

## Identity 9: Chapter 3:1-3

My ministry is not measured by the size of my prison cell. I am confined by his grace; Christ Jesus is the prison keeper. You are why I am here. (Grace measures my ministry; this prison cell cannot hide my message from you!) It is common knowledge that I have been entrusted with a message that reveals how included you Gentiles are in the grace gift of God. You must have heard how this mystery was revealed to me, in a dramatic disclosure that broke the silence of a long kept secret. I have previous written briefly about this. [Eph. 3:1-3](#).

Paul's "dramatic disclosure" is his being knocked off his horse event. Paul had a deep relationship with the Ephesian church. He first came to Ephesus to minister in A.D. 55 and stayed there for 2 full years. This is recorded in [Acts 18:21](#) and [19:8-10](#). His farewell message to them is one of the most moving in the Bible in [Acts 20:17-38](#). Paul sent for the elders of Ephesus and said in verse 22-24, "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

There are several things that are very important to know in this passage that reveal the degree that Paul knew his mission and identity in Christ:

1. Bound in the spirit to Jerusalem. This means that the will of heaven communicated by the Spirit was that Paul was to go to Jerusalem no matter what and even not knowing what awaited him.
2. The Spirit testified in every city saying that chains and tribulations awaited him. In spite of the fact that Paul knew he would be arrested and persecuted, he did not alter his course to go to Jerusalem. In fact, in chapter 21, Paul is told by Agabus under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost that he would be arrested. Phillip and his seven virgin daughters (one of the original 12) and all with them wept and begged Paul not to go.
3. He was not moved by any of these reports or the emotions of those who loved him.
4. The only thing that mattered to him was to FINISH HIS RACE WITH JOY and the MINISTRY GIVEN HIM FROM THE LORD.

How could he be so sure? How could he be so resolute?

### [Acts 9:1-19](#) (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

<sup>2</sup> and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any

who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

<sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It *is* hard for you to kick against the goads."

<sup>6</sup> So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

<sup>7</sup> And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.

<sup>8</sup> Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus.

<sup>9</sup> And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

<sup>10</sup> Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

<sup>11</sup> So the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for *one* called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.

<sup>12</sup> And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting *his* hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

<sup>13</sup> Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup> And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

<sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, "**Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.**

<sup>16</sup> For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

<sup>17</sup> And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>18</sup> Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

<sup>19</sup> So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

From the start, the conversion of Paul, God communicated that Paul was chosen to bear His name (the first revelation he received was the name of Jesus in v. 5) before GENTILES, KINGS, and the CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. Note the order. Paul knew from the beginning that he was called to deliver the good news to the Gentiles, which was probably a stunning piece of information to him as a Jew and a former Pharisee at that. His entire theology was rocked, which is why he spent 15 years in the desert receiving by revelation the gospel he preached, which was CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY and the message of GRACE not law. In fact, he stirred much controversy even among the

Jewish believers who were still wrestling with non-Jews being saved and attempting to put them under the Law of Moses.

Long story short, when Paul arrived in Jerusalem, the elders and apostles received with joy the news of the work among Gentiles through Paul's ministry and felt no concern or opposition for by this time, the Apostolic Decree of [Acts 15](#) had already been issued that nothing was required from the Gentiles except to "keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality" ([Acts 21:25](#)). But to appease some of the Jewish believers who were suspicious of Paul and felt he was teaching to forsake Moses, the leaders asked him to purify himself ceremonially while also paying for the expenses of four others to do so in order that the Jewish believers would be more receptive to what he had to say. But it didn't work. When the Asian Jews who had opposed Paul throughout Asia and who had made pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festival saw Paul in the temple, they became enraged thinking he had brought a Gentile into the inner temple precincts, an offense so severe that even Roman citizens were not immune to the death penalty.

The entire city was in an uproar, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple. The garrison commander learned of the uproar and immediately took soldiers and ran down to the riot. When the Jews saw, they stopped beating Paul. Paul was arrested while the commander questioned the mob but could not get a straight answer. Paul tried to reason with the people before being led away and gave his testimony but this only inflamed the crowd even more. When it appeared that Paul was going to be released, a plot was formed to trick the Romans in transporting him to the council and they were going to kill him. The commander hid Paul and then sent him to Felix, the governor of Judea. Now he is before a "king" so to speak. This lasted for two years and during that time, Paul preached the gospel. Finally, a new governor named Festus came into office and the chief priest and other leaders told Festus that they wanted Paul delivered to Jerusalem, another ploy to get him vulnerable so they could kill him. PAUL APPEALED TO CAESAR. He did this because Jesus said that he would go before kings.

Before he left, King Agrippa, the son of Herod Agrippa, great grandson of Herod the Great, an evil line of kings, listened to Paul's case.

#### [Acts 26:14-23](#) (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? *It is hard for you to kick against the goads.*'

<sup>15</sup> So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'

<sup>16</sup> But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.

<sup>17</sup> I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,

<sup>18</sup> to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

<sup>19</sup> "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

<sup>20</sup> but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

<sup>21</sup> For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill *me*.

<sup>22</sup> Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come--

<sup>23</sup> that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles."

Listen to the response of Paul's testimony and preaching to Agrippa.

#### **Acts 26:27-32 (NKJV)**

<sup>27</sup> King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."

