The Credentials Of A Christian

Romans 1

May 31, 2023

**Introduction**

What is the meaning of the word CREDENTIAL?

* A qualification, achievement, personal quality, or aspect of a person's background, typically when used to indicate that they are **suitable** for something.
* A document or certificate proving a person's identity or **qualifications**.
* **A** letter of introduction given by a government to an **ambassador** before a new posting.

Credentials are suitable qualifications for the position of ambassador. 2 Corinthians 5:20a says, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ…”

The word CHRISTIAN comes from the Greek word Christianos originally applied to the slaves of wealthy households. It came to denote the **adherents** (someone who supports a particular party, person, or set of ideas) of an individual or party. A Christian is an adherent of Christ; one committed to Christ; a follower of Christ (HBD).

Romans 1:1 says, **“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,”**

**How is Paul?**

PAUL was an outstanding missionary, theologian, and writer of the early church. Paul is a very important figure in the NT and in the history of Christianity. He wrote 13 epistles that comprise almost one-fourth of the NT. Approximately 16 chapters of the book of Acts (13-28) focus on his missionary labors. Thus Paul is the author or subject of nearly one-third of the NT and the most important interpreter of the teachings of Christ and of the significance of His life, death, and resurrection

**Acts 22:3**, “I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia,”

**Birth and Citizenship**

Paul was born in a Jewish family in Tarsus of Cilicia, probably sometime during the first decade of the first century. It’s believe that Paul’s family moved to Tarsus from Gischala in Galilee. Paul’s (Saul, pre-Damascus identity) family was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5), and he was named after the most prominent member of the tribe, King Saul.

Most theologians believe that Paul came from a family of tentmakers or leatherworkers and, according to Jewish custom, was taught this trade by his father. Apparently the business thrived and Paul’s family became moderately wealthy.

Paul was born a Roman citizen. It has been speculated that Paul’s father or grandfather were honored with citizenship because of some special service rendered to a military official. However, early Christian tradition stated that Paul’s parents had been carried as prisoners of war from Gischala to Tarsus and was enslaved to a Roman citizen; then freed and granted citizenship. Regardless of how Paul’s parents received their citizenship, the book of Acts states three times that he possessed it, and his citizenship was accompanied by important rights that would benefit him in his missionary labors. Roman citizens had the right of appeal after a trial, they were exemption from imperial service, had the right to choose between a local or Roman trial, and were protection from degrading forms of punishment like scourging.

Paul might have carried a wax tablet that functioned as a birth certificate or certificate of citizenship in order to prove his Roman citizenship. Most people who claimed citizenship were trusted since the penalty for impersonating a Roman citizen was death.

**Rabbinic Training**

Acts 22:3 shows that Paul grew up in Jerusalem. Paul used this fact to prove that he was no Diaspora Jew who was more influenced by Gentile culture than Jewish ways. He was educated in Jerusalem in the Jewish religion according to the traditions of his ancestors (Acts 22:3).

**Mishnah** - The rabbinic Judaism mishnah refers to the teaching or learning about the oral law (halakah) passed on by a particular teacher (rabbi).

The Mishnah taught: “At five years old [one is fit] for the Scripture, at ten years for the Mishnah, at thirteen [for the fulfilling of] the commandments, at fifteen for the Talmud, at eighteen for the bride-chamber, at twenty for pursuing a calling, at thirty for authority.” This is probably a fairly accurate description of the regimen of training that Paul experienced.

Acts 22 says that Paul was trained by Rabbi Gamaliel I, the member of the Sanhedrin mentioned in Acts 5:33-39. Gamaliel was a leading Jewish teacher in Paul’s day. The Mishnah mentions Gamaliel I frequently and expresses many of his opinions. Gamaliel was listed among 13 great rabbis whose deaths marked the decline of Judaism: “When Rabbi Gamaliel the Elder died, the glory of the Law ceased and purity and abstinence died.” The passage implies that Gamaliel was as renowned for his high moral standards as for his interpretation of the Scriptures. Paul quickly excelled as a Jewish rabbinical student. As Paul says in Gal. 1:14, “I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.”

In Phil. 3 Paul describes himself as “circumcised the eighth day; of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness that is in the law, blameless” (HCSB).

