As Paul addresses this issue, he says, "Do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,<sup>20</sup> for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body."<sup>6</sup> As Paul addresses this issue, he reveals this incredible truth: "You are not your own." Who do the Corinthians belong to? The answer is God. They were bought at a price. That price is the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is the price of redemption. Since, God paid the price for believers; all believers now belong to Him.

Once again, this truth about identity in Christ is actually a motivation for righteous living. "Honor God with your bodies," Paul says. His reasoning is simply that these Corinthians were bought with a price. As a result they were not their own. Now they belong to God. Thus, believers should live as if they belong to God. One application of this truth is that they should honor God with their bodies.

#### In Christ

Part of the profound nature of this new relationship with God is that believers now share a unique union with Christ. In Christ (and similar statements) are among the most

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6. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

important in Paul's theology.<sup>7</sup> Wayne Grudem explains this well in comments he makes about Ephesians 1:4. That verse tells Christians that God chose them in Christ. God did this choosing even before He founded the world:

Since we do not exist before the foundation of the world, these verses indicate that God, looking into the future and knowing that we would exist, thought of us being in a special relationship with Christ. He did not first choose us and later decide to relate us to Christ. Rather, while choosing us, he at the same time thought about us as belonging to Christ in a special way, as being 'in Christ'. Therefore, he thought about us as eventually having the right to share in the blessings of Christ's work.<sup>8</sup>

To be in Christ means to be incorporated in him so that he encompasses the entire life of the believer. The union is exclusive as Christians are joined to Him and no other resulting in Him determining the behavior of those joined to Him.<sup>9</sup> The union is also inseparable as being in Christ means that a person is connected to Christ as closely as limbs are joined to their physical bodies.<sup>10</sup> The language of being in Christ is very common in Paul's writing. Forty times in the book of Ephesians references are made to being 'in Christ' or 'Christ being in us'.<sup>11</sup> Anderson says that readers can find references ten to one about being in Christ as opposed to Christ being in the believer.<sup>12</sup>

Believers were present with Christ in God's thoughts through everything that Christ experienced. In Romans 6:6, it is clear that God thought of Christians as having died when Christ died. This verse suggests that believers are "grown together" or "fused

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7. Snodgrass, "Ephesians," 38.

8. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 841.

9. Garland, "Colossians," 219.

10. Ibid.

11. Anderson, *Who I am in Christ*, 68.

12. Ibid.



into one” with Christ.<sup>13</sup> Second Corinthians 5:14 expresses this same truth. Fortunately, God also thought of believes as having not only died and being buried, but also being raised, and taken up to heaven with Jesus. These truths are seen in Ephesians 2:6 and Colossians 2:12 and 13. Ephesians 2:6 is suggesting that to be saved is to be joined to the Savior. Being raised and seated are merely being in Christ.

### Christ in Paul

To be a Christian means that Christ is on the inside. In Romans 8:9 and 10, Paul says, “You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God lives in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.<sup>10</sup> Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” In one of the most profound statements Paul makes about his life in Christ, he states that Christ lives inside of Him. Galatians 2:19 and 20 quotes Paul as saying, “I have been crucified with Christ;<sup>20</sup> and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Paul understands the transformation that has occurred in his life. He expresses it simply by saying, “I no longer live.”

What has happened to Paul? Jesus has now taken up residence in Paul’s life. Paul belongs to God. This truth is revealed in that Jesus now lives inside of Paul. He lives through the presence of Christ in him. Being such united with Christ is to say that “all the experiences of Christ become the Christian’s experiences.”<sup>14</sup> Paul uses the perfect tense in this verse, which suggests that something that has happened in the past continues to

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13. Harrison, “Romans.”

14. James Montgomery Boice, “Galatians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).

impact the present. This clearly is a statement that defines Paul throughout this life.

Colossians 3:3 presents this reality in a different way. There Paul writes, “For you have died, and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God.” The same truth of death is presented here to the Colossians. Where is the life of the believer who has died in coming to Christ? His life is hidden with Christ in God. The believer is His. Earlier in this letter, Paul said, “God wanted to make known to those among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”<sup>15</sup> This is one of the key truths about God living inside the believer. It is a guarantee or a down payment of what will be. It should give the believer certainty in his or her walk with God. The hope of glory is that Christ has already taken up residence in the believer. When the believer comes to Christ, he or she will never be apart from Christ again for all eternity. The fact that Christ dwells in the believer gives certainty of salvation.

#### His Spirit in Paul

This is the exact point that is made as Paul describes the reality of the Holy Spirit living inside the believer. He expresses this truth in Ephesians 1:13 and 14 when he says, “In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—in Him when you believed—were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.”<sup>14</sup> He is the down payment of our inheritance, for the redemption of the possession, to the praise of His glory.” Not only does the believer never live apart from Christ, but the truth of God living inside the believer at the moment of conversion is expressed through the Holy Spirit’s living in the believer. The Holy Spirit is a seal of the promised inheritance that will be. He makes it clear: such that have the Holy Spirit are God’s possession.

Paul returns to this thought in Ephesians 2:22. In this verse though, Paul is

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<sup>15</sup>. Col. 1:27.

speaking to the Holy Spirit living corporately in believers. There he says, “in whom you also are being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.” The church is spoken of here. The presence of the Holy Spirit lives inside believers individually and corporately to show that they belong to God. Romans eight uses this truth as a great reality on who the believer is in Christ. In verse nine he says, “You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God lives in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” It is clear that believers belong to God. Those who do not have the Spirit are not believers. Thus, they do not belong to God. Then, in verse 11 he returns to this theme saying, “And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through His Spirit who lives in you.” Those who belong to God have the Spirit living inside them. That means that the very power of He who raised Jesus from the dead lives inside those who belong to God.

Paul expresses this same truth in 1 Corinthians 3:16 when he says, “Don't you know that you are God's sanctuary and that the Spirit of God lives in you?” Paul makes it clear that believers belong to God. They are His temple, His dwelling place. His Spirit dwells in His followers. This is a great reality that displays that believers belong to God.

### Saints

When believers begin to grasp the fullness of these truths, it may not be as surprising that the Bible calls believers ‘saints’. This topic has already been discussed to some extent by exploring what it means for to be holy in the previous chapter, but requires further examination. Saints literally means “holy ones.” In Romans 1:7, Paul

makes the point that God set them apart to be His own people.<sup>16</sup> In 2 Corinthians when Paul talks about this concept, he points out that believers are set apart as belonging to God.<sup>17</sup> The focus is on God's work and it points to God's saving of these believers. Believers are saints through union with Christ.<sup>18</sup>

Paul begins most of his letters by expressing this truth. This is Paul's normal description for Christians.<sup>19</sup> It is the name for believers.<sup>20</sup> This is interesting because this is not a term that most Christians would use to describe themselves. Believers need to recognize what Paul is saying. Holiness in this context does not describe condition, but "it carries the aroma of holiness to which every child of God is called."<sup>21</sup> That is why Paul could use the term so easily. He describes believers with this term in Romans 1:7, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, and Philippians 1:1. These introductory statements of description confirm that this term is not one that is only applied to some sort of super believer. The verses are clearly describing all believers in Christ. It is not the believer that does something to fit the description of a believer. It is God who makes someone a saint. It is simply part of belonging to God.

### Slaves

In light of being God's possession, one must ask what exactly this relationship means. God has set the believer apart for Himself. What does that relationship look like?

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16. Moo, "Romans," 38.

17. Hafemann, "2 Corinthians," 46.

18. Kent, Jr., "Philippians."

19. Snodgrass, "Ephesians," 37.

20. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness*, 48.

21. Harrison, "Romans."

It is clear that one description of a Christian would be that of slave, which is a declaration of God's ownership of Paul. In Galatians 6:17, Paul exclaimed, "From now on, let no one cause me trouble, because I carry the marks of Jesus on my body." Leonard Ravenhill points out that if there is one thing to be certain of as a result of this verse it is that it is "an acknowledgment of Christ's ownership."<sup>22</sup>

John MacArthur claims that this one term is used more than any other to describe Christians.<sup>23</sup> In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul uses this truth one more time in his letter to the church at Corinth. This time he is discussing marriage, but he refers to the image of slavery in this discussion. In verses 22 and 23 he says, "For he who is called by the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called as a free man is Christ's slave."<sup>23</sup> You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men." He makes the point that the person who comes to Christ is now Christ's slave. His point could be missed if one immediately goes to verses like Jesus saying that His followers are no longer slaves but friends.<sup>24</sup> Instead, Paul explains himself in verse 23. His point is the same as in chapter six. God bought all believers at a price. You now belong to Him. What should the Corinthians now do as a result of that truth? In chapter six they were told they should honor God with their bodies. Now, with the same reasoning, Paul says they should not become slaves to men. They should remain in the situation in which they were in when they called.

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22. Leonard Ravenhill, *Why Revival Tarries* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1987), 123.

23. John MacArthur, *Slave: The Hidden Truth About Your Identity in Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 12.

24. John 15:5.

Perhaps, one might suggest that slave is too strong a word. In 1 Corinthians 4:1, Paul uses a word for servant when he says, “A person should consider us in this way: as servants of Christ and managers of God's mysteries.” Otherwise, MacArthur points out that there are six words for servant; however, ‘doulos’ is frequently used when speaking of Christians. He argues that whenever it is used in or out of the Bible it is always used as slave.<sup>25</sup> There is no sense in shying away from this term. Being a slave is only part of the story, but it is a privilege nonetheless. Anderson points out that being a servant of Christ actually provides a sense of belonging.<sup>26</sup> Belonging is a critical need for people and those who follow Christ belong to Him as willing slaves.

### Sons

Since ‘slave’ appears to be a badge of honor for Paul, it seems that it would be acceptable if Christians were in relationship to God as slaves. It is notable that he never grew tired of calling himself by this title, implying that it is a privileged position.<sup>27</sup> Incredibly, God does far more than that. God does not leave His followers as slaves, but rather calls them His children. Identity in Christ could not be more defined than it is in the word ‘son’. Considering Paul’s clear description of life before Christ, the idea of sonship is even more incredible. Paul makes it clear that before Christ all people are enemies of God. Yet, he is just as quick to describe the change that occurs in the life of the one that is now found in Christ.

Interestingly, the Bible describes God’s children in two ways. One, some verses

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25. MacArthur, *Slave*, 16.

26. Anderson, *Who I am in Christ*, 58.

27. F.B. Meyer, *Paul* (Fort Washington: CLC, 2002), 80.

in the Bible explain that believers are born of God.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, it is clear in the verses below that believers have been adopted. Grudem points out, “Adoption is an act of God whereby he makes us members of His family.”<sup>29</sup>

In Romans eight, Paul describes one of the hallmarks of the believer. He says that if one is led by God’s Spirit, it is affirmation that he is actually God’s son.<sup>30</sup> Then in verse fifteen he says, “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’.” The word ‘Abba’ is an intimate a term for God coming from the Aramaic term for ‘father’.<sup>31</sup> Again he makes the point in verse 16 that the Spirit testifies that believers are God’s children. Jews would not have practiced adoption, but the culture around them would have. They would have understood that adoption implied all the rights and privileges of being a birth child.<sup>32</sup>

Like justification, adoption does not need to be repeated. It is a once and for all declaration.<sup>33</sup> In referring to this event in his writings, Paul would call believers children and sons. ‘Children’ points to what happens when a person is regenerated. ‘Sons’ points to the legal standing of believers.<sup>34</sup> In Romans 8 (and in Galatians), it is clear that the Spirit plays a critical role in recognizing son-ship. The Spirit gives assurance that

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28. See 1 John 3:9.

29. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 736.

30. Rom. 8:14.

31. MacArthur, *Slave*, 159.

32. Moo, “Romans,” 260.

33. Harrison, “Romans.”

34. Ibid.

believers are God's children. He is the one who "creates in the children of God the filial love and confidence by which they are able to cry, 'Abba, Father'."<sup>35</sup>

At times, people seem to present that God is the Father of all people. This language is foreign to the Bible. It is clear in this discussion that this relationship with God is much more than just a general sense in which God is the Father of all. It describes an intimate relationship with God as Father. Paul makes a similar point in the book of Galatians. This discussion begins in chapter three verses 26 and 27: "for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."<sup>27</sup> For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ like a garment." He makes it completely clear that these Galatian believers became sons of God through their faith in Christ. He continues this discussion in chapter four. In verses three through five, he says, "In the same way we also, when we were children, were in slavery under the elemental forces of the world."<sup>4</sup> But when the completion of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

Believers then become sons through the freedom that comes in Christ. In verses 6 and 7, he writes in a very similar manner to his discussion in Romans 8. There he says, "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father!'"<sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." So believers are no longer slaves, but sons; and since they are sons, God has made them heirs." Again, the Spirit is the affirmation of son-ship. This is also a reminder of the incredible change that comes in Christ. Through faith in Christ, one moves from slave to son.

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35. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 296.



Most if not all areas of identity in Christ produce not only a one-time truth, but also a change thereafter. Being children of God is no exception. In Ephesians 5:8, Paul is reminding believers of the change that has occurred in their lives. He says, “For you were once darkness, but now [you are] light in the Lord. walk as children of light.” Now being light in the Lord, Paul exhorts them to live as children as light. That is what they now are in Christ. They merely need to be what they are in Christ.

Paul offers a similar exhortation in Philippians 2:14 and 15. There he says, “Do everything without grumbling and arguing,<sup>15</sup> so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world.” They already are children of God. Paul merely exhorts them to act like it. The church of Thessalonica receives the same exhortation. Paul instructs them to be what they are. In chapter five verse five, he writes, “For you are all sons of light and sons of the day. We're not of the night or of darkness.”

Adoption is also something that is waiting to be completely fulfilled until the future. Romans 8:23 makes this clear. Paul points out that adoption is a past event in the sense that we have been delivered from our past. It is also a present status and way of life as well as a future hope.<sup>36</sup> All believers are awaiting the final and full realization of adoption when this life is over. What would possibly motivate God to turn enemies into children? Why would he turn from judge in the courtroom of justification to adopted Father of a guilty sinner? Ephesians 1:5 explains the reason believers have been adopted

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36. P.H. Davids, “Adoption,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 26.

by God. The simple answer is God's love. Davids explains, "Adoption is a free grant to undeserving people solely from God's grace."<sup>37</sup>

Identity in Christ, in the two components that have been described, being right with God and belonging to God finds a connection here. Not only is the person declared to be innocent. He or she is also given the status of a righteous man as an adopted child of God.<sup>38</sup> This is another glorious truth for the Christian that is part of what it means to belong to God.

### Loved and Chosen

God is motivated by love to act in such a way towards people who are at odds with Him. God also adopts children by His choice. He does not have to. He makes the purposed decision to do so. The truth that a Christian is chosen by God is an incredible source of value for the follower of Christ. Paul is able to express the believer's identity in Christ in the most simplistic of terms as well.

He makes a point to say to the church of Thessalonica that they are "loved by God." He makes this statement to them in both of his writings to them.<sup>39</sup> The nature of the word 'loved' in 1 Thessalonians 1:4 points to the fact that it is fixed or established.<sup>40</sup> Paul spoke to the Thessalonians this way often. So, it is clear that he is not just being sentimental. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, He reminds them of this truth to reassure them of

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37. Ibid., 25.

38. Packer, "Justification," 644.

39. 1 Thes. 1:4 and 2 Thes. 2:13.

40. Rober L. Thomas, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

their relationship with God in the face of attacks and persecution.<sup>41</sup> He expresses the same truth in his letter to the Romans in 1:7. In both of these statements, he includes the description that they are loved, but also chosen. Murray gives life to this greeting to the Romans. He says this phrase points to intimacy and tenderness. Specifically, it is the “embrace of His people in the bosom of His affection.”<sup>42</sup>

He expresses this truth again to the Ephesians. In 1:4, he writes, “for He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love.” Ephesians 1:11 continues this thought when Paul says, “In Him we were also made His inheritance, predestined according to the purpose of the One who works out everything in agreement with the decision of His will.” Paul clearly wants the Ephesians to know that God has chosen them. It provides such a source of meaning for the believer to know that God has acted towards them in this way.

In Colossians 3:12, Paul uses this truth as a motivation for how the Colossians should live. It is notable that in the midst of admonishing them, Paul reminds them of their identity in Christ.<sup>43</sup> He says, “Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.” Here is a reminder that God has freely chosen, it is not on the basis of merit. God's love speaks to the value of those who know Him. Yet, verses like the one above serve as great reminders that this is for the benefit of the world, not just believers.<sup>44</sup>

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41. Michael W. Holmes, “1 and 2 Thessalonians,” in *The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 252.

42. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 15.

43. Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 164.

44. Garland, “Colossians,” 209.

The implication of being chosen by God is profound. Paul uses this reality in Romans 8:33 majestically. He says, “Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the One who justifies.” No one can even bring a charge against the one God has chosen. They would have to deal with God to do so. He calls for similar motivation for life action based upon the reality that a Christian is loved by God. In Ephesians 5:1, he encourages them to imitate God because they are dearly loved by God. Being chosen should result in praise to God. It is about Him, not people. This verse points back to the great idea of adoption. The Spirit in the believer moves them to call God “Abba, Father.” If that is true, the believer will also imitate the God who loves them.

Since there are only two ways to become someone’s child it is important to consider a motivation for adoption. God does not have to adopt anyone as a believer, He chooses to. One explanation for why is that He loves people. Who was Paul and who is every believer in Christ? First and foremost he was loved by God. He says that the believers in Rome are “loved by God.”<sup>45</sup> The truth is simple: “I am loveable only because He loves me.”<sup>46</sup> This is a source of identity for the believer based upon God’s response to them.

So many believers struggle with the truth about how God describes them. Despite the words of Scripture, believers seem to question God’s love. Jones points out, “Mature faith is about allowing myself to be object of God’s delight.”<sup>47</sup> For Paul, “the love that had broken and captured his rebellious heart on the Damascus highway continued to hold

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45. Rom. 1:7.

46. Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, 83.

47. Alan Jones, *Soul-Making: The Desert Way of Spirituality* ( New York: Harper, 1985), 145.

him in willing vassalage until he met his Lord again in glory. It was this that unnerved him for the incredible trials, sufferings, and privations that were his lot.”<sup>48</sup>

### **Relocated in Christ**

When you take in this conversation, it is not surprising that Paul also tells the believers that they have been relocated in Christ. Believers, who have a new Father and a new family of fellow believers, also have a new home. They are not just residents on earth now that they are found in Christ. In Ephesians 2:6, Paul says “He also raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavens, in Christ Jesus.” As part of transforming the believer, Paul expresses this concept of relocating the believer. This verse gives assurance of glory at the end of the age but also points to a present realization of resurrection life for the Christian.

Paul connects the believer’s experience to what Christ has accomplished. Jesus was raised from the dead. In the same way, the believer has been raised up with Christ. After forty days, Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father. In the same way, the believer is seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. Wood says, “Not only do they anticipate and assure resurrection and glorification at the end of the age; they are matched by a present realization of the risen life in Christ and of participation with him in his ascended majesty.”<sup>49</sup> This raised life is experienced now and is assured in its fullness in the future.

In this same chapter Paul expresses this truth in a different conversation. He has been communicating about the relationship of Jews and Gentiles. He has pointed out the

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48. Sanders, *Dynamic Spiritual Leadership*, 39-40.

49. Wood, “Ephesians.”

division that stood between them; nevertheless, Christ has not only brought peace between man and God, but also between man and man. Thus, the two who were once divided are now one in Christ. In order to communicate this truth, he says, “So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household.”<sup>50</sup> These words are spoken to Gentile believers. He describes the change that has occurred in their lives by saying they once were foreigners and strangers, but they are not anymore. He now describes them as fellow citizens with the Jews. To bring this point of unity home, he says they are all, who are believers, members of God’s household. Simply put, they are now family. It is likely that any Jew or Gentile in Paul’s day would have understood the radical transformation that He was describing. This reality only drives the point home. These who were once at odds are now in the same family. This is a work of God. They have been relocated. They now reside in God’s household as one family.

Paul expresses this same concept in his writing to the Philippians. In chapter three, Paul is encouraging the believers in Philippi to follow his example in following Christ. He warns them though that this will be extremely challenging. This is primarily challenging because not everyone is going to be going the same direction. In fact, the Philippians will have to go against the grain in order to follow Christ. As they seek Christ, they will experience hardship from what Paul describes as “enemies of the cross.”<sup>51</sup> Paul describes these enemies in a variety of ways, but his final statement about this offers a great contrast to the believer. He says in verse 19 of chapter 3 that “they are

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50. Eph. 2:19.

51. Phil. 3:18.

focused earthly things.” They are solely concerned about what they see around them from an earthly perspective.

On the other hand, Paul says about believers: “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>52</sup> In contrast to those who are only concerned about earthly things, the believer recognizes they have a new citizenship. They cannot be tied into earthly things because this is not even their true home.

Paul also expresses this concept to the church in Colossae. Early on in his letter to them, he briefly mentions the transformation that has come in Christ. In 1:13 he says, “He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves.” It is possible that this verse does the most to express the radical relocation that has occurred in those who have trusted Christ. They have been relocated from the kingdom of Satan to God’s kingdom through Christ.

In Colossians 3:1, Paul picks up on this relocation again. Here he says, “So if you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God.” Paul speaks clearly here as he tells these believers “you have been raised.” This is something Christ accomplishes. It has occurred. What should they do now? Now they should live as if they have been raised. They should set their attention and focus on what matters from the perspective of their home and their king, not the world. This relocation is a reminder to the believer of the change that has occurred in them and thus it should motivate them in terms of how they live every day until they make it home. Since believers are in Christ, they already belong to the world above. Christians should give such things a clear priority in their thought life.

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52. Phil. 3:20.

These are incredible realities. Christ earned all the blessings of salvation for His followers and they are considered to be in possession as believers wait for them to be applied to personally in heaven.<sup>53</sup> This truth should change how believers live in the here and now live and will be explored more below. One might suggest that this cannot be true because there is still a judgment that awaits. As a result of justification, the believer has already passed through judgment. As such, there is a real sense in which the person is experiencing heaven on earth now.<sup>54</sup> This is just part of belonging to God.

### Heirs

It is pretty easy to move from this relocation to the concept of the believer as an heir. Paul can barely describe believers as sons without also mentioning that believers are heirs. ‘Heir’ reminds believers about adoption. An adopted child was guaranteed all the benefits of a natural child.<sup>55</sup> Titus 3:7 says so that, “so that having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs with the hope of eternal life.” In Galatians four, Paul says, “So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.”<sup>56</sup> Then in Romans eight, “and if children, also heirs —heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ— seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”<sup>57</sup> Christians are “heirs of the inheritance which God himself has laid up for them.”<sup>58</sup>

What is this inheritance? Craston says, “It is the Kingdom of God with all its

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53. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 842.

54. Packer, “Justification,” 644.

55. Moo, “Romans,” 260.

56. Gal. 4:7.

57. Rom. 8:17.

58. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 298.



blessings.”<sup>59</sup> Like adoption, inheritance is a current benefit and experience, but it will be fully experienced in the future. Believers get to live with the reality that they are rich in God. It would be like a poor person suddenly discovering he or she has been left a hefty inheritance. They might be tempted to continue living like they had no resources. They would have to understand the fullness of what has happened in their lives and the difference it makes day to day.

### **Application**

While it is clear that these truths are critical for the believer, how do they specifically speak to the pastor? The first thought would be in regard to how the pastor views himself in relation to ministry. Every pastor wants to see success in his or her ministry. He or she should pray and work in such a way that God would bear fruit through their labor. Certainly Paul worked hard as an example for other ministry leaders to follow. He pointed out that he had received great grace in being called. Yet, he points out that God’s grace was not in vain.<sup>60</sup> Paul clearly wanted to work hard and maximize God’s grace in saving Him, calling Him, and sustaining Him day to day. Every pastor should do this.

The key for the pastor is knowing that he is not striving to make God happy with him. The desire for success cannot be a journey to make an unhappy God pleased with a laborer. Instead, he must live out of the reality that God is pleased with him.

Merriweather says, “Our Maker has a beautiful image of who He wants us to be, and all

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59. R.C. Craston, “Inheritance,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 608.

60. 1 Cor. 15:10.

we need to do is look.”<sup>61</sup> In Christ, the pastor is right with God and he serves out of the joy of being accepted in the Son. As a believer, the pastor has already been ushered into the family of God with all of its fullness guaranteed.

Apparent ministry success can numb a pastor in this vain search. He or she could be blinded by what is really driving their ministry. On the other hand, dry times in ministry have a profound impact on the self-observation of the pastor. In reality, whether times are good or bad, successes in ministry do not make me right with God.<sup>62</sup> In addition, the pastor at times may not even be certain who they are or who they are supposed to be. This was the case for David Fisher. He describes how he came to the realization that he did not know “who he was supposed to be.”<sup>63</sup> He realized that between how other people perceived him and who he really was a gap that was expanding.<sup>64</sup> The answer came in the Apostle Paul.

Fisher is right in saying that Paul had a “deep pastoral self-consciousness.”<sup>65</sup> Paul recognized that who he was, was not the result of the successes for failures of ministry. This is a challenge for all pastors. Seventy percent of pastors surveyed for this project recognized the challenge of connecting happiness with ministry success as a concern at least some of the time. No one felt they had completely conquered this challenge, but rather found it to be an ongoing concern in ministry life.

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61. Eric T. Merriweather, *Knowing Your Identity Through Christ* (Mustang: Tate, 2010), 15.

62. Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, 83.

63. Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 22.

64. *Ibid.*, 23.

65. *Ibid.*, 24.



Fig. 2. Results for if Happiness is Dependent upon Ministry Success Graph.

There are numerous challenges that come in ministry and personally for a pastor. Edward Wimberly uses a case study to explore one person's experience in finding his or her identity. The ultimate answer was found in realizing that the pastor is identified first as someone who is "significantly related to God."<sup>66</sup> It is not that God cannot use these experiences to mold a pastor. It is just that God has already declared the truth of who the pastor is. This truth is firm and established. The pastor belongs to God.

Paul is probably one of the most successful Christians of all time because he understood the challenges of ministry. Paul reveals much about himself and his challenges in 2 Corinthians. Fisher points out, "Second Corinthians is the most autobiographical of Paul's letter, and its pages tremble with the tears and agony of

66. Edward P. Wimberly, "The Pastor's Theological Identity Formation," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1980):155.

personal and pastoral rejection.”<sup>67</sup> How did Paul handle these times and continue on in ministry. The answer: “Paul’s pastoral identity was rooted in God.”<sup>68</sup> His pastoral identity is certain despite attacks of 1 Corinthians 3 and 4.<sup>69</sup> He took his cues about identity from God, not the world or the church.<sup>70</sup>

The pastor today has to learn to do the same thing. How does this occur? Neil Anderson points out that, “Next to a knowledge of God, a knowledge of who you are in Christ is the most important thing.”<sup>71</sup> The pastor then should invest in understanding the rock solid foundation of who they are in Christ. A pastor can find value in God’s declared value of him or her.<sup>72</sup> This foundation will buffer pastors in the battles and successes.

To do this, “Our identity must be filled with Christian content-rooted in Christ, formed by Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>73</sup> Pastors must back up and assure themselves that they have laid the proper foundation according to what God has done to make man right with Him and His love in making him His own. D.A. Carson warns that pastors can attach their joy to a ministry position that can be taken away. Instead, he advises that pastors “tie your joy to the fact that you are known and loved by God.”<sup>74</sup> This type of understanding can help the pastor respond to ministry like Paul. How many pastors have figured out the truth that Paul expresses in 2 Corinthians 12:11? This great

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<sup>67</sup> Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 26.

<sup>68</sup> Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 26.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>71</sup> Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness*, 47.

<sup>72</sup> Merriweather, *Knowing Your Identity through Christ*, 110.

<sup>73</sup> Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 27.

<sup>74</sup> Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and his Prayers*, 141.

Christian leader is able to acknowledge that in himself “he is a nobody while at the same time recognizing that God has made him a somebody.”<sup>75</sup>

It is not that pastors should not desire success. It is that the earthly environment is extremely limited in the amount of significance it can provide.<sup>76</sup> It is a very slender hope if pastors get their satisfaction from work in the church.<sup>77</sup> Instead, the key to pastoral identity is to focus on the one being served.<sup>78</sup> Anderson observes, “God wants us to know who we are so we can start living accordingly.”<sup>79</sup>

What any person does as a Christian does not define him or her. Being a Christian defines what a Christian does.<sup>80</sup> This truth impacts life. In fact, Ken Sande points out how critical this is even in handling conflict. Peacemakers, he says, are “guided, motivated, and empowered by his or her identity in Christ.”<sup>81</sup>

In addition to this foundational response for the pastor, he must also realize that each of these statements that come from God on behalf of the believer also carries with it appropriate action:

- Being a child of God carries with it the exhortation to live like a child of God.
- Being a saint carries with it the exhortation to life in a holy lifestyle.
- Being a slave carries with it the idea of living solely in God’s leading.

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75. Wood, “Ephesians.”

76. Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 28.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid., 213.

79. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness*, 27.

80. Ibid., 47.

81. Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 248.

- Being an heir carries with it the expectation that Christians live as those who are rich in Christ.
- Being chosen by God carries with it the expectation that Christians live differently.

People struggle with feeling valuable. Talking the way Paul talked could lead to risk. These truths could lead people to unusual responses. It could be a reason to mistreat others and exalt self. Instead, the practical application is that believers would lead holy and blameless lives.<sup>82</sup> The truths of God's word should have the impact of causing a person to recognize his or her value comes from God. God has established this by what He has done in the life of the believer and what He says about the believer. Pastors have to be very careful about letting other people's words or their own accomplishments define them. Self-esteem cannot be a search for the pastor because value comes from God.

The value for the believer comes first in the reality that they are created by God in His image. This principle is assumed throughout the Bible based upon the introduction to the Bible in Genesis. This truth is found in God making man in His image. It is then notable that Paul expresses a similar truth when it comes to salvation and becoming a new creation in Christ. In Ephesians 2:10, he points out that the believer has been created in Christ. They have been made new.<sup>83</sup>

Everyone can use more encouragement. The church should actually be the most encouraging place on earth. The problem is when these things define a person. The

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82. Snodgrass, "Ephesians," 106.

83. By the way, he has previously stated the truth of salvation being by grace alone through faith alone.

problem is when a person only feels good when he or she receives such acknowledgments. His or her value is clearly based upon other people. That is clearly too much influence to give to man. Instead, the child of God, and especially the pastor, gets to look to their heavenly Father to find their value.<sup>84</sup> The Father says, “You are worth me sending my Son to earth. You are worth His life and death.” That is ultimately what it means to be re-created in Christ. God is shouting the value of those He desires to know Him. How can a believer possibly ignore the truth about themselves from the mouth of God?

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84. Miller, *Survival Handbook for Young Pastors*, 38.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR A RICH RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The realities of who a person is as a follower of Christ continue to build upon one another. It would be enough for God to save a person. If it were just that Christians were God's slaves and not sons, it would be enough. Yet, God adds the truth that those who are sons are also heirs. More than anything else, this truth communicates the wealth of the child of God. Christians are rich regardless of their material resources. Bank accounts could not begin to compare with the type of wealth that comes from being God's child.

The problem for the average Christian is that he or she does not recognize this wealth. The average Christian compares to a person who brings an item to an appraiser only to discover that he or she has been rich all this time, but did not clearly see the fullness of all they had. Ignorance of the riches that come in Christ is an awful place to be. While people might debate how much it takes to be officially rich, no one can deny the wealth of the follower of Christ once they consider what the Bible teaches about this truth. Paul is able to express the riches that in Christ. He also demonstrates how a person lives in recognition of this wealth.

#### **The Certainty of Wealth**

There can be no doubt about the wealth that comes in Christ. Paul offers an airtight defense to assist readers in seeing this truth. In Romans 8, Paul makes a break in his writing with verse 31. There he says, "What then are we to say about these things? God is



for us, who is against us?” It seems most likely that Paul is speaking in response to everything he has written in these eight chapters as he pens these words. In response to the incredible explanation of what God has done in saving sinners, Paul sees a clear principle appear.

God is for his children and this is a certainty. Because this is certain, Paul asks, “Who can be against us?” The answer to that question is obvious. While on one hand, lots of people can be against the child of God, ultimately no one can. Scriptures assure believers they have an enemy and he has numerous forces. Scripture also reminds that others will hate believers. Yet, regardless of the number of opponents that arise, the one that matters is God and His being for His children overwhelms any thought of opposition.

