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W. O. Vaught

*Ouachita Baptist University*

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## MR. ORDINARY CHRISTIAN MEETS SAUL OF TARSUS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS  
NUMBER 34  
ACTS 9:13-18

Dr. W. O. Vaught  
Immanuel Baptist Church  
Little Rock, Arkansas

In our last session together we studied Mr. Ordinary Christian. Please remember if you are an ordinary Christian you are fortunate indeed for our Lord depends on your kind of servant to get his work done.

ACTS 9:13-14 "Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name." Here we have human viewpoint in regard to Saul of Tarsus. Ananias had heard of Saul as the chief persecutor of the Jews. He knew what a dangerous man Saul was. Saul had authority to arrest the Christians.

ACTS 9:15 "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:" This verse gives us the divine viewpoint. Here is information which was given to Ananias which will not be known by other believers for a period of ten or fifteen years. God had chosen Saul to carry Christianity out to the Gentile world. The word BUT is a conjunction of contrast and shows how human viewpoint shows Saul as the persecutor, while God knows he is to be the greatest church builder of all time. The Lord knows what Saul is to do, how he will become Paul the Missionary, and how his life is going to turn out. The Lord sees the end from the beginning. God knows every failure and every sin Saul will commit, but the grace of God is extended toward Saul and God will put up with Saul for he knows eventually how great he will become. This is the omniscience of God and here we see the greatness of the principle of God's grace.

Here God says of Saul, "He is a chosen vessel unto me". Under seven points let us review the doctrine of election as it refers to this word "chosen". What is true here of Saul is true of every born-again believer. Human viewpoint must be excluded and divine viewpoint must be substituted.

### Seven Points on Election

1. Christ was chosen from all eternity past. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who was elected in the plan of redemption. God the Father, the author of the plan, chose Christ the executor of the plan. God the Father elected God the Son to carry forward his plan of salvation.  
ISAIAH 42:1-4 "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."  
1 PETER 2:6 "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."
2. This election of Christ took place in eternity past. It is the doctrine of divine decrees.  
EPHESIANS 1:4 "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:"  
2 THESSALONIANS 2:13 "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:"

- 1 PETER 1:2 "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."
3. Election is the present and future possession of every believer. Election is your possession now. The moment you were saved you shared the election of Christ.
  4. Every believer shares the election of Christ through what we call positional truth. Christianity is a relationship with Christ.  
ROMANS 8:28-33 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."
  5. Election takes place in you the moment of salvation.  
2 THESSALONIANS 2:13 "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth"  
1 CORINTHIANS 1:9 "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."
  6. Election is also the foundation of the church.  
1 THESSALONIANS 1:4 "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."
  7. The saved remnant of Israel are also elected. All four covenants--Abrahamic, Davidic, Palestinian and New Covenants are unconditional covenants.

God said of Saul that he was a chosen "vessel" unto me. A vessel is something used for service.

ROMANS 9:21-23 "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory"

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7 "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

2 TIMOTHY 2:21 "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

Ananias is Mr. Ordinary Believer. He is told to contact the man who is to become the greatest believer of all times. How is Saul of Tarsus going to think during his life? Remember he was a Jew by blood, a Roman by birth and had a Jewish and a Greek education. He was one of the Jewish leaders of his day. Was a member of the Sanhedrin Council at age 30. Here is one of the greatest men of all times. At the moment of his conversion, Saul of Tarsus made a right about face, and came immediately to believe that Bible doctrine was the most important thing in the world. Saul never got this idea out of his mind and made this the central part of his thinking and living. Paul didn't get disturbed because he wasn't married. Doctrine in his mind led him to occupation with Christ and this was the central thing in his life. Not money nor marriage nor home nor position--these things didn't make the difference. Everything in his life was detail except Bible doctrine. If you are a Christian you have the Lord, and if you have the Lord then nothing else really matters.

Let us turn for a moment to Phillipians 4 and discover the explanation of the inner peace and contentment of Saul of Tarsus.

PHILLIPIANS 4:11 "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Paul is saying that he had gone through a period of lack of food, lack of friends, lack of clothing. But these things didn't upset him. Then he says, "I have learned" (In a point of time he had learned this great lesson "to be" (infinitive of purpose) content. Paul is saying that the things that make you happy are not physical things, but rather Bible doctrine in your mind. Notice Paul says, "I have learned". This is the same for every person. It is something that has to be learned.

PHILLIPIANS 4:12 "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Now Paul says, "I know". These words ring like a bell through the writings of Paul. He knows for he had been instructed. Doctrine has to become more important to you than the very air you breathe. Paul learned this in those days of quiet meditation when he was blind, and in those months when he was alone with God in the desert, and in those silent years back at Tarsus. Paul also learned the principle of this great lesson from Mr. Ordinary Christian named Ananias. Notice again the emphasis of Paul here--"I have learned", "I know", "I am instructed". Doctrine is something you learn.