In Acts 26:5 (“Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.”) Paul again identifies himself with the sect of the Pharisees. Paul’s father had also been a Pharisee (Acts 23:6, “But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.”).

**Paul’s Conversion (a.d. 35)**

While Saul was on his way to Damascus to arrest and imprison believers there, the resurrected and glorified Christ appeared to him with a blinding force. Christ spoke to Saul saying, **“It is hard for you to kick against the pricks (goads).”** A prick is a goad or point (Acts 9:5; 26:14). "To kick against the pricks" or goads, meaning to offer vain and rash resistance which is a proverbial expression alluding to unruly oxen and applied to those who by unruly rage hurt themselves. Paul’s aggression towards Christ and Christians was only hurting himself. Any fight against God and the children of God result in self inflicted wounds.

At the appearance of Christ, Saul immediately surrendered to His authority and went into the city to await further instructions. It was in the city the Saul found a cure for his blindness and he received the Holy Spirit followed by the baptism. Ananias shared with Paul the message that the Lord had given him in a vision. God said to him, “This man is My chosen instrument to carry My name before Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel. I will certainly show him how much he must suffer for My name!”

Paul does not identify himself in this text as a Jew, a Roman citizen, a Rabbinical Student or even a convicted converted Christian. He identifies himself as **“A Servant.”**

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June 14, 2023

Let’s take a look into this title in which Paul tags himself. **Servant!**

**Servant [**Slave (**doulos**)**]** Paul was a "slave" of Jesus Christ.

1. The word "slave" (doulos) means far more than just a servant. It means a slave totally possessed by his master and his master’s will.
2. It is a bond-servant bound by law to a master.

**Lesson Insert**

**What is the difference between biblical slavery and most modern form of slavery?**

When we think of the institution of [slavery](https://www.dictionary.com/browse/slavery), most of us think about the bondage and oppression experienced by African Americans in the 18th and 19th centuries here in America. But the New Testament Servitude (NTS) of the Ancient Near East had little in common with the New World Slavery (NWS) of our American ancestors. So before we become defensive, we need to examine the difference between these two forms of slavery/servitude.

Many historic white Christian leaders failed to understand theses differences as they errantly used the Bible to defend their slave ownership. Others learned the historic place of indentured servitude and came to understanding how such a system could be reconciled with the words of Jesus. This latter group eventually answered the call of Scripture and abolished New World Slavery altogether.

Let’s look at several common characteristics of slavery to see if there are any differences between the ancient New Testament Servitude (NTS) and the more recent cultural New World Slavery (NWS) we understand so well.

1. **There Is A Difference In the Motive Behind Slavery**
We first need to understand why slavery existed in each case we are examining. In NWS here in America, slaves were taken so that their masters would have a better life (for economic gain), but in ancient NTS, the primary motive for slavery was often the economic relief of the servant.
* Leviticus 25:35-37 Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. Do not take usurious interest from him, but revere your God, that your countryman may live with you. You shall not give him your silver at interest, nor your food for gain.
1. **There Is** A Difference As to How People Entered Into Slavery.
In our American version of NWS, people were taken into captivity (and slavery) against their will. They were simply kidnapped or were later born into captivity from parents that were enslaved. But in ancient NTS, the path into slavery was varied and in many cases voluntary (bond-servant). There were several types of servant/slaves in the New and Old Testament.
* Voluntary Temporary Indentured Hebrew Servants: People who needed assistance, or who simply could not pay their debts, might turn to a voluntary form of servitude. The Bible had guidelines for this kind of voluntary subjection. Read Exodus 21:2 Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them. If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. Read Deuteronomy 15:12-15. If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. And when you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today.
* Voluntary Permanent Hebrew Servants. It was also not uncommon for a temporary indentured servant to want to stay in service to his or her master (they were not treated harshly like slaves in the NWS version of slavery as you will soon see). The Bible also offered guidelines for the treatment of these types of servants who became part of the family. Read Exodus 21:5-6. But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,’ then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently. Read Deuteronomy 15:16-17 And it shall come about if he says to you, ‘I will not go out from you,’ because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you; then you shall take an awl (marṣēa - a small tool used to punch holes) and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. And also you shall do likewise to your maidservant. It shall not seem hard to you when you set him free, for he has given you six years with double the service of a hired man; so the LORD your God will bless you in whatever you do.