How are believers sure that God is for them? Verse 32 is the answer to this question. There Paul says, “He did not even spare his own Son, but offered him up for us all; how will He not also with Him grant us everything?” There can be no question as to whether God is for his children because of one specific act on His behalf. He gave His very best; He gave His Son. The argument here is a greater to less than argument. If God has done the biggest thing for His children, He will certainly do smaller things. A God who sacrificed his own Son on sinners’ behalf will certainly not withhold that which by comparison is merely trivial. The immeasurable greatness of God's love is seen in the infinite nature of his sacrifice on behalf of people.<sup>1</sup>

This is rational and there can be no question about it. John MacArthur taps into the thinking of the letter as a whole when he says that God has done this act when people

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1. Robert H. Mounce, “Romans,” *The New American Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995).

were His enemies, certainly he will do far more for those who are now His children.<sup>2</sup>  
This is a truth that could cause the believer to have profound confidence.

Romans 5 approaches this truth from several angles, but ultimately proves MacArthur's point in verse 10. Paul says, "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, [then how] much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life!" There can be no question about whether God is for man when consideration is given for what God has done and man's status when He did it.

In Romans 8:32, he argues, "how will He not also with Him grant us everything?" Moo observes, "The 'all things' we are guaranteed as a result of Christ's death for us includes both our final glory and all that God provides to bring us to that glory."<sup>3</sup> Harrison says, "With the cross before us as the mighty demonstration of God's grace in giving his dearest to help the neediest, it naturally follows that the same gracious spirit will not withhold anything from those who are his."<sup>4</sup> Further life is given to this argument in the verses that follow. In verse 33, Paul says, "Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the One who justifies." God is for His children to the extent that no one can even bring a solid accusation against them. If they did, they would have to face the judge who happens to be the one who declared believers to be right with Him. How can anyone argue with Him?

Then, in verse 34 he writes, "Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the One who died, but even more, has been raised; He also is at the right hand of God and

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2. John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 1709.

3. Moo, "Romans," 282.

4. Harrison, "Romans."

intercedes for us.” If no one can bring a charge against God’s child, certainly no one can condemn His child. How could they? Jesus died and was raised and now represents believers in the Father’s presence. God is certainly for Christians. Finally, verse 35 produces one final discussion about the certainty that God is for His children and what that means. There Paul says, “Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” Believers can be so certain that God is for them that they can know that nothing will ever separate them from Him. All of this is part of what comes to readers in consideration of God giving His very best for man.

### **The Location of this Wealth**

Christians are certain of the riches they have as God’s child because He gave His Son. They know as a result of this act that God gives all things along with Christ. The amazing part is that Jesus is not just the assurance of riches, but the location of riches as well. Paul makes this clear in Ephesians 1. This makes it clear that these riches are not necessarily financial but the “incomparable riches of God’s grace.”<sup>5</sup>

After a couple of introductory verses, Paul expresses a possible theme for the entire letter in verse three. There he says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ.” God is to be blessed or praised. The reason for this praise is as a result of His action in blessing His children. Paul says, “God has blessed His children with every spiritual blessing.” The first challenge in gleaning truth from this verse is the idea that these blessings are spiritual. It is said by some that a person can be so spiritual that they are of

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5. Gene Getz, *Rich in Every Way: Everything God Says About Money and Possessions* (West Monroe: Howard, 2004), xviii.

no earthly good. Even if that is possible for a person, it is not possible for God's blessings. The reality is that spiritual does not refer to the immaterial, but rather of God's work. He is the divine and spiritual source of all blessing.<sup>6</sup> All blessings come from God. Thus, all blessings are spiritual in nature. From food on a table, to air breathed, to the ability to live, and move and have being, it all comes from God. Snodgrass points out, "The expression refers to all that God's Spirit brings to enable life."<sup>7</sup> He should be praised because He is the source of all blessings for His children.

A second challenge is the phrase that He blessed Christians "in the heavenly realms." It sounds so distant. Perhaps, God's blessings are all futuristic. People would then muddle through life until experiencing these blessings in heaven. Instead, this phrase points to the complete, heavenly reign of God where all of His blessings originate from.<sup>8</sup> The most important point of this verse is that the every blessing of God that has been given is found solely in Christ. There is no exception and no other place to look. Amazingly, assurance is given to believers of the riches given in God as a result of His giving His Son. Christians also find all His blessings in His Son.

It is clear that Paul believed that to mean every blessing with no exception. Paul did not believe that anything was lacking because he had Christ. In Christ, God has transformed the believer. The change that has happened, the change that is happening, and the change that will happen in the life of the believer is found in Christ. Paul has all he needs in Christ.

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6. MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1803.

7. Snodgrass, "Ephesians," 45.

8. MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1803.

These blessings are of great value. Wood exclaims, “Their value is measured by the price that was paid to obtain them when on the cross the Son of God fought satanic opponents and disarmed them.”<sup>9</sup> They are also all-inclusive. The word ‘every’ should definitely be explored in the life of every pastor. This will assure that they do not begin to think that something is excluded. Paul gives a starter list in the verses following this profound truth.

First, in Ephesians 1:4, Paul makes it clear that the child of God has been chosen. This is true even before the foundation of the world. One of God’s great blessings for His children is simply in choosing them. Second, Paul says in verse five, that children of God were predestined to adoption. God did this in love and by His grace. This is a certain blessing for the child of God. In the following verse, Paul says that believers have been accepted. This is a third blessing from God.

Fourth, in verse seven, Paul says that believers have been redeemed. Christ has paid the price to buy them back from slavery to sin. This comes in connection to forgiveness of sin. Continuing on into verse nine, Paul says that God has blessed believers by revealing a mystery to them. This mystery is a mystery of salvation in Christ for all who would believe. Sixth, in verse eleven, Paul addresses the chapter’s point that believers are rich as a result of the inheritance they have in Christ. Finally, in verse thirteen, Paul says believers have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. This is an assurance of all that God has promised in the future. Specially, Paul again says that the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of the inheritance of the child of God.

It is not surprising, but extremely important what Paul does next after mentioning this sample list of God’s blessings. He prays for these believers. He does so in a manner

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9. Wood, “Ephesians.”

that should inform prayers today. Of particular importance are verses 17-19. There Paul says,

[I pray] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.<sup>18</sup> [I pray] that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the glorious riches of His inheritance among the saints,<sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His vast strength.

Paul prays for three things that he hopes these believers will clearly see. First, he wants them to see clearly the hope they have as Christians. This certainly speaks to the future salvation that is guaranteed. The third request is that they would see clearly and experience God's power for believers. This power is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Housed in between these two great requests is that believers would understand clearly about a rich inheritance. Admittedly, there is some confusion over this verse. It is challenging to discern whether God is describing the inheritance of those who believe, as in the concept of an heir, or if this is describing God's inheritance in regard to those who belong to Him.

The latter concept could be initially shocking to a reader. It could sound as if it is making a little too much of the believer to say that they are God's inheritance. What would make that significant to the God who has all things? Yet this concept is a biblical concept.<sup>10</sup> It actually fits within this context to understand how God sees His children. It is of great value to the child of God to know that he or she is God's glorious inheritance.

The first interpretation is also just as clearly a biblical concept. It is clear that the believer is now given all the riches there are in Christ. Taking this interpretation, Paul is

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10. Joel 3:2.

praying for his fellow believers that they would appreciate all the riches of God which are their inheritance.<sup>11</sup>

The concept of praying this way is astounding. It is like a story of a young heir to a throne who has no idea of the riches that are really his. He could live life as if he was poor, but in reality he is rich. Just the knowledge of what is actually his would be sufficient to transform most everything about how he lived day in and day out. The believer is in the same situation. He or she could be blind to the riches that are theirs in Christ. These believers could live as if they have nothing. Paul prays that they will not make this mistake. He prays that they will not overlook all that is rightfully theirs in Christ. He desires that they meditate on what they have now inherited. He wants them to drink it in and allow it to transform how they live every moment of every day.

God gave them this inheritance. He made them heirs in making them children.<sup>12</sup> Paul expresses another powerful and related thought in Colossians 1. Of course, these two letters bear much similarity. Paul's rendering of this truth in verse twelve is, "giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light." Here he is encouraging believers to give thanks to God because of the reality that He has qualified the believer for this great inheritance. This truth is incredible first because God does the qualifying. It is clear in this verse that the believer does not qualify himself or herself. Believers "have no fitness for sharing in the heritage of God's people."<sup>13</sup> God has accomplished this through Christ. Thus, this inheritance comes solely by God's grace

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11. Wood, "Ephesians."

12. Rom. 8:17 and Gal. 4:7.

13. Vaughan, "Colossians."

in Christ. God's initiative guarantees that his people will be able to inherit what is promised them.<sup>14</sup>

This inheritance language is first used in describing the apportioning of land to the tribes of Israel.<sup>15</sup> This causes the meaning of this verse to have even more significance to the Gentile. Prior to Christ the Gentile has no right at all to an inheritance in God, but now God has qualified them as full heirs. In these two books, Paul mentions this concept both times in the course of praying. In Colossians, it is a statement of thanksgiving that should be returned to God. He has done this and thus He is worthy of praise. He has given all believers an inheritance that is beyond imagination.

### **Christ is Enough**

Paul not only taught these truths, but he lived them out. This is nowhere more prevalent than in understanding what it means to be rich in Christ. Paul's example in this regard is clearly seen in his letter to the Philippians. It is clear in Paul's life that he recognized the treasure that was Christ. He realized that in Him he had everything that he needed. It is a blessing to believers today that Paul did not have an easy life. Paul's life was tough. Such a load as Paul bore would have crushed many.<sup>16</sup> It is a blessing that he went through such highs and lows because it displays this truth clearly throughout his life.

Paul writes this letter while in prison. There is some debate as to where he is in prison at, but no debate as to the fact that he is in prison. He makes this clear throughout this letter. In 1:7, he says he is "in chains." He repeats this truth in verses 13 and 14 as he

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14. Melick, "Philippians, Colossians, Philemon."

15. Garland, "Colossians," 65.

16. Sanders, *Dynamic Spiritual Leadership*, 25.



mentions he is in chains for Christ. In 2:17, he mentions that he could be “poured out as a drink offering.” He seems to be suggesting that death is a good possibility in his current situation.

Of course, in the midst of writing from prison, joy is a clear theme in this letter. He commands it of his listeners and clearly displays it in his life. This is true despite his circumstances. In the midst of this experience, Paul makes it clear that all he cares about is that Christ is preached. He even points out that some people are trying to cause a stir in preaching Christ so as to make Paul’s life worse. Others apparently have seen how Paul is handling his imprisonment and have been emboldened to preach.

Prison could not take Paul’s joy, neither could death. Paul moves on to mention how death is a possibility in his current situation. He seems to embrace it. He is certain that death will be a showing to honor God in his life. In fact, he says death would be a “gain.”<sup>17</sup> He makes it clear that he understands that death is a doorway to a full experience of God’s presence. How could Paul talk this way? How could he live this way? He answers this question by pointing to the riches that were his in Christ in chapter 4 of this letter.

As he concludes his writing, he makes a point to thank the believers in Philippi for their recent gift that they have sent him. This closing message begins in verse ten. He appreciated their concern for him and the proof of that concern lived out through the giving of this gift. Then Paul says something that at first appears to be the worst thank you card ever penned. He says, “I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have

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17. Phil. 1:21.

learned to be content whatever the circumstances.”<sup>18</sup> In essence Paul says, “Thanks for the gift. I really did not need it, but I appreciate it none the less.” A parent could be appalled at hearing his or her child express this truth after receiving a gift from someone.

The word for ‘content’ that Paul uses expresses the idea of self-sufficiency. Typically, it would be used to express that someone needed no outside assistance. They are self-reliant to the extent that all they need they have within themselves. This is not a statement of Paul’s great external wealth. The truth is, “He was independent (self-sufficient) only when he was dependent!”<sup>19</sup> Paul seemed to be equally unaffected by poverty and riches. Contentment is learned through experience and Paul has had plenty of that. This knowledge is learned by walking with Christ, who is the sufficient one, and by developing a solid theology of material things. Possessions ultimately do not matter. Paul’s attitude contrasted with that of the false teachers. They were preoccupied with food and other earthly matters; Paul could rise above any set of circumstances.<sup>20</sup>

His strength for “everything” lay in the One who continually empowered him.<sup>21</sup> Paul is basically considering all of the glories that Christ is currently experiencing as his own glories. Mounce points out, “The preposition kata (‘according to’) conveys the thought that God’s supply of the Philippians’ need will not be merely from or out of his wealth but in some sense appropriate to or commensurate with it.”<sup>22</sup>

Paul could be saying that he has such a supply of goods that he does not need any

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18. Phil. 4:11.

19. Melick, “Philippians, Colossians, Philemon.”

20. Mounce, “Romans.”

21. Kent, Jr., “Philippians.”

22. Ibid.

additional items, but this is not the case. Paul surely did not have a storage unit attached to his jail. Paul is actually saying something far more valuable. As Paul continues, it becomes clear what he is attempting to communicate. He wants his readers to know of the sufficiency of Christ. Paul recognizes that he has all he needs in Christ and he wants to share this truth with the Philippians.

He begins expressing this by saying that he has learned contentment in all situations. In verse twelve, he expresses a broad summary of his life. He points out that he has had times of having much. On the other hand, he says that he has also had times of having little to nothing. Then comes the incredible truth in verse 12: “I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret [of being content]—whether well-fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need.” How does a person learn this level of contentment? How can a person be content if they really do not have anything?

Paul gives the answer in one of the most well-known verses in the entire Bible. Philippians 4:13 says, “I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.” What is the secret to this level of contentment that Paul has discovered? The answer is simply Jesus. He says that he can do all things through the one who gives him strength. The idea literally points to God putting power in Paul.<sup>23</sup> That one who gives him strength is Jesus. Simply put, Paul can put up with any situation because Jesus will give him the strength to make it through any circumstance. Paul recognizes that if he has Jesus, he has all he needs.

The context of this well-quoted verse is extremely notable. It was not an athletic

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23. MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1829.

event or some show of physical strength that Paul was referring to. On the contrary, Paul was expressing how to deal with the challenges of life. The challenges of not having basic needs met are the clear description of this verse. When Paul is able to handle hard times in this way, it makes it clear that God is incredibly important. Sam Storms says, “pleasure is the measure of our treasure.”<sup>24</sup> Paul’s pleasure in God in spite of circumstances could not help but make God appear to be the most valuable of treasures. Paul reached the incredible place of glorying in his challenges and thus displaying the sufficiency of Christ.<sup>25</sup> This puts God on a glorious display for all to see.

The expression “through him who strengthens me” clearly refers to the indwelling Christ and Paul could accomplish all that God wanted through the strength he provided.<sup>26</sup> Like a thread throughout these verses, Paul makes it clear that Christ in him makes all the difference. External realities matter not where Christ is present. This truth gives Paul power in all circumstances. The apparently poor greeting card sentiment continues in the verses that follow as he applauds the Philippians for their gift. He reminds them that they have generously given to him previously. Then he says, “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that is increasing to your account.”<sup>27</sup> Paul says that he does not want things from them. What he really wants is things for them.

To fully grasp what Paul is communicating about the Philippians giving record, one must consider the testimony of 2 Corinthians. In chapter 8 verse 2, Paul writes about the churches in Macedonia. Philippi would be expected to be one of the churches he is

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24. Sam Storms, *Pleasures Evermore* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2000), 39.

25. Sanders, *Dynamic Spiritual Leadership*, 26.

26. Melick, “Philippians, Colossians, Philemon.”

27. Phil. 4:17.

mentioning. He says, “during a severe testing by affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their generosity.” The point of this connection is that the church was not overflowing with resources and just giving a little here and there. The church appears to be facing some challenges. They are described as extremely poor.

This truth seems to hint at what Paul is expressing to them in Philippians four. He reaches his climax in verse 19 when he says, “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” This seems to be the turning point where Paul wants his readers to get to the place he has found in Christ and where his experience can become their experience. Just as Paul has expressed to being content in Christ, He wants the Philippians to know that they too can know this experience. It begins by coming to the truth that God will supply their needs. It begins by realizing the fullness of the riches that are found in Him. When the believer comes to recognize this as true, then he or she begins to live with a confidence in God in the face of challenges.

This is where it is clear that the Philippians must be on this track already. They have been confident to give despite poverty and challenges because they had a confidence in the supply of their God. Paul encourages them in their faith and exhorts them to continue in this pattern because of the God they serve. This points back to 2 Corinthians 9:8. There Paul encourages the Corinthians in their giving. He reminds them of the principle of reaping and sowing and the certainty that they will have as much as they need when they give. He makes a summary statement of this truth by saying, “And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.”