ACTS 9:15 "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" To bear my name means to carry a principle, a message, something that is of vast importance. He is to bear that message before three groups--Kings, The Gentiles, and Israel.

ACTS 9:16 "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." He is to learn how many things he would suffer for Jesus Christ. The Lord hides much of the suffering from us. Any religious worker faces a certain amount of suffering. Before Saul ever took one step in his active ministry, the Lord showed him how great things he would suffer for the name of Christ. I will show (Huper-deiknumi). Hupo is the preposition of authority and deiknumi is the word for teach. It means he would be shown and taught from the authority of God. The only way he could serve with greatest effectiveness under such pressures of suffering was for him to have his mind filled with Bible doctrine. The link between effective service and suffering was Bible doctrine.

ACTS 9:17-18 "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." Here is the ministry of Ananias. Notice he called him "Brother Saul". Saul of Tarsus is already saved. (Let me list here a point about your King James version. Some places you have the word "Holy Spirit" and some places you have the word "Holy Ghost". They always mean exactly the same and come from the very same word "pneuma". The Oxford translators gave one translation and the Westminster group gave another translation but it is exactly the same word.) When the Lord told Ananias what to do, he obeyed immediately. It is the Lord's business to protect him. Ananias put his hands on Saul. This means he is identified with him. Ananias in this way recognized a new believer. Mr. Ordinary Christian ministered to Saul on the principle of grace. He doesn't hold Saul's past against him. Please notice that he doesn't ask Saul to jump up and give his testimony. He doesn't ask Saul to join the local church in Damascus.

He doesn't hit him with a lot of taboos. He communicates to him Bible doctrine. Ananias sticks to the issue and the issue is Bible doctrine.

Please notice that before Saul was given physical food he was given spiritual food. He needed something far more than food, clothes, or even eyesight. He is waiting for Bible doctrine. He said to him receive thy sight--and the word is ana blepo--ana means "up" and blepo means "to look". Saul was commanded to look up. Ananias was talking about spiritual sight not physical sight. Getting his physical eyesight back was secondary. Saul was commanded to be filled with the spirit.

#### Five Points On Being Filled With The Spirit

1. In the transition period between the Age of Israel and the Church Age, a new believer received the Holy Spirit by contact with an apostle. Philip, the evangelist, had been leading people to Christ for many days in Samaria, but they had not received the Holy Spirit. The apostles had to come down and lay their hands on them in order for them to receive the Holy Spirit.
2. There is one exception to this in the Bible, and that is right here with Saul of Tarsus. Saul, who is to become Paul, received the Holy Spirit by contact with an ordinary Christian, namely Ananias. This gives emphasis to the fact that Mr. Ordinary Christian is very important indeed. (Note: The backfield men in football can't go anywhere if the linemen don't block out the oncoming tacklers.) Ananias, Mr. Ordinary Christian, is most important and though Saul of Tarsus would become the greatest believer of all, this ordinary man was used to help him. We can't get along without each other. Both are important.
3. This reminds us of teamwork. Always behind the great preacher, the great missionary, there is always Mr. Ordinary Believer.
4. These ministries are both spiritual and physical.
5. Today, in the post-canon period, when we have the complete Bible, the believer receives the Holy Spirit the moment of conversion. In the pre-canon period, before people had the whole Bible, they received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at conversion, but not the infilling of the Holy Spirit. But now, since we live in the day when we have the complete Bible, the new convert receives the indwelling and the infilling of the Holy Spirit instantaneously.

ACTS 9:18 "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." It says Saul "Received physical sight". It also says he "received baptism". Baptism literally says this--down with human good, up with divine good. Down with my sins, up with the new life in Christ.

ACTS 9:19 "And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus." Then Saul received food. Notice the order in which these things happened, spiritual food and the baptism of the Spirit came first, then came physical food. Then Saul spent certain days there while they communicated doctrine to him. This was his first instruction session.

In closing this study, let us get these points on Ananias.

1. Service in the large field is often determined by faithfulness in the small field.
2. Ananias was faithful in teaching one man but the results were fantastic.
3. The ordinary Christian only become bored when he is a slave to circumstances. This means when circumstances are magnified beyond the detail stage.
4. If a person learns Bible doctrine then circumstances can never enslave him nor bore him.
5. Like Ananias, every Christian must be ready for team contribution. Do your own work as unto the Lord. No man can be great without many people contributing to his greatness.

6. Monotony becomes inner happiness and difficulties are translated into opportunities when Bible doctrine is first.
7. It isn't what we do for Christ that counts, but what Bible doctrine does for us.
8. Christian service is not doing but transmitting.
9. Under the principle of grace, everything depends upon who and what God is, never who and what the believer is.
10. Unbelievers do not need us, but they need the Gospel. Believers do not need us, they need doctrine. So to become an Ananias, we must learn doctrine. The greatest tragedy of the 20th Century as far as Christians are concerned is that they do not know doctrine and they don't hear doctrine preached to them.