Note: **There were also very strict Biblical laws preventing the Israelites from holding their brethren as slaves against their will.** Read **Deuteronomy 24:7** If a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen of the sons of Israel, and he deals with him violently, or sells him, then that thief shall die; so you shall purge the evil from among you.

* **Involuntary Hebrew and Gentile Criminals in Restitution**. Just like today, there were several crimes that required restitution as part of the penalty following a conviction. But what if the criminal was unable to make the restitution to the victim? And how were criminal convictions enforced in a world without an established jail system? In these situations, convicted people found themselves in servitude as slaves, paying off their debt to society and to God. Read **Exodus 22:1-3** If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. But if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.
* **Permanent “Pagan” Servants.** The ancient Hebrews did have permanent slaves obtained from the non-Jewish nations that surrounded them. They came into their possession as the result of military conquests. Read **Leviticus 25:44-46**  As for your male and female slaves whom you may have you may acquire male and female slaves from the pagan nations that are around you. Then, too, it is out of the sons of the sojourners who live as aliens among you that you may gain acquisition, and out of their families who are with you, whom they will have produced in your land; they also may become your possession.[This does not mean the Israelites were allowed to kidnap a man (even a “pagan” man) against his will to hold or sell him. Read **Exodus 21:16** And he who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.]

Unlike New World Slavery in which slaves entered into slavery involuntarily, the ancient New Testament Servitude of Biblical times was far more varied and often voluntary.

1. **There Is A Difference In How People Were Treated Once They Were Slaves.** There was also a great difference between the way slaves were treated in the New World and in the Ancient Near East. We are all familiar with early American stories chronicling the harsh and often brutal mistreatment of slaves. They were considered the lowest of properties and often treated as though they were not human. But ancient NTS is another story altogether. Slaves were treated humanely and their treatment was regulated by Biblical law. Here are a few of the legal requirements for the treatment of slaves.
2. **Slaves were not to be treated harshly. They were to be treated humanely and with respect:** Leviticus 25:43, 46, 53. You shall not rule over him with severity, but are to revere your God (*Do not be a hard master to him, but have the fear of God before you*). And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen forever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigor (cruel, ruthless). Like a man hired year by year he shall be with him; he shall not rule over him with severity in your sight. Deuteronomy 15:18. It shall not seem hard to you when you set him free, for he has given you six years with double the service of a hired man; so the LORD your God will bless you in whatever you do.
3. **Slaves were allowed to make a decision about whether or not they would stay with their masters:**  Exodus 21:5. But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,’ then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently. Deuteronomy 15:16. And it shall come about if he says to you, ‘I will not go out from you,’ because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you; then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever.
4. **Slaves were often released and when this was done, the slave was to be released with his or her possessions:** Deuteronomy 15:12. “If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free.
5. **Slaves were allowed religious privileges and were also allowed to rest on the Sabbath along with everyone else:** Exodus 20:9-10. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. Exodus 23:12. Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor in order that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves. Deuteronomy 5:13-14. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.
6. **Slaves were also allowed to celebrate other religious holidays and celebrations:** Deuteronomy 12:12. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you. Deuteronomy 12:18. But you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all your undertakings.
7. **Masters were to be held accountable for the way they treated their slaves:** Exodus 21:20. And if a man strikes his male or female slave with a rod and he dies at his hand, he shall be punished.
8. **And even though the law allowed for the punishment of slaves, this punishment was exactly the same as that prescribed for non-slaves and even for the sons of non-slaves:** Exodus 21:20. And if a man strikes his male or female slave with a rod and he dies at his hand, he shall be punished. Deuteronomy 25:1-3. If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be if the wicked man (a non-slave) deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt. Proverbs 10:13. On the lips of the discerning, wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding (whether a slave or not). Proverbs 26:3. A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools (even non-slaves). Proverbs 13:24. He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.
9. **And Slaves could actually be freed if they were not treated properly by their masters:** Exodus 21:26-27. And if a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye. And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth.
10. **Foreign slaves were prescribed refuge under Biblical Law. They were not treated as property:** Deuteronomy 23:15. You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. He shall live with you in your midst, in the place which he shall choose in one of your towns where it pleases him; you shall not mistreat him.
11. **Slaves could actually be brought into the Jewish Covenant and become Jewish believers alongside their masters:** Exodus 12:43-44. And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it; but every man’s slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it.”  **Genesis 17:12-13.** And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. Leviticus 22:10-11. No layman, however, is to eat the holy gift; a sojourner with the priest or a hired man shall not eat of the holy gift. But if a priest buys a slave as his property with his money, that one may eat of it, and those who are born in his house may eat of his food.
12. **Slaves had rights within the homes of their masters and, as a part of the family, they could even share in the inheritance:** Genesis 24:2. And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned…. Proverbs 17:2. A servant who acts wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully, And will share in the inheritance among brothers.
13. **There Is A Difference In How People Freed Themselves From Slavery.** Finally, let’s take a look at how people were able to free themselves from their servitude in ancient times and compare this with the more recent version of slavery with which we are familiar. In NWS here in America, there was very little recourse for slaves who wanted to be free of their master, but in the ancient NTS form of the institution, there were a number of pathways to freedom.
14. A family member could purchase your freedom by simply paying your debt: Leviticus 25:47-49. Now if the means of a stranger or of a sojourner with you becomes sufficient, and a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to him as to sell himself to a stranger who is sojourning with you, or to the descendants of a stranger’s family, then he shall have redemption right after he has been sold. One of his brothers may redeem him, or his uncle, or his uncle’s son, may redeem him, or one of his blood relatives from his family may redeem him.
15. A slave could purchase his own freedom by simply paying his debt: Leviticus 25:49. …or if he prospers, he may redeem himself.
16. Slaves were freed as part of a national day of debt forgiveness and rest every 7th year: Exodus 21:2. If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. Deuteronomy 15:12-13.If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. And when you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you.
17. An injury to the slave would often be a means by which the slave could gain his or her freedom: Exodus 21:26. And if a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye

While it is clear that the ancient Israelites did possess slaves, it is also clear the reason for their possession, the manner in which they were treated, and the manner in which they could be released was very different from the institution of slavery in more recent times in Europe and America. When American slave owners used the Bible to support their practice, they were either ignorant of the nature of New Testament Servitude, or willfully denying the truth about New Testament Servitude.

[When American slave owners used the Bible to support their practice, they were either ignorant of the nature of New Testament Servitude, or willfully denying the truth about New Testament Servitude.](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcoldcasechristianity.com%2Fwritings%2Ffour-differences-between-new-testament-servitude-and-new-world-slavery%2F&text=When%20American%20slave%20owners%20used%20the%20Bible%20to%20support%20their%20practice%2C%20they%20were%20either%20ignorant%20of%20the%20nature%20of%20New%20Testament%20Servitude%2C%20or%20willfully%20denying%20the%20truth%20about%20New%20Testament%20Servitude.&via=jwarnerwallace&related=jwarnerwallace)

These slave owners may have tried to use the Bible to support their position, but by doing so, they clearly twisted the intent and meaning of the scriptures, applying guidelines for one form of servitude to an entirely different form of slavery. It is unfair to say that the God of the Bible supports the institution of slavery as we understand it in more modern times. That version of slavery had little in common with the version of servitude in Biblical times.

**Was Paul speaking of a slave bound by his masters will or the law?** A look at the slave market of Paul's day shows more clearly what Paul meant when he said he was a "slave of Jesus Christ.”