All things come from God. The Corinthians, Philippians, and all believers must be reminded of this truth. They can live out of the reality that God possesses all things and freely gives to them all they need. Paul faced an unbelievable load in ministry. He dealt with this load and “appropriated his abundantly sufficient grace” in Christ.<sup>28</sup>

### **Application**

The importance of this truth is powerful for ministry. The key to living victoriously come from believers knowing who they are in Christ<sup>29</sup> and what they have in Christ. It is certainly one of the truths that grounded Paul in ministry. The pastor is always caught in the bind of money. Paul seemed to want to avoid this bind at all costs. Over and over the pattern is set of Paul seeking to be bi-vocational and thus not financially dependent upon a church. His tent-making had the impact of not being a burden to new churches. It also removed the “pressures” that such a financial relationship can generate. It gave him a freedom to rebuke and counsel people in a way that may have been difficult if he were financially obligated to them.<sup>30</sup>

While this is not likely possible for many pastors, the attitude behind Paul’s actions should be present with each pastor. Paul knew he was not working for a paycheck. The pastor must remember that as well. It seems like it is often stated by those in other professions that they are working for their next paycheck. Things might not be great, but at least there is a reward for their labor. The pastor cannot allow himself to fall into this trap. Never is a pastor working for a paycheck; rather, the pastor should see

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28. Sanders, *Dynamic Spiritual Leadership*, 26.

29. Tony Evans, *Free at Last: Experiencing True Freedom through your Identity in Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 2001), 26.

30. Sanders, *Dynamic Spiritual Leadership*, 23.

himself as wealthy beyond comparison.<sup>31</sup> The Bible is clear that the “worker is worthy of his wages.”<sup>32</sup> Also, there are appropriate rewards in ministry. Christian ministry is high on some rewards and low on other rewards.<sup>33</sup> Still, Paul’s attitude seemed to be that God had already given him all that he needed in Christ. This is a freeing place to be. It is freeing on the personal side of being a pastor, but it is also freeing in regard to the corporate nature of a church. It becomes a faith-builder for the pastor. The pastor can know that as he leads his church that God is sufficient for all of their needs as well. There may be times of plenty and times of want, yet God can bring contentment through them all.

Believers in today’s society are equally challenged to treasure Christ above all things and the truth that how to handle challenging times will reveal what is treasured. Being rich in Christ means that first and foremost, believers have everything they need to be happy in Christ already.<sup>34</sup> This is an important truth for the pastor to grapple with because challenges abound in ministry. Paul expected rejection and loneliness in his work; it came as no surprise when he had these experiences.<sup>35</sup> It is doubtful there is a 21<sup>st</sup> century pastor that is surprised that there are challenges in ministry.

How can a pastor appropriate the riches of Christ in the face of these challenges? A Christian’s victory comes from a conscious dependence on the Lord and his power, and that is easier understood when times get hard! This is not an easy place to arrive at. It

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31. Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, 228.

32. Luke 10:7.

33. Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition*, 14.

34. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness*, 146.

35. Melick, “Philippians, Colossians, Philemon.”

will be an ongoing challenge to live in this victory. Thus, one mark of maturity in Christ is that the mature know how to depend on the Lord in every situation of life, not only in those for which they assume they need help. Paul modeled this lesson for them and thus even in his thankfulness taught the truths of Christian living.<sup>36</sup> The 21<sup>st</sup> century pastor must be inspired by this example and aim for this goal.

There must also be a reminder of how to tap into these riches. One source of wealth for the child of God is God's Word. In 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 this is clear. Paul writes, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Paul expresses that the word of God is such a treasure that it fully equips the man of God. It is a treasure chest of vast riches.

The final reality of this is that God promises a reward for His faithful followers. In Ephesians 6:8, Paul says, "knowing that whatever good each one does, slave or free, he will receive this back from the Lord." Amazingly, God takes enemies and makes them children. He then provides them all the riches of His kingdom. Finally, he solidifies this truth by referring time and again to the 'reward' that belongs to those who are His.

This reality changed Paul's life and perspective. It can most certainly have the same impact upon pastor in today's society. In 2 Corinthians 6:10, Paul writes, "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything." Paul acknowledges that he is poor from a worldly perspective. Yet, he also can boldly proclaim that he is capable of making men rich with true riches in Christ. Once more he points out that he has nothing. Then he can declare that in His

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36. Melick, "Philippians, Colossians, Philemon."



Father's kingdom, he has everything. The child of God can handle any and every challenge with the riches that come in Christ.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR GOD’S CALL

Everything in ministry flows from being called to this work and this people.<sup>1</sup> Paul knew this and the pastor in today’s society needs to know it too. At the end of the day, it is possible that nothing can encourage sticking it out in the challenging times of ministry more than the truth of God’s calling in the life of the pastor. When Paul mentions the idea of calling, it is clear that he is speaking of at least two different things. One, calling is used first and foremost in describing a believer. It could be said it is a call to salvation. Two, calling is also a description of a specific call for a portion of believers who are called to ministry. For example, a pastor is a person who should be called by God to that role.

#### **Called to Salvation**

Paul occasionally throws out the word ‘called’ as he is writing to churches and people. In Romans 1 Paul expresses this twice in verses six and seven: “including yourselves who are also Jesus Christ's by calling:<sup>7</sup> To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” First, he says believers belong to Jesus as a result of calling. Second, believers are called as saints. In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul also mentions calling twice. In verse two he again says that believers are “called as saints.” In verse 9, he says, “God is faithful; by

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1. Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 29.

Him you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” This statement provides clarity on calling because one of the differences between calling in the New Testament versus the Old Testament is that it implies intimacy with God. God is speaking to a person in such a way as to bring them near.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that calling speaks to God taking the initiative in calling people to Himself.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, it does not have to mean that God creates what He commands in calling lost sinners to salvation. This would be something to wrestle with in regards to Reformed theology. Mounce observes, “Calling refers to that whole complex of events, including repentance and faith, by which a lost sinner is converted to Christ.”<sup>4</sup> A person who is called is simply a person who is in relationship with God and are saved. The incredible truth is that this should give the believer great security. In 1 Thessalonians 5:24, Paul says, “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” God has taken the initiative in calling. It is certain. A believer can rest in this truth because God has called and He is faithful to bring this calling to completion.

It is noteworthy that even though the calling is forever established, believers are exhorted to live in a way that matches this calling. Paul says in Ephesians 4:1, “I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received.” ‘Worthy’ means to bring up the other side of the scale. That is, to walk worthy is to bring equivalence to the profession and practice of a person’s faith.<sup>5</sup> Paul gives this

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2. Lawrence O. Richards, *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words*, Electronic Ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

3. Mare, “1 Corinthians.”

4. Mounce, “Romans.”

5. Wood, “Ephesians.”

same command in both letters to the Thessalonians.<sup>6</sup>

It is clear in the majority of the verses that Paul is speaking to a call to salvation. God is summoning believers into a relationship with Him. When that call is met with a person who accepts the invitation, God describes that person as ‘called’. Paul frequently describes himself as called in a different sense.

### **Called to Ministry**

Paul unites these two sides of calling in his writing. This is very clear in Galatians 1:15, 16. There he writes, “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased<sup>16</sup> to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man.” This truth is a powerful declaration about the God who calls. Paul expresses the truth that this calling was one from birth. While this calling begins with the call to salvation, Paul quickly points out that God called him to Himself to then send him to Gentiles who needed to know Him. Paul recognized His calling was from God, to preach, and to go to the Gentiles. He adds some specifics to this calling in other places describing himself as an apostle, but this is the general picture of his calling.

### **Called by God**

The most important part of this calling is the fact that Paul was called by God. This is crystal clear to the reader. It is also the first part of his calling that any pastor today should be able to identify with. Paul’s certainty of the fact that God had called him gave him a rock solid foundation for life and ministry. Pastors in today’s society can learn from Paul about this ministry foundation.

As readers, insight is gained into Paul’s calling three times in the book of Acts as he is saved and then as he recounts his salvation two other times. First, in Acts 9:15-16

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Thess. 2:12 and 2 Thess. 1:11.

Paul is saved and the following verses review God’s instruction to Ananias about Paul: “But the Lord said to him, ‘Go! For this man is My chosen instrument to carry My name before Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel.<sup>16</sup> I will certainly show him how much he must suffer for My name!’” Paul is described as a “chosen instrument.” He is called and chosen by God for a specific purpose. In Acts 22:14, 15 Paul again speaks to being appointed by God: “Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the sound of His voice.<sup>15</sup> For you will be a witness for Him to all people of what you have seen and heard.’”

Finally, in Acts 26:16-18 Paul again speaks to being appointed by God and describes God’s mission for him. He says,

But get up and stand on your feet. For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness of things you have seen, and of things in which I will appear to you.<sup>17</sup> I will rescue you from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,<sup>18</sup> to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.

These three accounts make it clear that the call of God came to Paul in such a “clear and specific manner” that he could not misunderstand it.<sup>7</sup>

When considering these three accounts with the verses from Galatians 1, Oswald Sanders makes a great observation:

Thus from the earliest days of his Christian life, he not only knew that he was a chosen medium through whom God would communicate his revelation, but he had a general idea of what God had planned for his future. He knew that (1) his ministry would take him far from home, (2) he would have a special ministry to the Gentiles, and (3) this ministry would involve him in great suffering. Only gradually did he come to realize that this call was not so much a new purpose of God for his life as it was a culmination of the preparatory process that began before His birth.<sup>8</sup>

7. Sanders, *Dynamic Spiritual Leadership*, 34.

8. *Ibid.*, 35.

At the end of his first letter to the Corinthians, he again mentions this calling as being part of God offering him a special revelation of Christ. He points out in 1 Corinthians 15:8 and 9 that he was called to be an apostle by Jesus who made a special appearance in his life. This encounter validated Paul in comparison to the twelve and left a certainty of this call.

In addition to these accounts of Paul's calling, he simply mentioned this calling in his letters to others. In 2 Corinthians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 1 Timothy 1:1, 2 Timothy 1:1, and Titus 1:1 he describes himself as an apostle by God's will. He gives a similar description in Galatians 1:1. There he reminds both himself and his audience that God, not man, has called him to this office. In Philippians 1:1 he says that he co-writes this letter and the two write as servants of Christ. Perhaps the best verse in this regard comes in Ephesians 3:7. There he says, "I was made a servant of this [gospel] by the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of His power." This verse is a treasure for the minister of the gospel because it is a reminder that the call to ministry is a gift to the one who is called.

#### Called to a Specific Role

Paul understood that God called him and God called him to a specific role. In the verses just quoted and in others, Paul describes his calling in a variety of ways, but he most frequently refers to himself as an apostle. In all of the verses listed in the previous heading where Paul mentioned that he was called in his opening line, he added that his calling was that of an apostle. The term 'apostle' speaks to the authority that God has

given Paul both to preach and to oversee churches.<sup>9</sup> He was being sent out by God's command for the purpose of sharing Christ and starting churches.<sup>10</sup>

In Romans 1:5, he says, "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith." Again, Paul makes it clear that God has called him. He also makes it clear that his apostleship comes from God's calling in his life. This apostleship did not cause Paul to boast. In fact, he describes himself as a servant of the church as he writes to Colossae in Colossians 1:25. He expands this understanding as an apostle in his pastoral epistles to Timothy. He includes the idea of being a herald and a teacher in 1 Timothy 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:11. These were the roles that God had called him to.

#### Called to a Specific Task

As an apostle, herald, and a teacher, Paul understood what he was called to do. This is helpful because it assisted him in focusing in on God's calling rather than getting distracted in ministry. The simplest way of understanding God's call in Paul's life is that Paul was called to preach. For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul says "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power." Again, Paul makes it clear that God has sent him. Baptizing is an important part of the faith. Clearly, it is part of the Great Commission.

Still, Paul understood that it was not his primary goal. Baptism comes after the gospel is preached and a person has responded to the message in faith. Paul understood that he would have men around him who could baptize. God had called him to preach.

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9. Harrison, "Romans."

10. Blomberg, "1 Corinthians," 35.

Also, it is notable that Paul understood the power of the message he was preaching. Of course, this message had first borne fruit in Paul's life. It had transformed him. Thus, he did not need to show his wisdom nor present the message in a flashy manner. He merely needed ~~merely~~ to share the message and allow God to transform lives.

This calling to preach the gospel was strong. Paul felt compelled to this calling by God. In 1 Corinthians 9:16, 17, Paul describes this calling by saying, "Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!<sup>17</sup> If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me." The God who had called Paul grabbed hold of him with a calling that Paul could not escape from. He had to fulfill his calling by preaching. What a glorious truth this is for Paul! Paul had put all his eggs in the basket of God's calling. Nothing could keep him from this calling. He realized that even in jail he could continue preaching. He might be in chains, but the word of God could never be in chains.<sup>11</sup> Even in prison the word was going forth and people were being saved.<sup>12</sup>

As Paul is writing to the church of Galatia, he makes it clear that it is not only true that God called him to preach the gospel. He also makes it clear that the content of the message he preached came directly from God. In Galatians 1:11 and 12, he says, "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up.<sup>12</sup> I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ." It is no wonder that he fought so hard to assure that the church was

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11. 2 Tim. 2:9.

12. Phil. 1:13.



the “pillar and foundation of the truth.”<sup>13</sup> In Colossians 1:25, Paul says, “I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness.” He serves the church by God’s commission. He does this because he knows that God has called him to it and the calling requires him to present the word of God in all its fullness.

Finally, as he writes to Titus he says, “and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior.”<sup>14</sup> God had entrusted a great treasure to Paul. It was an incredible privilege and one he wanted to fulfill faithfully. It is no wonder that one of his closing commands to Timothy is simply to “Preach the Word.”<sup>15</sup>

#### Called to Suffer

The apparently glorious part of Paul’s calling was presented to him from the beginning. He is told he will bear God’s name before others. In fact, he is told he will bear God’s name before kings.<sup>16</sup> He is also told of a painful side to this calling. Paul had a glorious calling, but his calling would also result in a great deal of suffering.

In Acts 9:16, Paul will be shown how much he must “suffer for My name!” As much as anything, Paul’s calling was to suffer. Paul seemed to understand this. It is notable that on one of the three occasions when Paul does not introduce himself as an apostle, he instead describes himself as a prisoner of Christ.<sup>17</sup> He repeats this description

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13. 1 Tim. 3:15.

14. Titus 1:3.

15. 2 Tim. 4:2.

16. Acts 9:15.

17. Philem. 1:1.

in Philemon 1:9 and Ephesians 3:1. In Ephesians 4:1 he uses his prisoner status as a just reason to exhort them to action. ‘Prisoner’ is as much a description of his calling as anything. Ultimately, Paul seems to grasp that his calling is not even hindered by prison or death as noted in the previous chapter of this paper in Philippians. When Paul uses the description of a prisoner of Christ it is clear that he is connecting these circumstances with his calling. He connects with this side of his calling in 2 Timothy 1 and again in chapter 2. In 2 Timothy 1:11 he points out how he was appointed to his calling. Then he quickly transitions in the following verse to point out that the very reason he suffers is because of this calling.

In chapter two, verse 3, he describes his calling as being a good soldier of Christ. This description serves as a motivation for him to respond to hardship as part of his calling. Then in verse 10, he says he endures all hardship so that he may fulfill the call to see Gentiles come to know Christ. Suffering was part of the calling for Paul and it is for all believers. In fact, Paul seems to point to suffering as the only validation for apostleship.<sup>18</sup> He shows how much he embraces this truth when he describes how he wants to know Christ and includes the “fellowship of His sufferings” as part of that bond.<sup>19</sup> The entire letter to the Philippians expresses this truth. Perhaps it is nowhere clearer than Paul’s words about Jesus being obedient to the point of death. Paul himself had made that same commitment in following Christ.<sup>20</sup> The amazing thing is that his suffering seems to be nothing compared to the importance of his calling to share the

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18. Murray J. Harris, “2 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).

19. Phil. 3:10.

20. Caroline Johnson Hodge, “Apostle to the Gentiles: Constructions of Paul’s Identity,” *Biblical Interpretation* 13, no. 3 (September 2005): 285.

gospel.<sup>21</sup>

### Called to the Gentiles

At this point it is crystal clear that Paul was called by God. God called Paul as an apostle. His primary task was to preach the gospel. God also included in this calling who Paul should preach to. Paul's calling was to preach the gospel to Gentiles. This calling is included in all three of the Acts passages on Paul's calling.<sup>22</sup> In fact, in Galatians 2:8, Paul clearly unites his calling with that of Peter's. He says, "For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles."