<sup>28</sup> Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

<sup>29</sup> And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."

<sup>30</sup> When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them;

<sup>31</sup> and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains."

<sup>32</sup> Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Every single decision Paul made was with the focus on his call and seeing the divine plan of Holy Ghost to get him before Caesar. Paul ends up in Rome where he preached predominantly to the Jews there who had not even heard of Paul and the uproar he caused; although they had heard of the sect of Christians. Some believed and Paul spent two years preaching the good news and instructing the converts. From Jerusalem to Rome the majority Jews rejected the good news; therefore, the torch went from the Jews to the Gentiles. Eventually, Paul did go before Caesar. He was eventually beheaded. BUT PAUL LIVED HIS ENTIRE LIFE TRUE TO THE ASSIGNMENT GIVEN HIM ALLOWING IT TO INFLUENCE EVERY DECISION MADE.

When Paul said that he was a prisoner due to the Gentiles, he was not being untruthful or exaggerating. His ministry to the Gentiles and the revelation given him by God of grace is the very reason he was arrested. And, yet, he says that his ministry isn't confined by the size of his prison cell. NO HE IS CONFINED BY HIS GRACE AND CHRIST IS HIS PRISON KEEPER. And because of this, the good news given to him cannot be confined or kept hidden from them. It was during this time of persecution and

imprisonment while awaiting trial before Caesar that Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians, which was to be read by several congregations and is probably the letter referred to in [Colossians 4:16](#) as presently being in Laodicea. It is during this time in his life THAT THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH BECOMES EVEN MORE CLEAR TO PAUL AND WHAT IT IS SUPPOSED TO LOOK LIKE GOVERNMENTALLY AS WELL AS THE PURPOSE OF ITS EXISTENCE.

In the NKJV, Paul begins chapter 3 with the words, "For this reason..." indicated that the revelation revealed in [Ephesians 2](#) is the cause of his imprisonment, which is that both Jew and Gentile now ENJOY EQUAL ACCESS TO THE FATHER THROUGH THE SAME SPIRIT AND ARE PART OF THE FAMILY OF GOD AND ARE PART OF THE GLOBAL SPIRITUAL HOUSE GOD IS BUILDING AS HIS PERMANENT SPIRITUAL RESIDENCE.

Before continuing, I want to point out that the **REASON PAUL STAYED TRUE TO GOD IN THE MOST DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES IS HE KNEW HIS IDENTITY IN CHRIST AND HIS ASSIGNMENT. If you do not know who you are and your assignment, you will backslide and stumble when difficult circumstances increase pressure in your life and you will have no focus or direction and live a life of confusion and lack of clarity.**

King Solomon is the best example of this. His vision was to build David's dream and blueprint of a temple of God. Once he was finished with this task, he did not have his own assignment and identity as to why he existed in God's plan and backslid resulting in the dividing of the kingdom his father David had united. This eventually led to the northern kingdom backsliding and being taken by the Assyrians and eventually the southern kingdom where Jerusalem was to also be taken by the Babylonians due to idolatry.

But the most important thing I want you to take away today is the fact that PAUL'S UNDERSTANDING OF HIS CALL AND PURPOSE MEANT THAT NO MAN EVEN THOSE WELL-MEANING BELIEVERS COULD SWAY HIM. This is so important. Unfortunately, due to incorrect doctrine and understanding of authority and being under authority in the church, many do not know that they must listen to God and stay true to their call. EVERY CHRISTIAN WILL FACE A SITUATION IN WHICH THEY MUST DECIDE BETWEEN SUBMITTING TO OTHERS AND BEING DISQUALIFIED OR LISTENING TO GOD AND BEING LABELED REBELLIOUS.

Read [1 Kings 13](#).

This is the best example I have found of a younger minister holding an older minister in too high esteem to the point of going against and doubting the known word of the Lord to them personally. MATURITY IS KNOWING WHAT GOD IS SAYING AND NOT BEING SWAYED. This can be dangerous if you hear God wrong and you want to take into counsel what others say, but if they are truly hearing God and you are correct, they will

Speak what you are hearing anyway. I HAVE FOUND 99% OF THE TIME PROPHETIC INSPIRATION CONFIRMS WHAT YOU ARE ALREADY HEARING.

### **2 Peter 1:10-11 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

<sup>11</sup> for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Diligent means "earnestness, diligence, eagerness." It means "to make every effort to do one's best." Calling is "an invitation to the kingdom of God and its privileges, i.e. THE DIVINE CALL...UNTIO CHRISTIAN SERVICE OR MINISTRY." I.e. **what are you in the body of Christ? What is your role?** Jesus stated that many are called and few chosen. The idea is of the event that occurred with the Romans. All males of eligible age were called to a central location to go through a series of tests and assessments to see who would be chosen to serve in the Roman army. Some did not pass the tests and were sent home. Those who were chosen became the elite, the elect and began training physically and mentally in what it means to be a Roman soldier. DO YOU SEE WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO MAKE SURE THAT THE DOCTRINE YOU ARE RECEIVING IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS OF WHICH THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH IS BUILT UPON. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE THE PROPER INSTRUCTION, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO COMPLETE YOUR ASSIGNMENT FOR WITH THE DOCTRINE COMES IMPARTATION.

### **2 Peter 1:20-21 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

<sup>21</sup> for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.