1. The slave was owned by his master; he was totally possessed (completely controlled) by his master. This is what Paul meant. Paul was purchased and possessed by Christ. 1 Cor. 7:23 says, “Ye are bought **(purchased)** with a price; be not ye the servants of men.” Eph. 5:18 says, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled **(controlled)** with the Spirit;” Christ had looked upon Paul and had seen his degraded and needful condition. And when Christ looked, the most wonderful thing happened; Christ loved him and purchased him; therefore, he was now the possession of Christ. (This purchase by God is offered to those who are convicted of sin and surrender to the salvation of God. The only way to escape sin is to sell out and Jesus Christ alone has purchasing power.)
2. **The slave existed for his master and he had no other reason for existence.** He had no personal rights whatsoever. The same was true with Paul; he existed only for Christ. His rights were the rights of Christ only. This should be the existence and life purpose of every Christian today. Acts 17:28 says, “For in him we live, and move, and have our being;…”
3. **The slave served his master and he existed only for the purpose of service.** He was at the master's disposal any hour of the day or night. Paul’s position as a servant meant that he lived only to serve Christ, hour by hour, day by day, and night by night. A true servant is not happy unless he or she is serving. (Is there evidence in your life that would validate you as a true servant of God?)
4. **The slave's will belonged to his master.**  When we speak of will, it means desires, **ambitions**, goals, thoughts (drive), and focus. He was allowed no will and no ambition other than the will and ambition of the master. He was completely subservient to the Master and vowed total obedience to the will of the master. Paul belonged to Christ. In fact, he said that he fought and struggled to “bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Think about that. Paul only wanted to think about what God would cause him to think. That brings new meaning to “let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus.” How many of us can truly say that our minds are continuously focused on God, godly thoughts, and God’s purpose for our life?
5. There is a fifth and most precious thing that Paul meant by "a slave of Jesus Christ." He meant that he had the highest and most honored and kingly profession in all the world. The greatest men of history, have always been called **"the servants of God."** It was the highest title of honor. The believer's slavery to Jesus Christ is no cringing, cowardly, or shameful subjection. It is a **position of honor** and bestows upon a man the privileges and responsibilities of serving the King of kings and Lord of lords.

**Here are some others who were slaves to God.**

**Moses was the slave of God**

Deut. 34:5, “So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.” Psalm 105:26, “He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen.” Malachi 4:4, “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant,…”

**Joshua was the slave of God**

Joshua 24:29 “And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being a hundred and ten years old.

**David was the slave of God**

2 Samuel 3:18 “Now then do it: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save -- my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.” Psalm 78:70 “He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds:”

**James was the slave of God**

James 1:1 “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.”

**Peter was the slave of Jesus Christ**
2 Peter 1:1 “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ…”

**Jude was the slave of God**

Jude 1 “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James…”

**Paul was the slave of Jesus Christ** continuously identified himself as a slave to Go.

Romans 1:1; Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Phil. 1:1; Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

Titus 1:1; Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;

**Call To Be An APOSTLE**

Romans 1:1, “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, **called to be an apostle**, separated unto the gospel of God,”

**What does Paul mean by “called to be an Apostle?”**

Called is the key word in the phrase.

**Called (Klētós)** One who is called means one who is saved (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1). Paul was saved to be an apostle. He was saved with purpose. I have seen people who wonder if their life has purpose. Every born again believer’s life has purpose; a purpose which has been ordained by God.

The called ones **(kletoi)** are those who have received the divine call **(klē’sis)** [G2821]), having conformed to God's saving purpose (Rom. 1:6, 7; 8:28; 1 Cor. 1:2, 24). Romans 8:28 says, “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**.”

Paul was saved by God to be an apostle. The gift we are given in the body of Christ is determined by God (1 Corinthians 12).

**We are saved and placed according to the purposed grace of God’s plan through Christ Jesus.** 2 Timothy 1:9 says, “Who hath saved us, and called us with a **holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to **His own purpose and grace**, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,”

God has a divine purpose for every believer who has been saved by the grace of God. Believers are anointed and assigned to the position of **service** in the body of Christ (the church). Paul has identified his purpose and that is to serve God as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

**Paul the Apostle**

The word **"apostle"** (apostolos) means either a person who is sent out or a person who is sent forth. An apostle is a representative, an ambassador, a person who is sent out into one country to represent another country. As it relates to God, it is a person who represents God and His kingdom (kingdom of righteousness).

**Lesson Insert**

Does God still call or assign people to be Apostles? Here are some facts that can help answer this question.