This calling to the Gentiles would become common knowledge in the days to follow. It led to controversy in Acts 15 as the church at Jerusalem wanted to assure that this was God's leading. In Ephesians 3:2, Paul expects that the believers in Ephesus have heard of God's grace given to him as the apostle to the Gentiles. This by no means expresses that Paul did not preach to or care for Israelites. Romans 11:13 and 14 makes this clear that he did. Paul says, "I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them." Paul points out he is an apostle to the Gentiles and at the same time he reveals his heart for Israel.

### Application

Paul would have experienced incredible hardships in fulfilling his calling. He traveled extensively in an age when travel was extremely challenging. He took the gospel into places where his presence caused great resentment. The Bible lists many of the

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21. Daniel J. Harrington, *Meeting St. Paul Today* (Chicago: Loyola, 2008), 122-123.

22. Acts 9:15; 22:15; and 26:17.

abuses and hardships that Paul experienced. The question must be asked over and over, “How did Paul continue on in ministry?”

As much as any other answer that could be given, ‘calling’ has to rise to the top of the list. “‘Calling’ is a growing awareness that God has set your life aside for a special purpose of service for Him.”<sup>23</sup> The first lesson Paul teaches 21<sup>st</sup> century pastors in this regard is to think often and deeply about calling. Paul clearly knew he was called by God. It is vital for pastors to know this. Knierim and Burrage point out that, “A sense of call to the ministry is the cornerstone for an effective ministry.”<sup>24</sup>

The sense of God’s calling must be clear because if ministry is merely something that a man chooses for himself, he will not make it. This is important because “One does not choose the ministry! A pastor is chosen. He is chosen by God for God’s purposes, in God’s time and place, and serves Him in God’s ways.”<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the most important finding in this project was that every pastor surveyed was certain or completely certain that God had called them. It is only through this external call that pastors can realize their identity as pastors.<sup>26</sup> If this is not true for a pastor, it will be close to impossible to finish the race.

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23. Neil Knierim and Yvonne Burrage, *God’s Call: The Cornerstone of Effective Ministry* (Nashville: Lifeway, 1997), 8.

24. *Ibid.*, 7.

25. Henry T. Blackaby, Henry Brandt, and Kerry L. Skinner, *The Power of the Call* (Broadman & Holman: Nashville, 1997), 26-27.

26. Bruce R. Hartung, “Identity, the Pastor, and the Pastor’s Spouse,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 3, no. 5 (1976): 307.

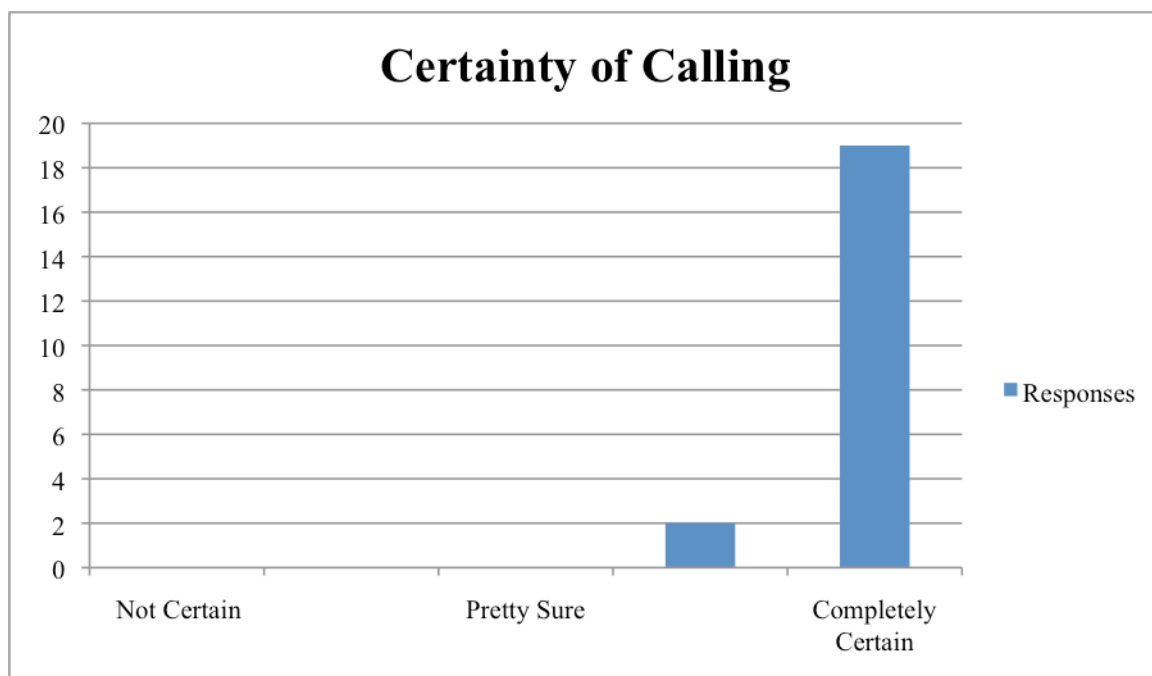


Fig. 3. Results for Certainty of Calling Graph.

Paul encourages today's pastor by mentioning this call time and again to let readers know how often it was on his mind. The reason this is so important is that this call from God changes everything in a person's life. That is why the person who is called cannot turn back. Guinness says, "Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service."<sup>27</sup> Paul's life demonstrates this as much as anyone's could. He understood that all he had and all that he was belonged to God. Wherever God wanted to lead and whatever God wanted to do was Paul's desire.

This sounds like a frightening proposition, but Guinness presents the positive side of the encounter eloquently. First, he points out that answering the call of the Creator is

27. Os Guinness, *The Call* (Word: Nashville, 1998), 4.

‘the ultimate why’ for living, the highest source of purpose in human existence.<sup>28</sup> Yes, it is intimidating, but it is essential. Again he says that “answering the call is the way to find and fulfill the central purpose of your life.”<sup>29</sup> Who wants to live a purposeless existence? Everyone wants to do what they were made for. Answering God’s call is where that happens. For the pastor, this call is unique. Blackaby, Brandt, and Skinner point out, “No one else in society has a greater or higher calling; no one else can see so great a difference made in the lives of individuals, homes, and workplaces.”<sup>30</sup> The challenges may be rampant, but the impact is certainly worth it. That is why the pastor must embrace this calling passionately.

Another caveat to calling is the unique nature of pastoral calling. For many people, it is challenging to separate work from identity. This is perhaps more challenging for a pastor. Wayne Cordeiro points out that this calling is “something I could not escape.”<sup>31</sup> Though this is true, the pastor must find his identity in Christ before being able to fully understand and embrace his calling. In addition, the pastor should think through their calling in regard to the specifics that Paul understood. Paul was called as an apostle. What is the 21<sup>st</sup> century ministry leader called as? For pastors, this means thinking through what it is that God has called them to do. Paul was called to preach the Word. What does that look like for pastors in today’s society? Paul was called to a particular people. Calling to a particular people or place must be considered. Mannoia and

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28. Ibid., 4.

29. Ibid., 7.

30. Blackaby, Brandt, and Skinner, *The Power of the Call*, 27.

31. Wayne Cordeiro, *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion* (Minneapolis: BethanyHouse, 2009), 96.

Walkemeyer say that effective “leaders see their identity and calling as a servant of God, reflecting Christ and extending the work of God in the world.”<sup>32</sup> These questions are critical in the long haul of ministry. For example, a pastor will likely stay at one place longer than Paul did. As such, more pastoral care will be required than Paul did. This care will not be possible if pastors do not love the people.<sup>33</sup> Feeling that God has called the pastor to those people will make it far easier to love them.

In regard to location, David Fisher believes that at a church he is God’s man sent to this location with the gospel of Christ.<sup>34</sup> That carries the pastor through the struggles of ministry. Paul held those types of conviction due to his calling. Fisher observes, “Paul’s sense of identity flowed out of a deep conviction that he was called and set apart by God for apostolic work.”<sup>35</sup>

Within Paul’s calling, he recognized that he was called to preach the gospel. This is true for every pastor. Pastors must ask themselves if this passion is predominant in their ministry as it was for Paul. The challenges of ministry are certain, thus the call to ministry must be just as certain. A clear call will sustain the pastor in trials. A clear call will also guide the pastor in how he invests his time. A clear call will burden the heart for the things of God. May it be that pastors today will have a call as clear as Paul’s and finish the race with Paul.

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32. Mannoia and Walkemeyer, *15 Characteristics of Effective Pastors*, 16.

33. Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 40.

34. Ibid, 37.

35. Ibid, 97.

CHAPTER SIX  
FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR EMPOWERMENT

Every point that has been explored thus far points to the actual salvation encounter. Each is a piece of a solid foundation in Christ. They assist in getting a complete picture of exactly what God has done in saving His children. They should be truths that keep a person firmly planted in his or her faith in good times or in bad because they are equally true in these times. Theologically, it is clear that a large portion of this time in the faith is described as ‘justification’. As a result of this encounter, it is also clear that this life will end with ‘glorification’. The question is about the in between period. Though for some they may have an extremely brief time between salvation and heaven, for most, a reasonable time will be lived out in faith on the earth. This final chapter seeks to explore how Christians live and pastors serve between salvation and heaven.

Being asked to follow Christ daily is an impossible task in a person’s own strength whether this is recognized to be true or not. It is no different than being asked to perform something far outside of your training. Typically a mechanic would be overwhelmed if asked to write eloquent poetry and vice versa. A chef makes great tasting food, but probably cannot quickly transition to life as a rocket scientist. The impossibility of following Christ is no different.

**Sanctification**

The difficulty of following Christ is first seen when one recognizes God’s goal in



the life of His children. Second Corinthians 3:18 expresses this work in these words: “We all, with unveiled faces, are reflecting the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.” Intimacy with God is part of this relationship. It is not what it will be, but it is still closer than could be imaged apart from Christ. As a result of this intimacy, Paul can say believers are reflecting the glory of the Lord.

He continues to say believers are being transformed by this encounter. The key observation is that believers are being transformed into the same image. He is saying that Christians are being made like Christ. That is the process of sanctification that is happening in the child of God. At the end of that verse, Paul also expresses how this happens when he says “this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.” God is bringing about this transformation in the life of the child of God. Blackman, says, “It is the process thereby inaugurated, presided over by the Spirit, and mounting up to a maturity definable in terms of Christ’s own perfection.”<sup>1</sup>

Paul expresses this same truth in Romans 8:29: “For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers.” God has determined in advance that those who know Him will be conformed to the image of Jesus. To be conformed signifies the whole set of characteristics or qualities that make something what it is. It points to a vital connection with the object it resembles. In the end, it speaks to being together with Christ and all that implies.<sup>2</sup> This is the ideal for the Christian life according to Paul: “to be more and more

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1. E.C. Blackman, “Sanctification,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 4, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 213.

2. Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 982-983.

like Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

Yet again, it is clear that Paul wants his readers to know that it is really God who is bringing about this transformation. It is beyond a Christian to do in his or her own strength. On the other hand, there is a clear part of the process that lands in the lap of the person. Paul expresses this and the partnership of sanctification in Philippians 2. In verse twelve, Paul puts the emphasis on man. He says, “So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” It is obvious that Paul is not speaking to someone working for his or her salvation. He is speaking to believers and he tells them to work out their salvation. He is speaking to mankind’s part in their sanctification. Man should take it seriously as indicated by the “fear and trembling” part of the discussion. It should be the direction of the life of the believer.

Paul says the same thing in 1 Timothy 4:7: “But have nothing to do with irreverent and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness,<sup>8</sup> for, the training of the body has a limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” Anyone who is working hard for physical fitness has a plan. He or she put a set of exercises together to impact their body in particular ways. The exercises are merely tools to that end. The Christian should do the same thing. As John Ortberg points out, it is just as demanding as learning to play the piano or to run a marathon.<sup>4</sup> You cannot do either of those things by merely jumping to a piano bench or signing up for a marathon. Discipline and training must take place first. The Christian should work just as hard and have a plan to discipline himself or herself for

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3. Harrington, *Meeting St. Paul Today*, 61.

4. John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 44.

godliness. On the other hand, God still has the preeminence in this process. Paul makes that clear in verse 13 of Philippians 2. There he says, “For it is God who is working in you, [enabling you] both to will and to act for His good purpose.” Even though Christians should work out their salvation, they must recognize God’s role in this.

If someone has the desire to grow spiritually, that desire has come from God. God wills that in His children, but having a desire for something does not matter if it is not followed by action. God gives both desire and action. God is really the one making His children like His only begotten. The job of His child is merely to agree with Him. It is to follow the direction that He is leading. This requires work, but is nothing compared to what God is doing.

One final thought on this discourse is that this process of sanctification does not end until God brings it to completion when this life is over. This truth is seen in 1 Thessalonians 5:23: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This part of the Christian life is impossible in man’s own strength and yet God is more than sufficient to bring it to completion in His people.

### **Weakness and Strength Every Day**

Sanctification must be addressed in consideration of the Christian life between salvation and heaven. On the other hand, the core of this chapter will deal with the everyday life of the Christian. Certainly, all that will be discussed is part of sanctification, but it will be explored to highlight man’s insufficiency and God’s sufficiency each day in following Christ. To this end, a survey of 2 Corinthians will be undertaken. Second Corinthians is easily the most autobiographical of Paul’s letters. He talks about himself

more here than anywhere else. That being the case, it is clear to see that Paul recognizes his need for God each day as he describes his life in this writing.

This is first seen in chapter 1 verse 8. He says, “For we don't want you to be unaware, brothers, of our affliction that took place in the province of Asia: we were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength —so that we even despaired of life.” This verse follows Paul beginning this letter by talking about God offering comfort and mercy. Then he arrives at this verse describing a recent situation. Some commentators go to great lengths as to hypothesize what this trial was. The reality is that Paul experienced so many trials of this type that all suggestions have to merely be hypotheses. What is clear is that this challenge was of such a level that it left Paul thinking he would die. He clearly saw that the resources needed to handle this difficulty were more than he had. In reality, Paul seems to present that this is true for everyday life for him. It is true for everyone each day. Throughout 2 Corinthians, Paul goes back again and again to challenges of this caliber. In chapter four, he describes the overwhelming nature of life in verses 8-12:

We are pressured in every way but not crushed; we are perplexed but not in despair;<sup>9</sup> we are persecuted but not abandoned; we are struck down but not destroyed.<sup>10</sup> We always carry the death of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.<sup>11</sup> For we who live are always given over to death because of Jesus, so that Jesus' life may also be revealed in our mortal flesh.<sup>12</sup> So death works in us, but life in you.

In each description, there seems to be the approaching of death, but he is saved from that ultimate fate.

It seems in verse 10 that this experience of the nearness of death coincides with the life of Jesus being seen. Apparently, this is just a normal part of life for the Christian.

There will be trials and weaknesses that will meet the sustaining power of God.

In chapter 6 he presents another list in verses 4-10. He says,

But in everything, as God's ministers, we commend ourselves: by great endurance, by afflictions, by hardship, by pressures,<sup>5</sup> by beatings, by imprisonments, by riots, by labors, by sleepless nights, by times of hunger,<sup>6</sup> by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,<sup>7</sup> by the message of truth, by the power of God; through weapons of righteousness on the right hand and the left,<sup>8</sup> through glory and dishonor, through slander and good report; as deceivers yet true;<sup>9</sup> as unknown yet recognized; as dying and look—we live; as being chastened yet not killed;<sup>10</sup> as grieving yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing yet possessing everything.

Yet again, housed in the middle of these descriptions he comes to the point that he is dying and yet he lives. Somehow these two go hand and hand in Paul's life.

Then in chapter 7 he again mentions these challenges in verses 4 and 5. He says, "I have great confidence in you; I have great pride in you. I am filled with encouragement; I am overcome with joy in all our afflictions."<sup>5</sup> In fact, when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest. Instead, we were afflicted in every way: struggles on the outside, fears inside." Paul describes life as "afflicted in every way." Who is sufficient for this description of life?

Finally the reader comes to chapter 11. There he gives his greatest list of challenges. He does this in response to "super-apostles" who have come to Corinth. These men seem to look down on Paul as a result of Paul's sufferings. It appears that if Paul were really a godly man he would not experience such things. Paul responds to them by presenting a resume of the validity of his ministry. It is not what would be expected. He mentions his pedigree in verse 22. Then he goes on to list the length of his sufferings:

Are they servants of Christ? I'm talking like a madman—I'm a better one: with far more labors, many more imprisonments, far worse beatings, near death many times.<sup>24</sup> Five times I received from the Jews 40 lashes minus one.<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the depths of the sea.<sup>26</sup> On frequent journeys, [I faced]

dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the open country, dangers on the sea, and dangers among false brothers;<sup>27</sup> labor and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and lacking clothing.<sup>28</sup> Not to mention other things, there is the daily pressure on me: my care for all the churches.<sup>29</sup> Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?

The abuse that Paul took was beyond the reader's grasp to take in. It also appears that he was in danger wherever he was and with whomever he was around. The amazing thing for a fellow pastor is how Paul concludes this list. When he comes to the end he mentions how the greatest stressor is his concern for other churches. In a day in which Paul could not travel easily nor get news easily, Paul was burdened for churches he started and had to leave.

Two responses should come from these challenges in Paul's life. One, for most pastors there should be a great humbling. Most pastors, especially in the United States, will probably never experience any such suffering. Most pastors should realize that things are not so bad. A second response should be considered. While pastors in today's society have a list of challenges that is vastly different than Paul's, the challenges are real nonetheless. Pastors still have trials and sufferings even if they are different in this day, time, and location. The good news is that Paul gives the answer for how to survive and thrive amidst such experiences. This answer comes in verse 9 of chapter 1.

After mentioning the recent life-threatening trial, Paul gives an answer to the problem. He says, "However, we personally had a death sentence within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead." Paul had the same basic struggle that pastors have today. He relied on his own strength at times. In the midst of this life threatening situation Paul realized that at the end of his strength was a God with

unending strength. He knew this because God is forever described as a God who raises the dead. If God can raise the dead, God can do anything. In fact, God did preserve Paul's life and continually does that for him.

God rescued Paul from this challenge because Paul is writing. In verse ten, he also says, "He has delivered us from such a terrible death, and He will deliver us; we have placed our hope in Him that He will deliver us again." God can be relied on. He raises the dead and rescues Paul in the face of death time and again. This picture of life is clearly more than one can handle in his or her own strength. This pattern only continues as 2 Corinthians continues. In chapter two, Paul paints a picture that is hard to grasp. In verse 14, he says, "But thanks be to God, who always puts us on display in Christ, and spreads through us in every place the scent of knowing Him." Reading this verse in some translations, such as the KJV, makes it sound like a verse on par with Romans 8:37 or 1 John 4:4. It sounds like a verse of triumph for the Christian. In fact, this interpretation comes from men such as John Calvin.<sup>5</sup> There is a more accurate interpretation.

While this idea is expressed in Romans and 1 John, that is not what Paul is saying here. Paul paints a picture of a Roman military procession. There are at least 350 mentioned in history.<sup>6</sup> It is a parade on par with any celebration we could point to in today's society. The victorious military leader and his troops would lead through the city being celebrated grandly. It would be great if God were leading the celebration with Paul as part of His cavalry; however, that is not what happens. Instead Paul finds himself in the most ominous of places in this celebration. While the military leaders were being

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5. Hafemann, "2 Corinthians," 107.

6. Ibid.

celebrated, prisoners of war were being humiliated. The victorious army would gather these prisoners, especially any well-known figure from the other side, and parade them through the city as part of their victory celebration. In Paul's language, he is in this group. He is part of this celebration as an enemy of God who has been conquered. He is in fact a slave of Christ in this picture (one of the descriptions Paul used of himself often).

In this way, Paul was conquered by God on the Damascus road is the best thing that ever happened to him. While Paul's life exalts God, it happens by Paul being presented as a defeated foe. Paul is "a trophy of His mighty power to bring the most stubborn under His yoke."<sup>7</sup> This results in the glory and message of God being extended wherever He leads Paul.

He goes on to describe himself as the "fragrance of Christ."<sup>8</sup> This results in a dividing line in a man's life. Either they accept Christ or reject Him. Mankind's eternal future is based upon how it responds to the message that Paul presents as he goes from place to place. This leads Paul to the obvious question for him and pastors in today's society. At the end of verse 16 he says, "Who is competent for this?" When he contrasts himself with those who preach in such a way that lacks sincerity in verse 17, it seems that perhaps he is saying he is competent. Instead, it seems that he is just pointing out that those who sincerely are serving God are competent for what they are called to do.

This theme he picks up in the following chapter in verses 4 through 6. Paul says, "We have this kind of confidence toward God through Christ:<sup>5</sup> not that we are competent in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our competence is from

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7. Meyer, *Paul*, 80.

8. 2 Cor. 2:15.



God.<sup>6</sup> He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit produces life.” Who is competent for these things? Paul would say that no one is unless God makes them competent. The pattern of the life of a Christian and of a pastor in general is beyond man’s strength and ability, but God shows Himself strong in the midst of man’s weakness.

Lest possessing this treasure cause Paul to boast wrongfully, he points out that he and all Christians possess this treasure as earthen vessels or clay pots. Paul offers another picture in chapter 4, verse 7. There he says, “Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us.” The treasure he seems to be describing has been presented in verses 4 and 6 of this same chapter. In verse 4 he mentions “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” Then in verse 6 it is “the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” These are the treasures that change lives of believers from God’s enemies to God’s children. This type of clay pot describes a common, unattractive, unimpressive item. It is fragile, inferior, and expendable.<sup>9</sup> It is one that could have been used for trash or human waste. This is not a self-esteem building picture.

Nevertheless, the contrast offers the reality that God’s power is seen in man’s weakness. When extraordinary power is seen in an ordinary vessel, everyone realizes there is more than meets the eye. When people see God’s power through Paul’s life and recognize that he is an ordinary person, they see and recognize God. His power is exalted in Paul’s weakness. Fisher is right in saying this verse should straighten up the most

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9. David E. Garland. “2 Corinthians,” in *The New American Commentary* on CD-ROM, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999).

discouraged pastor.<sup>10</sup>

A relevant, but also side part to this discussion occurs in chapter 10 verses 3 through 5. Paul says, “For although we are walking in the flesh, we do not wage war in a fleshly way,<sup>4</sup> since the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments<sup>5</sup> and every high-minded thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” Obviously if Paul is a clay pot, he is in the flesh. Yet he points out that he does not wage war according to the flesh. Elsewhere he has pointed out that “our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.”<sup>11</sup>

If pastors need a reminder that walking with Christ is beyond their strength, they need merely see that the weapons they need to battle with belong to another plane. They are weapons of God that can accomplish far more than man can in his strength. These weapons demolish strongholds and arguments against Christ. This is how believers live in God’s strength in the midst of certain conflicts.

Finally, Paul reaches his climax in this letter in chapter 12, verses 7 to 10. In verse 7 he says, “Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so I would not exalt myself.” It seems likely that this thorn in the flesh is some sort of physical ailment. Paul does not disclose what it is and that is probably best for everyone. What readers do know is that this thorn would prevent Paul from thinking too highly of himself and forgetting that he was a clay pot. What does Paul do about this thorn? He prays about it. In verse 8, “Concerning this, I

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10. Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 119.

11. Eph. 6:12.

pleaded with the Lord three times to take it away from me.” Paul prayed for God to remove this thorn. Paul probably believed he would be better off without this ailment. “God, I could serve you more effectively if I could see better or could walk longer distances,” he might say.

God’s answer to Paul comes in verse 9: “But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’” Ultimately, God says no to Paul, but he does so for Paul’s own good. He reminds Paul that Paul needs God’s grace not just for salvation, but every day. He will not make it without God’s grace. Then God discloses the key principle to the book of 2 Corinthians and all of the Christian life: God’s strength is made perfect in man’s weakness. This truth really explains all the verses quoted thus far. Paul is facing death, but he relies on a God who raises the dead and he is delivered. In fact, it appears that Paul faces death all the time and yet God always comes through. In man’s weakness, God is strong. God’s extraordinary power is seen in the weakness of His children.

This truth hit home like a bright shining light for Paul. He quit praying for the thorn to be removed and started praising God for the strangest things. He began to boast about his weaknesses. He says he is “pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in catastrophes, in persecutions, and in pressures.”<sup>12</sup> It is not enjoyable to experience these things, but Jesus in a person’s life changes his or her perspective. Paul realizes that, “when I am weak, then I am strong” and God’s strength in him is far better than his strength.

Finally, in chapter 13, Paul presents this truth one more time. In verse 3, Paul again addresses how the Corinthians are looking down on his sufferings. They want him to be powerful among them. In verse 4, Paul declares that he will be. He says, “In fact,

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12. 2 Cor. 12:10.

He was crucified in weakness, but He lives by God's power. For we also are weak in Him, yet toward you we will live with Him by God's power.” He finds his inspiration in the example of Jesus. He points to the fact that Jesus was also weak. In his crucifixion and the events leading up to it, Jesus displayed utter weakness. Yet, this weakness was required in order for true strength to be seen. The strength of the resurrection far outweighed the weakness of His death. In the same way, Paul declares that these two truths must be present in the life of the child of God. Weakness and strength must reside together just as life and death must reside together. Only when these live together can God’s power be seen in common clay pots.

### **Application**

The example of Paul in the book of 2 Corinthians should encourage pastors greatly. If anyone ever wanted a job that reminded him or her of their insufficiency, the pastoral ministry is it. A pastor that finishes the race must remember this truth and live relying upon a God that raises the dead and not in his or her own strength. Though situations in today’s society are frequently different than Paul’s, modern day pastors have challenges. There are daily reminders that the tasks of ministry are beyond the pastor’s strength. The ultimate reality is that the pastor longs to see people come to know Christ and yet cannot make this happen. In the same way, the pastor cannot make people forgive, love, or give. The calling to ministry is beyond the pastor’s ability in his or her own strength.

God is sufficient for the needs of ministry. The greatest challenge in ministry appears to be the same for Paul and for 21<sup>st</sup> century pastors: it is the challenge to rely on God and not self. It is notable that no pastor surveyed for this project suggested that they

had this challenge figured out. In fact, other challenges merely offer the reminder to cease relying on our own strength and to fall upon God.

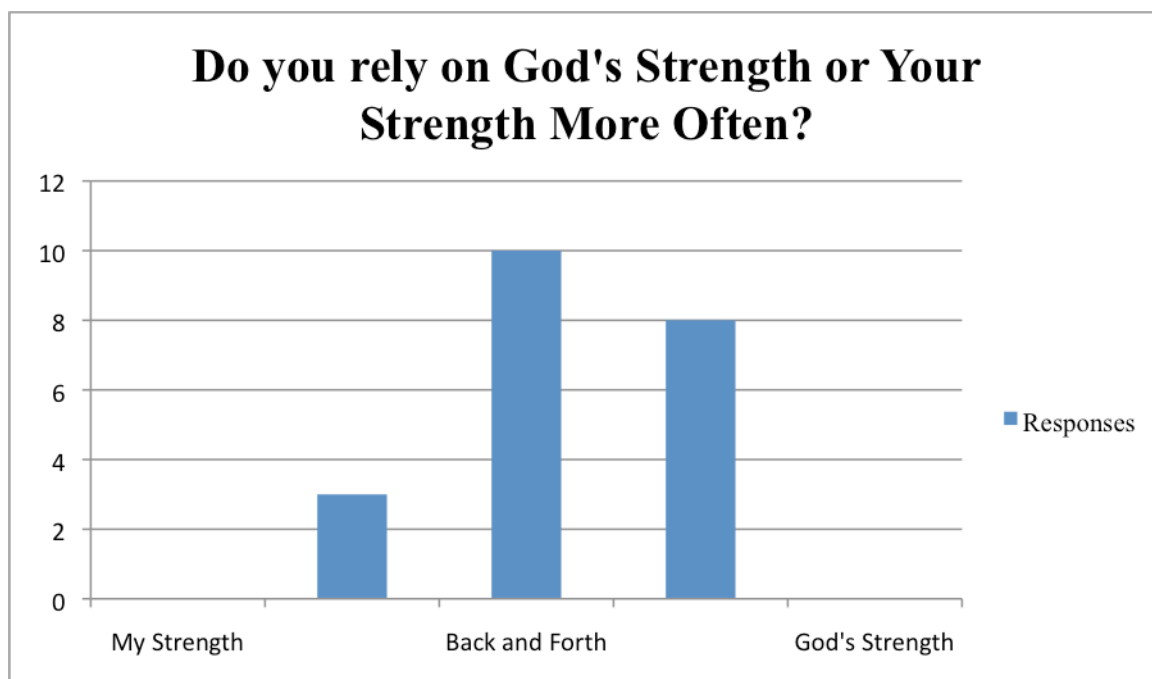


Fig. 4. Results for Relying on God's Strength Graph.

The amazing thing is that Christians have a choice to live differently by living in the Holy Spirit's control.<sup>13</sup> This truth should give believers encouragement by taking the focus off of self and putting it where it should be—on God. Pastors can realize their gifts and skills rest on the foundation of Christ's work, words, and person.<sup>14</sup> This allows them to see weaknesses and still rejoice in a God who is strong in those weaknesses.

Pastors must be careful to not let this truth make them lazy. This does not mean that higher education should not be sought. Nor does it mean that pastors should not seek to sharpen their skill set. As noted in the discussion of discipleship, believers should put

13. Eric Geiger, *Identity: Who you are in Christ* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 154.

14. *Ibid.*, 214.

forth effort. This just reminds Christians that no amount of effort will make them sufficient for this task. <sup>8</sup>Only God can make the pastor competent for the ministry.

For pastors, it is not showing up for meetings or preaching sermons that completes their job. Pastors are called by God into something that surpasses everything this side of heaven. Pastors are not simply keeping the streets safe. They are involved in an eternal endeavor. That should remind each pastor of his or her own insufficiency but also of God's sufficiency. "My human resources simply cannot touch eternity," but God's can and does through His people.<sup>15</sup> This is perhaps the greatest truth about identity in Christ. For the child of God, identity in Christ is inseparable from the mission.<sup>16</sup> This was true for Jesus and it is for pastors today as well. This talk is important because it assures that His soldiers can be faithful to the mission they have been given. This is in fact the great glory of ministry. Fisher observes, the glory of ministry is that those called are inadequate for task.<sup>17</sup> God raises the dead. God calls to ministry. Those two facts meet in the life of the pastor. As Paul exemplifies, if a pastor can learn to rely upon a God who raises the dead, then that pastor can make it to the end of the race.

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15. Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 119.

16. Armand Veilleux, "Identity with Christ: Modeling Our Lives on RB 72," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (February 1, 2010): 15.

17. Fisher, *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor*, 129.

## CONCLUSION

Ministry has and always will be a challenging proposition. Yet in the midst of these challenges, faithful men and women have completed the race of serving God in ministry. Paul is one of those faithful servants. Paul had a list of ministry challenges that is difficult for today's reader to wrap his or her head around. He appears to be constantly facing a situation that could result in death. Yet, somehow he can write to his dear companion Timothy, "I have finished the race."<sup>1</sup>

Today's pastor must look for answers to their challenges in the pages of Scripture. Paul becomes one of the best examples to study in regard to persevering in ministry. This thesis project has sought to identify what it was that allowed Paul to navigate the challenges of ministry and still make it to the finish line. As a result, it is an encouragement for pastors to take the lessons learned from the Apostle Paul's life and integrate them into their own understanding of pastoral ministry.

Six key foundational elements to Paul's understanding of who he was as a Christian and a ministry leader were revealed through this study. These key elements are powerful realities for pastors and have important implications for ministry in each generation. This is critically important because ministerial studies abound to reveal the challenges that confront ministry leaders. The onslaught comes from every direction and there is no sign of that changing this side of heaven.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. 4:7.

Paul is one of the greatest theologians of all time. In his writings, he thoroughly explains critical topics. His deep understanding of topics such as justification, allowed him to more fully grasp what God had done in his life. He understood that God had declared an enemy to be right with Him. As Paul lives out of this work of God, Paul encourages today's pastors to do the same. Pastors can dig deep in these topics to more fully appreciate what God has done in their lives. They can also show grace to others because of the grace they have received.

Paul shows others what it looks like to live a transformed life. Through the pages of Scripture, readers get to see Paul's life before Christ and the change that Jesus brought about in him. Paul reviews this transformation repeatedly in his writings. He seeks to make the most of this change and give God the glory for what had happened to him. This serves as a reminder to today's leaders to review the transformation that God has brought about in their lives and trust that God can do that same thing in those around them.

Paul also firmly grasped who he was in Christ. He quickly throws out descriptions of Christians such as saints, children, and heirs. These truths that he says about others are fully engrained in Paul's thinking about himself in Christ. This is crucial because it causes Paul to find his identity in what God has done rather than what God does through Paul. He is complete because God has made him complete. This prevents the pastor from being defined by their successes or failures in ministry.