1. You must be identified as an Apostle by Jesus Christ. Matthew 10:1-4; “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.”
2. Apostles wer eye witnesses of Jesus Christ. After the betrayal and suicide of Judas, Peter proposed choosing a new apostle and set the qualifications. Not everyone could be considered for an apostleship. Candidates needed to have been with Jesus during the whole three years that Jesus was among them. That is, he needed to be an eyewitness of Jesus earthly ministry and mission. He needed to have heard Jesus’ life-changing teachings and been present to see His healings and other miracles. He needed to have witnessed Jesus sacrifice Himself on the cross and to have seen Jesus walk, talk, and eat among the disciples again after His resurrection. These were the pivotal facts of Jesus’ life, the heart of the message they were to teach, and personal witnesses were required to verify the truth of the good news. The prayer group in Jerusalem nominated two who met these qualifications for apostleship: Joseph Barsabbas and **Matthias**. Then the disciples asked God to guide them to know which one was to fill the post. Using a method of determining God’s will that was common at that time, they **cast lots**, thus giving God freedom to make His choice clear. The lot fell to Matthias, and he became the twelfth apostle.
3. The 13th Apostle. Saul was on one of his deadly errands to Damascus, the living Jesus personally appeared to him. This [undeniable encounter](https://www.gotquestions.org/Damascus-Road.html) with the resurrected Lord revolutionized Saul’s life. In a vision to another believer in Damascus, Jesus said that He had chosen Saul “as My chosen instrument to carry My name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel” ([Acts 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%209.15); cf. [22:14–15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2022.14%E2%80%9315)). Following his conversion, Paul spent some time in Arabia, where he was taught by Christ (Galatians 1:12-17). The other apostles recognized that Jesus Himself had appointed their former enemy to be one of them. As Saul went into Gentile territories, he changed his name to the Greek “Paul,” and Jesus, who gave Paul his apostleship, sent many messages through him to His churches and to unbelievers. It was this apostle, Paul, who wrote over half of the books of the New Testament. (Galatians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 9:1; Acts 26:16-18).
4. No biblical evidence exists to indicate that these thirteen apostles were replaced when they died. See [Acts 12:1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2012.1%E2%80%932), for example. Jesus appointed the apostles to do the founding work of the Church, and foundations only need to be laid once. After the apostles’ deaths, other offices besides apostleship, not requiring an eyewitness relationship with Jesus, would carry on the work.
5. Finally, the Bible declares there were only 12 names in the foundations of the apostles of Christ. Rev. 21:14 says, “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”
6. Note: Ephesians 4:11, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;” There are no more apostles or prophets (those who foretell things that have never been told). Now there are only “Evangelist” and “Pastor-Teacher” to equip saints for the work of the ministry.

**Three things are true of the apostle (and a true disciple)**

1. He belongs to the One who has called and sent him out (1 Cor. 6;20 - “bought with a price”)
2. He is commissioned (charged with a particular function) when sent out (2 Timothy 4:5 - “make full proof”)
3. He possesses all the authority and power of the One who sends him out. (Mt. 28:18-20 - “Go therefore”)

**Paul said he was "called" to be an apostle. He was not in the ministry because…**

* **He chose to be.** He did not choose Christ initially, Christ chose him.
* **He had the ability.** He lacked the spiritual ability to be an affective apostle of Jesus Christ until he surrendered to the word and will of God.
* **He had been encouraged by others to choose the ministerial profession.** The original apostles were afraid of Saul because of his assault on the church (and Christians).
* **He enjoyed working with people.**  There is no evidence that Paul had a good working relationship with other believers until after his Damascus Road experience.

**Paul was an apostle, a minister of the gospel for one reason only: God had called him.**

* "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I [the Lord] have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to **make thee a minister and a witness** both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee" (Acts 26:16).
* "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, **putting me into the ministry**" (1 Tim. 1:12).
* "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy Father's house, unto a land that **I will shew thee**" (Genesis 12:1).
* "Come now therefore, and **I will send thee** [Moses] unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:10).
* "And the Lord looked upon him [Gideon], and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: **have not I sent thee?**" (Judges 6:14).
* "Also I [Isaiah] heard the voice of the Lord, saying, **Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?** Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

**Paul Hears And Answers The Call**

God did not override Paul's will; He wanted Paul in the ministry, so He called Paul. It was up to Paul to hear (**acknowledge**) and respond (**accept**). Failure to obey would have consequences just like obedience has it rewards. God called Paul to be an apostle and become an active full-time minister. He was not called to occupy a position of authority or to be honored by men. **Every servant of God is called for two primary purposes.**

1. **To serve and minister.** "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:27-28). "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:36-37). "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).
2. **To go forth and bear fruit.** "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8). "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:4). "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:11). "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10). "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3). "Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God" (Psalm 92:13).