When a Christian is called an heir, it reveals the fullness of what has happened in a person's life. Heir implies all the riches that come to a child of God in Christ. Paul believed this truth and demonstrated the change it created in his life. Paul could have nothing, yet was still firmly convinced that he had Jesus and that meant he had



everything. In Scripture, it is clear that Paul worked hard to provide for his needs as he shared Christ. Still, he demonstrated a resolute trust in God when he could not provide for those needs. Pastors can fall into the lure of money and begin to work for a paycheck in ministry. On the other hand, if pastors can follow Paul's example of trusting in the riches of Christ, they are able to resist this temptation and give God glory through their demonstration of the riches that are in Christ.

One of the key concepts that Paul seems to mention very often is that of his calling. In almost every letter, Paul introduces himself and mentions this truth about his life. Paul had a crystal clear understanding that God had called him. It grounded him in ministry and left him confessing that he could do nothing else as a result of God's call. Today's leaders must have this same conviction. The opportunities to turn away from God's call and find another profession will come often. Still, if God has called, it will not be possible to turn away or to turn away for long. This will remain a strong element to keep the pastor pressing on to the end.

Each of these elements deals with the point of salvation for Paul. He could look back and see God's work from the beginning in his life and find a solid ground to stand on when the pressures of ministry bore down on him. They serve as that same foundation for pastors today. Still, pastors must make it from salvation to glory. While they give encouragement for the in between, Paul spoke more about what got him through. Paul had discovered that God's strength was most greatly revealed through his weaknesses. This realization appeared to be a bright shining light for Paul. It allowed him to face the coming challenges, but to do so in the power of God. It is a wonderful reminder that 21<sup>st</sup>

century pastors can finish the race, but they must depend upon God in order to make it to the finish line.

While these are not all the truths that can be gleaned from Paul's life in regard to pastoral life, they are the foundational elements that allowed Paul to finish his race and they are based upon his pastoral identity. They overflow in Paul's writings to others as he encourages them to press on in the midst of challenges. Pastors can overlook each element on a day-to-day basis, but they will do so to their detriment. Difficulties will come in following Christ. There is no question about that this side of heaven. Yet, Paul knew, "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."<sup>2</sup> He knew that God was enough to carry him to the end. All readers know that God did just that in Paul's life. In studying his life, it becomes clear that 21<sup>st</sup> century pastors can know what Paul knew. These pastors too can find a foundation in Christ that will carry them through the certain challenges of life to the completion of their ministry.

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2. 1 Thess. 5:24.

## APPENDIX

## PASTORAL IDENTITY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How long have you been in ministry? How many ministry settings/positions have you held?

2. Have you thought about leaving the ministry (go to question 4 if no)?

● Yes ● No

3. How often do you think about leaving the ministry (approximately)?

	Every day	Every other day	More than once a week	Once a week	Once every two weeks	Once a month	Once every six months	Once a year	Once every few years	Never
Rate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. How close have you come to leaving the ministry?

	I left the ministry	Almost left	Considered leaving	Hardly think about it	Never considered it
Rate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Do you find yourself working in God's strength or your own strength most often?

	My strength	Back and forth	God's strength
Rate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Do you find that your happiness or unhappiness depends upon your success in ministry?

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Rate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Do you feel confident that you find your identity (meaning) from the right things as a pastor?

	Never	Sometimes	Always
Rate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Where do you find your identity as a pastor?

9. What has kept you from leaving the ministry?

10. What Bible personality (other than Jesus) encourages you to persevere in ministry?

11. Rate the following in order of importance to you as a pastor (1=most important, 6=least important; use each number only once):

	1	2	3	4	5	6
I am a new creation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am right with God.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I belong to God.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am rich in Christ.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am called by God.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am empowered by God.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. What other statements would you add to this list in terms of what encourages you to persevere in your calling as a pastor?

13. How often do you think about the change that occurred in your life when you came to Christ?

	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Rate	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of the change Jesus has brought about in you?

	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Rate	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

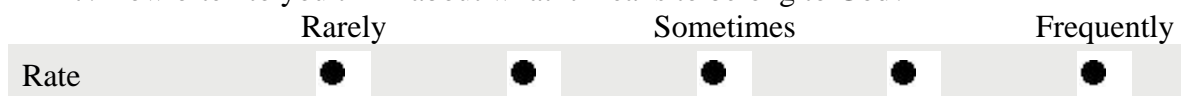
15. How often do you think about what it means to be right with God?

	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Rate	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what God has done to make you right with Him?

	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Rate	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. How often to you think about what it means to belong to God?



18. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what God has done to make you His own?



19. How often do you think about the riches and blessings that come with knowing Christ?



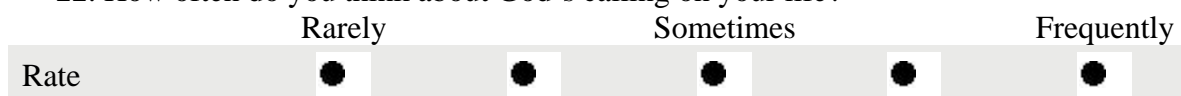
20. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what God has given you in Jesus?



21. Do you feel certain that God has called you into ministry?



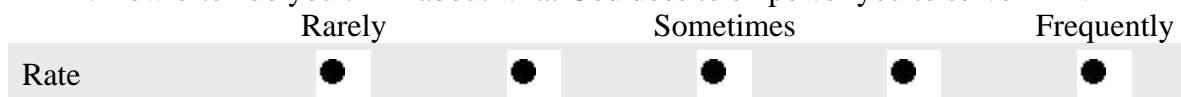
22. How often do you think about God's calling on your life?



23. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result knowing God has called you to ministry?



24. How often do you think about what God does to empower you to serve Him?



25. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what the Bible says about how He empowers His children?



## PASTORAL IDENTITY QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. How long have you been in ministry? How many ministry settings/positions have you held?

- 9 years
- 4 years. 1 positions as pastor. 2 other roles.
- Approx. 20 years. Since college, I have served in 4 positions.
- 22 years 2 positions
- 36 Years; 7 ministry settings/positions.
- 10 years. 2
- 13 Years. 4 settings/6 positions
- 18 years. I was a youth pastor when I was in college, and have been the pastor of four churches--one during seminary and three since then.
- 12 years, 5 positions
- 22 years
- 14 years in ministry Deacon, Deacon Chairman, Pastor
- 4 years full time, 5 years as a lay leader. One position, three different churches.
- About 10 years in full-time church ministry. I've been on staff at 4 different churches as a children's minister during this time.
- 20 years lead pastor at 4 different churches
- 17 years. 3 positions.
- 42, 3
- 18 years 2
- 22 years, 1 pastorate
- 31 years 4
- 12 years 2 churches, Associate pastor & senior pastor
- 5 years 2 ministries

2. Have you thought about leaving the ministry (go to question 4 if no)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	61.9%	13
No	38.1%	8
<i>answered question</i>		21
<i>skipped question</i>		0

3. How often do you think about leaving the ministry (approximately)?											
	Every day	Every other day	More than once a week	Once a week	Once every two weeks	Once a month	Once every six months	Once a year	Once every few years	Never	Rating Average
Rate	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	9	0	8.00
	<i>answered question</i>										14
	<i>skipped question</i>										7
4. How close have you come to leaving the ministry?											
	I left the ministry	Almost left	Considered leaving	Hardly think about it	Never considered it	Rating Average					
Rate	1	2	5	7	5	3.65					
	<i>answered question</i>					20					
	<i>skipped question</i>					1					
5. Do you find yourself working in God's strength or your own strength most often?											
	My strength	Back and forth	God's strength	Rating Average							
Rate	0	3	10	8	0	3.24					
	<i>answered question</i>					21					
	<i>skipped question</i>					0					
6. Do you find that your happiness or unhappiness depends upon your success in ministry?											
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Rating Average							
Rate	1	2	11	6	0	3.10					
	<i>answered question</i>					20					
	<i>skipped question</i>					1					
7. Do you feel confident that you find your identity (meaning) from the right things as a pastor?											
	Never	Sometimes	Always	Rating Average							
Rate	0	0	6	13	2	3.81					
	<i>answered question</i>					21					
	<i>skipped question</i>					0					
8. Where do you find your identity as a pastor?											
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the Lord.</li> <li>• In Christ.</li> </ul>										



- I try to find it in my understanding of God's calling. I was 17 when I begin to "feel led into ministry." (to use a pastor catch phrase) Theologically I know I find it in Scripture (i.e. 1 Timothy and other places), however, at times, practically I find it in all the "other things" we are told and read and think and feel as pastors.
- The obvious biblical answer of course is that my identity is in Christ. Beyond that I think there are a number of things that contribute to my identity as a pastor. Skill set, spiritual enablements, experience, unique ministry opportunities all along my journey are all things that I think God has used and is using to make me who I am.
- My calling from God.
- Christ.
- from God and Scripture.
- I find the most identity as a preacher/teacher, and as a caretaker of people.
- I seek to find my identity in Christ and His finished work. At times I struggle, but as soon as I realize that I am struggling I go back to prayer.
- Shepherd to the sheep, caring ministry, practicing or modeling what is preached.
- I find my identity as a pastor the same place i do as a father, or husband, or farrier (previous job) or deacon or whatever. These are simply roles that God calls us to be servants in. I am a slave and servant to Jesus....no matter what role i am in. As a husband or father i am to obey the Lord in it. A servant is most satisfied when he has pleased his master!
- Too often it is from the comments or compliments that I receive. There are several times when it through God's voice or stirring that I find my identity.
- In Christ and His leading.
- In whether or not I carry out the duties I have been given as a minister of the gospel. In whether or not I fulfill my "charge" from II Timothy 4: 2. I also admit my identify is tied as well to the health of the church and my success with the flock.
- In my personal sense of call--the Lord's hand in my life leading me to pursue ministry as a vocation. In the church's affirmation of my gifts for ordained ministry.
- Other believers and pastors.
- My calling. Scriptures.
- I find my identity in God's grace and His calling on my life.
- In the last 20 years in Christ alone.
- Through helping people grow in dealing with life.
- As undershepherd relying upon the power of Christ to work through me. I need to remind myself that I am an instrument of the almighty God.

9. What has kept you from leaving the ministry?

- God's calling. I realize that this is about Him not me.
- Not a consideration. Christ has called me, and I serve Him.
- I would say my sense that God has called me, and the support and prayers of my

family, His church, and a couple of close brothers in Christ.

- The grace of God. The need to finish what I've started. The passion God gives me for what I do. The love for serving and equipping God's people.
- My calling from God.
- The call of God on my life.
- My Calling from God and knowing that I cannot abandon the task God has given me, He will sustain me.
- Knowing beyond any doubt that I am called.
- God's call and sense of purpose...I can't imagine being fulfilled doing anything else.
- God's call on my life.
- One, I know it is what God has called me to do at this time. Two, I see the fruit of this calling.
- Obedience to God and knowing that God will see me through the tough times. I know I need to persevere, sometimes that is just tough.
- God's clear call, leading, and provision
- I enjoy ministry and I have a calling to serve. Although I have been successful in the secular work world prior to the ministry, I couldn't see myself doing anything else but the work of ministry.
- I have tended to consider leaving ministry in times of congregational conflict. Study of family systems theory has given me a chance to explore understanding the emotional systems of congregations and my personal functioning in a way that helps me pursue being a more effective leader. In times of consideration of leaving ministry, I have continued to find God's affirmation through the Word and through God's people who remind me that God is still very much at work through me.
- Called by God!
- I enjoy what I do.
- The sense of privilege that I feel to be in ministry. The affirmation of my calling in the lives of others. (It probably helps not having any other opportunities lol.)
- God's grace and my hunger to preach
- I know I'm called
- The call to preach the gospel faithfully.

10. What Bible personality (other than Jesus) encourages you to persevere in ministry?

- Peter, **Paul**, Timothy
- **Paul** and Peter
- For sure **Paul**, Peter, John. Just recently I studied Joshua, another great hero.
- I would imagine most pastors would have to say **Paul**, since we spend so much of our time studying the epistles and because most of us can identify with his struggles.
- **Paul**

- **PAUL**
- the apostle Peter
- Timothy
- There are several: Joseph, Daniel, the prophets, **Paul**
- **Paul**
- The apostle **Paul**.
- Peter and his life. Job and his story.
- **Paul**, King David
- The apostle **Paul**
- I find much in common with Timothy, the young man to whom Paul wrote.
- **Paul**
- **Paul**
- **Paul** and Timothy
- Peter, Moses
- Gideon
- John the Baptist.
- **14 of 21 mentioned Paul.**

11. Rate the following in order of importance to you as a pastor (1=most important, 6=least important; use each number only once):

	1	2	3	4	5	6
I am a new creation.	4	4	2	3	1	6
I am right with God.	6	3	1	3	6	1
I belong to God.	5	5	5	3	1	1
I am rich in Christ.	2	0	3	3	7	5
I am called by God.	9	5	2	3	1	0
I am empowered by God.	6	3	4	2	1	4
<i>answered question</i>						20
<i>skipped question</i>						1

12. What other statements would you add to this list in terms of what encourages you to persevere in your calling as a pastor?

- Paul - I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith
- Being in Christ
- I have no other additions, the list in #11 is hard enough to prioritize :)
- The desire to be used of God to do something eternally significant, to know at the end of my journey that I've run the race and kept the faith, to finish well and have no regrets.
- I want to finish well.

- I am encouraged by the Holy Spirit and other brothers/pastors.
- I know I am making a positive difference in the lives of others.
- I am an equipper of the saints
- Trusting that somehow in God's eyes this matters on an eternal level. 1 Cor 15:58 -- Our labor in the Lord is not in vain.
- Filled with love and joy by His Spirit
- I am valued by God I am valued by others I am helpful to the Kingdom
- Joshua 1:9 "the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
- Christ is the head of His church and is building His Church.
- Transformation of individuals
- I am afraid of God
- I am loved by God.

13. How often do you think about the change that occurred in your life when you came to Christ?

	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	3	2	8	5	3	3.14
	<i>answered question</i>					21
	<i>skipped question</i>					0

14. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of the change Jesus has brought about in you?

	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	0	1	6	8	6	3.90
	<i>answered question</i>					21
	<i>skipped question</i>					0

15. How often do you think about what it means to be right with God?

	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	0	1	4	9	7	4.05
	<i>answered question</i>					21
	<i>skipped question</i>					0

16. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what God has done to make you right with Him?

	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	0	1	4	9	7	4.05
	<i>answered question</i>					21
	<i>skipped question</i>					0

17. How often do you think about what it means to belong to God?

	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	0	0	3	9	9	4.29
	<i>answered question</i>					21
	<i>skipped question</i>					0
18. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what God has done to make you His own?						
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	0	1	5	8	7	4.00
	<i>answered question</i>					21
	<i>skipped question</i>					0
19. How often do you think about the riches and blessings that come with knowing Christ?						
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	0	0	5	7	9	4.19
	<i>answered question</i>					21
	<i>skipped question</i>					0
20. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what God has given you in Jesus?						
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	0	1	4	7	9	4.14
	<i>answered question</i>					21
	<i>skipped question</i>					0
21. Do you feel certain that God has called you into ministry?						
	Not certain		Pretty sure		Completely certain	Rating Average
Rate	0	0	0	2	19	4.90
	<i>answered question</i>					21
	<i>skipped question</i>					0
22. How often do you think about God's calling on your life?						
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	0	0	4	3	14	4.48
	<i>answered question</i>					21
	<i>skipped question</i>					0
23. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of knowing God has called you to ministry?						
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	0	0	1	7	13	4.57

<i>answered question</i>						21
<i>skipped question</i>						0
24. How often do you think about what God does to empower you to serve Him?						
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	0	0	4	7	10	4.29
<i>answered question</i>						21
<i>skipped question</i>						0
25. Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what the Bible says about how He empowers His children?						
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently	Rating Average
Rate	0	0	3	8	10	4.33
<i>answered question</i>						21
<i>skipped question</i>						0

PASTOR IDENTITY QUESTIONNAIRE INDIVIDUAL RESULTS

QUESTION 1

	How long have you been in ministry? How many ministry settings/positions have you held?
1558565644	9 years
1557198588	4 years. 1 positions as pastor. 2 other roles.
1557061164	Approx. 20 years. Since college, I have served in 4 positions.
1556997530	22 years 2 positions
1556811158	36 Years; 7 ministry settings/positions.
1556771636	10 years. 2
1555645476	13 Years. 4 settings/6 positions
1554017051	18 years. I was a youth pastor when I was in college, and have been the pastor of four churches--one during seminary and three since then.
1552558063	12 years, 5 positions
1551881134	22 years
1550942941	14 years in ministry Deacon, Deacon Chairman, Pastor
1550910606	4 years full time, 5 years as a lay leader. One position, three different churches.
1550325415	About 10 years in full-time church ministry. I've been on staff at 4 different churches as a children's minister during this time.
1549475145	20 years lead pastor at 4 different churches
1548987345	17 years. 3 positions.
1547809991	42, 3
1547312928	18 years 2
1547128566	31 years 4
1547049142	12 years 2 churches, Associate pastor & senior pastor
1546785527	5 years 2 ministries
1536005719	22 years, 1 pastorate

## QUESTION 2

	Have you thought about leaving the ministry (go to question 4 if no)?	
1558565644		No
1557198588		No
1557061164		No
1556997530	Yes	
1556811158		No
1556771636	Yes	
1555645476	Yes	
1554017051	Yes	
1552558063	Yes	
1551881134		No
1550942941		No
1550910606	Yes	
1550325415	Yes	
1549475145		No
1548987345	Yes	
1547809991		No
1547312928	Yes	
1547128566	Yes	
1547049142	Yes	
1546785527	Yes	
1536005719	Yes	



## QUESTION 3

	How often do you think about leaving the ministry (approximately)?									
	Every day	Every other day	More than once a week	Once a week	Once every two weeks	Once a month	Once every six months	Once a year	Once every few years	Never
1558565644										
1557198588										
1557061164										
1556997530									X	
1556811158										
1556771636									X	
1555645476									X	
1554017051									X	
1552558063								X		
1551881134									X	
1550942941							X			
1550910606										
1550325415									X	
1549475145									X	
1548987345										
1547809991										
1547312928									X	
1547128566							X			
1547049142						X				
1546785527			X							
1536005719									X	

## QUESTION 4

	How close have you come to leaving the ministry?				
	I left the ministry	Almost left	Considered leaving	Hardly think about it	Never considered it
1558565644					X
1557198588					X
1557061164				X	
1556997530				X	
1556811158					X
1556771636			X		
1555645476				X	
1554017051		X			
1552558063				X	
1551881134				X	
1550942941			X		
1550910606					
1550325415		X			
1549475145					X
1548987345			X		
1547809991					X
1547312928				X	
1547128566				X	
1547049142			X		
1546785527			X		
1536005719				X	

## QUESTION 5

	Do you find yourself working in God's strength or your own strength most often?				
	My strength		Back and forth		God's strength
1558565644				X	
1557198588				X	
1557061164			X		
1556997530				X	
1556811158					X
1556771636				X	
1555645476			X		
1554017051			X		
1552558063			X		
1551881134			X		
1550942941				X	
1550910606			X		
1550325415			X		
1549475145			X		
1548987345				X	
1547809991			X		
1547312928		X			
1547128566				X	
1547049142		X			
1546785527			X		
1536005719		X			

## QUESTION 6

	Do you find that your happiness or unhappiness depends upon your success in ministry?				
	Always		Sometimes		Never
1558565644			X		
1557198588			X		
1557061164			X		
1556997530					
1556811158				X	
1556771636			X		
1555645476			X		
1554017051			X		
1552558063			X		
1551881134			X		
1550942941				X	
1550910606			X		
1550325415		X			
1549475145			X		
1548987345				X	
1547809991	X				
1547312928				X	
1547128566				X	
1547049142		X			
1546785527				X	
1536005719			X		

## QUESTION 7

	Do you feel confident that you find your identity (meaning) from the right things as a pastor?				
	Never		Sometimes		Always
1558565644				X	
1557198588				X	
1557061164			X		
1556997530			X		
1556811158					X
1556771636				X	
1555645476				X	
1554017051				X	
1552558063				X	
1551881134				X	
1550942941				X	
1550910606			X		
1550325415				X	
1549475145			X		
1548987345				X	
1547809991					X
1547312928				X	
1547128566			X		
1547049142				X	
1546785527				X	
1536005719			X		

## QUESTION 8

	Where do you find your identity as a pastor?
1558565644	From the Lord
1557198588	In Christ
1557061164	I try to find it in my understanding of God's calling. I was 17 when I begin to "feel led into ministry." (to use a pastor catch phrase) Theologically I know I find it in Scripture (i.e. 1 Timothy and other places), however, at times, practically I find it in all the "other things" we are told and read and think and feel as pastors.
1556997530	The obvious biblical answer of course is that my identity is in Christ. Beyond that I think there are a number of things that contribute to my identity as a pastor. Skill set, spiritual enablements, experience, unique ministry opportunities all along my journey are all things that I think God has used and is using to make me who I am.
1556811158	My calling from God.
1556771636	Christ
1555645476	from God and Scripture
1554017051	I find the most identity as a preacher/teacher, and as a caretaker of people.
1552558063	I seek to find my identity in Christ and His finished work. At times I struggle, but as soon as I realize that I am struggling I go back to prayer.
1551881134	Shepherd to the sheep, caring ministry, practicing or modeling what is preached
1550942941	I find my identity as a pastor the same place i do as a father, or husband, or farrier (previous job) or deacon or whatever. These are simply roles that God calls us to be servants in. I am a slave and servant to Jesus....no matter what role i am in. As a husband or father i am to obey the Lord in it. A servant is most satisfied when he has pleased his master!
1550910606	Too often it is from the comments or compliments that I receive. There are several times when it through God's voice or stirring that I find my identity.
1550325415	In Christ and His leading
1549475145	In whether or not I carry out the duties I have been given as a minister of the gospel. In whether or not I fulfill my "charge" from II Timothy 4: 2. I also admit my identify is tied as well to the health of the church and my success with the flock
1548987345	in my personal sense of call--the Lord's hand in my life leading me to pursue ministry as a vocation. In the church's affirmation of my gifts for ordained ministry.
1547809991	Other believers and pastors.
1547312928	My calling. Scriptures.
1547128566	In the last 20 years in Christ alone
1547049142	Through helping people grow in dealing with life

1546785527	as undershepherd relying upon the power of Christ to work through me. I need to remind myself that I am an instrument of the almighty God.
1536005719	I find my identity in God's grace and His calling on my life.

## QUESTION 9

	What has kept you from leaving the ministry?
1558565644	God's calling. I realize that this is about Him not me.
1557198588	Not a consideration. Christ has called me, and I serve Him.
1557061164	I would say my sense that God has called me, and the support and prayers of my family, His church, and a couple of close brothers in Christ.
1556997530	The grace of God. The need to finish what I've started. The passion God gives me for what I do. The love for serving and equipping God's people.
1556811158	My calling from God.
1556771636	The call of God on my life.
1555645476	My Calling from God and knowing that I cannot abandon the task God has given me, He will sustain me.
1554017051	Knowing beyond any doubt that I am called.
1552558063	God's call and sense of purpose...I can't imagine being fulfilled doing anything else.
1551881134	God's call on my life.
1550942941	1. I know it is what God has called me to do at this time. 2. I see the fruit of this calling.
1550910606	Obedience to God and knowing that God will see me through the tough times. I know I need to persevere, sometimes that is just tough.
1550325415	God's clear call, leading, and provision
1549475145	I enjoy ministry and I have a calling to serve. Although I have been successful in the secular work world prior to the ministry, I couldn't see myself doing anything else but the work of ministry.
1548987345	I have tended to consider leaving ministry in times of congregational conflict. Study of family systems theory has given me a chance to explore understanding the emotional systems of congregations and my personal functioning in a way that helps me pursue being a more effective leader. In times of consideration of leaving ministry, I have continued to find God's affirmation through the Word and through God's people who remind me that God is still very much at work through me.
1547809991	Called by God!
1547312928	I enjoy what I do.
1547128566	God's grace and my hunger to preach
1547049142	I know I'm called
1546785527	The call to preach the gospel faithfully.
1536005719	The sense of privilege that I feel to be in ministry. The affirmation of my calling in the lives of others. (It probably helps not having any other opportunities lol)



## QUESTION 10

	What Bible personality (other than Jesus) encourages you to persevere in ministry?
1558565644	Peter, Paul, Timothy
1557198588	Paul and Peter
1557061164	For sure Paul, Peter, John. Just recently I studied Joshua, another great hero.
1556997530	I would imagine most pastors would have to say Paul, since we spend so much of our time studying the epistles and because most of us can identify with his struggles.
1556811158	Paul
1556771636	PAUL
1555645476	the apostle Peter
1554017051	Timothy
1552558063	There are several: Joseph, Daniel, the prophets, Paul
1551881134	Paul
1550942941	The apostle Paul.
1550910606	Peter and his life. Job and his story.
1550325415	Paul, King David
1549475145	The apostle Paul
1548987345	I find much in common with Timothy, the young man to whom Paul wrote.
1547809991	Paul
1547312928	Paul
1547128566	Peter, Moses
1547049142	Gideon
1546785527	John the Baptist.
1536005719	Paul and Timothy

## QUESTION 11

	Rate the following in order of importance to you as a pastor (1=most important, 6=least important; use each number only once):					
	I am a New Creation	I am Right with God	I Belong to God	I am Rich in Christ	I am Called by God	I am Empowered by God
1558565644	1	4	2	5	3	6
1557198588						
1557061164	2	1	3	5	4	6
1556997530	4	3	2	5	1	6
1556811158	6	5	4	3	1	2
1556771636	1	1	1	1	1	1
1555645476	5	2	1	6	3	4
1554017051	2	5	4	6	1	3
1552558063	6	1	2	5	4	3
1551881134	3	2	2	3	1	1
1550942941	2	1	5	6	3	4
1550910606	2	3	1	6	4	5
1550325415	6	4	3	5	2	1
1549475145	4	6	2	5	1	3
1548987345	4	5	1	6	2	3
1547809991	1	5	6	4	2	1
1547312928	6	4	3	5	1	2
1547128566	6	5	4	3	2	1
1547049142	1	1	1	1	1	1
1546785527	6	5	3	4	1	2
1536005719	2	1	3	4	5	6

## QUESTION 12

	What other statements would you add to this list in terms of what encourages you to persevere in your calling as a pastor?
1558565644	Paul - I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith
1557198588	Being in Christ
1557061164	I have no other additions, the list in #11 is hard enough to prioritize :)
1556997530	The desire to be used of God to do something eternally significant, to know at the end of my journey that I've run the race and kept the faith, to finish well and have no regrets.
1556811158	
1556771636	I want to finish well.
1555645476	I am encouraged by the Holy Spirit and other brothers/pastors.
1554017051	I know I am making a positive difference in the lives of others.
1552558063	
1551881134	I am an equipper of the saints
1550942941	Trusting that somehow in God's eyes this matters on an eternal level. 1 Cor 15:58 -- Our labor in the Lord is not in vain.
1550910606	
1550325415	Filled with love and joy by His Spirit
1549475145	I am amused by God I am valued by others I am helpful to the Kingdom
1548987345	Joshua 1:9 "the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
1547809991	
1547312928	
1547128566	Transformation of individuals
1547049142	I am afraid of God
1546785527	I am loved by God.
1536005719	Christ is the head of His church and is building His Church.

## QUESTION 13

	How often do you think about the change that occurred in your life when you came to Christ?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644			X		
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530			X		
1556811158			X		
1556771636					X
1555645476				X	
1554017051	X				
1552558063				X	
1551881134			X		
1550942941					X
1550910606			X		
1550325415		X			
1549475145		X			
1548987345	X				
1547809991				X	
1547312928	X				
1547128566			X		
1547049142				X	
1546785527			X		
1536005719			X		

## QUESTION 14

	Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of the change Jesus has brought about in you?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644				X	
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530			X		
1556811158			X		
1556771636					X
1555645476					X
1554017051			X		
1552558063					X
1551881134				X	
1550942941					X
1550910606			X		
1550325415			X		
1549475145				X	
1548987345			X		
1547809991					X
1547312928		X			
1547128566				X	
1547049142				X	
1546785527				X	
1536005719				X	

## QUESTION 15

	How often do you think about what it means to be right with God?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644					X
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530					X
1556811158			X		
1556771636					X
1555645476					X
1554017051				X	
1552558063					X
1551881134				X	
1550942941				X	
1550910606				X	
1550325415				X	
1549475145			X		
1548987345			X		
1547809991				X	
1547312928			X		
1547128566				X	
1547049142				X	
1546785527		X			
1536005719					X

## QUESTION 16

	Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what God has done to make you right with Him?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644					X
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530			X		
1556811158		X			
1556771636					X
1555645476					X
1554017051				X	
1552558063					X
1551881134				X	
1550942941				X	
1550910606				X	
1550325415				X	
1549475145			X		
1548987345			X		
1547809991					X
1547312928			X		
1547128566				X	
1547049142				X	
1546785527				X	
1536005719					X

## QUESTION 17

	How often to you think about what it means to belong to God?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644				X	
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530					X
1556811158			X		
1556771636					X
1555645476					X
1554017051					X
1552558063			X		
1551881134				X	
1550942941			X		
1550910606				X	
1550325415				X	
1549475145				X	
1548987345					X
1547809991				X	
1547312928				X	
1547128566				X	
1547049142					X
1546785527					X
1536005719					X



## QUESTION 18

	Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what God has done to make you His own?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644				X	
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530			X		
1556811158		X			
1556771636					X
1555645476					X
1554017051					X
1552558063			X		
1551881134				X	
1550942941			X		
1550910606				X	
1550325415				X	
1549475145				X	
1548987345			X		
1547809991					X
1547312928			X		
1547128566				X	
1547049142					X
1546785527					X
1536005719				X	

## QUESTION 19

	How often do you think about the riches and blessings that come with knowing Christ?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644					X
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530					X
1556811158			X		
1556771636					X
1555645476				X	
1554017051			X		
1552558063			X		
1551881134					X
1550942941					X
1550910606				X	
1550325415				X	
1549475145				X	
1548987345					X
1547809991					X
1547312928			X		
1547128566					X
1547049142				X	
1546785527					X
1536005719				X	

## QUESTION 20

	Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what God has given you in Jesus?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644					X
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530					X
1556811158		X			
1556771636					X
1555645476				X	
1554017051			X		
1552558063				X	
1551881134					X
1550942941					X
1550910606			X		
1550325415					X
1549475145				X	
1548987345			X		
1547809991				X	
1547312928			X		
1547128566				X	
1547049142					X
1546785527				X	
1536005719					X

## QUESTION 21

	Do you feel certain that God has called you into ministry?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644					X
1557198588					X
1557061164					X
1556997530					X
1556811158					X
1556771636					X
1555645476					X
1554017051					X
1552558063					X
1551881134					X
1550942941					X
1550910606					X
1550325415					X
1549475145					X
1548987345				X	
1547809991					X
1547312928					X
1547128566					X
1547049142					X
1546785527					X
1536005719				X	

## QUESTION 22

	How often do you think about God's calling on your life?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644					X
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530			X		
1556811158			X		
1556771636					X
1555645476					X
1554017051					X
1552558063					X
1551881134					X
1550942941					X
1550910606					X
1550325415			X		
1549475145				X	
1548987345					X
1547809991					X
1547312928					X
1547128566				X	
1547049142					X
1546785527					X
1536005719			X		

## QUESTION 23

	Do you find encouragement regularly as a result knowing God has called you to ministry?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644					X
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530			X		
1556811158				X	
1556771636					X
1555645476					X
1554017051					X
1552558063					X
1551881134					X
1550942941				X	
1550910606					X
1550325415					X
1549475145				X	
1548987345				X	
1547809991					X
1547312928					X
1547128566				X	
1547049142					X
1546785527					X
1536005719				X	

## QUESTION 24

	How often do you think about what God does to empower you to serve Him?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644				X	
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530					X
1556811158			X		
1556771636					X
1555645476				X	
1554017051					X
1552558063				X	
1551881134					X
1550942941					X
1550910606					X
1550325415					X
1549475145			X		
1548987345			X		
1547809991				X	
1547312928				X	
1547128566				X	
1547049142					X
1546785527					X
1536005719			X		

## QUESTION 25

	Do you find encouragement regularly as a result of what the Bible says about how He empowers His children?				
	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently
1558565644				X	
1557198588				X	
1557061164					X
1556997530					X
1556811158			X		
1556771636					X
1555645476				X	
1554017051					X
1552558063				X	
1551881134					X
1550942941					X
1550910606				X	
1550325415					X
1549475145			X		
1548987345			X		
1547809991				X	
1547312928					X
1547128566				X	
1547049142					X
1546785527					X
1536005719			X		



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