

The Power of His Presence

Romans 8:29-39

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As transcribed by Jane Vaughn

I'd like for us to read an extremely familiar passage in our Bibles – beginning at Romans 8:28. We often quote this first verse in particular to one another for encouragement when things around us look rather difficult. “*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.*”

But we really must not stop reading right there, good as that is. Let's continue reading to get the whole context: 29“*For whom He did foreknow, He did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified. 31What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32He 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?*

Paul goes on to ask the questions: 33“*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It's God that justifieth. 34Who is he that condemneth? It's Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation...?*” Unfortunately, it does *separate* many people from God. ***It*** (the tribulation) doesn't really separate, but in their minds it sadly does.

“*Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36As it is written, 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' 37Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. 38For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.*” A familiar portion of scripture, as I noted.

How often we have read this simply to encourage ourselves. But we're selective in our remembering and sort of skip over some of those *tribulations* and trials. In fact, here in America, honestly, it's very difficult for us to think in terms of *distress* and *famine* and *nakedness* and *peril* and *sword*. We have been so blessed in this nation – so protected – I believe, by the hand of God. The whole discussion about *wars* – is, almost, far removed from us. Our whole nation was in a state of absolute *SHOCK* when 9-11 occurred in New York City – when *our* buildings on *our* land were attacked by those explosive planes and utter destruction happened, destroying not only the buildings but thousands of people. We were shocked! “That can't happen in America! This is America! Don't they know who we are?” We have always sent *our* men and *our* women overseas to where there is warfare and a need for fighting – over there – somewhere else. But we didn't expect armies or *any* attacks to be here on our own soil. We still don't.

I don't know *exactly* what lies ahead of us and I'm not a “doom-and-gloom” or a “be-careful” kind of preacher, but I believe that today, the **Lord is endeavoring to prepare His Church for His Kingdom to be able to stand tall** – no matter what is ahead for us. We just can't spend all of our prayer-life in fear: “Oh, God! Keep it away from us. Keep it *away* from us! Keep it away from us!” It's time for us to rise to a new level – of who we are – *in Christ Jesus*.

If I was to take a roving microphone and interview individuals in a congregation, my question would be: “What do you think God wants from you?” I suppose I would get as many different answers as there are people to ask. That's because we conjure up in our thought-life what we think or imagine is true. “Oh, what God wants of me is...” Or, “I *hope* what God wants for me will be...” As a result of our own thinking about this, some people unfortunately endeavor to thrust themselves into a call that is not from

God, and then spend their entire lives *miserably* trying to fulfill something God never intended. If you got that – just quit reading – you got it! That’s enough! ☺

I have recently come into contact with a book written by Ed Delph (the title of the book is Church at Community. Creation House. 2005.). In it, the author reminds us that **our primary purpose** as individual Christians – or as a church, or even as churches – **is to be conformed to the image of Christ** (Rom.8:29). That is *predestined* to be so, as we read above.

In some circles – certainly in my own church background – we don’t like to use the word *predestination*. We’ve been afraid to say anything is “predestined” because that seems to take away the *choice* of mankind, or our freewill. The idea that something is predestined by God, however, in actuality does not remove our personal volition. There is a very genuine and scriptural term that says, “God has predestined some things for your life.” The only problem is that God alone has the *foreknowledge* of what He predestines. He simply knows the path that I shall take – before I take it.

So many of the Old Testament prophets said it – like Jeremiah – “*I know the plans I have for you...*” (Jer.29:11). Then Paul said it here in Romans 8, and James said it also in the New Testament: God knows the path that I take (Jas.1:18b; 2:5). He knows it because it’s all part of His plan for me. There is a plan for your life and that plan is not this: Are you ready? It is not that you should spend your entire Christian life trying to discover the plan! ☺

We are *in* the plan of God. We’re in it right now. We are destined to some things. But some of us take a few more detours than others. ☺ Do you know how I know the truth of that? I could draw you a detailed map of my many detours. I would go down one way (by my choice) and it just came to a dead-end; it wouldn’t take me anywhere I wanted to go – a blind alley. I’d come back and the Lord would simply say, “Hi. I’ve been here waiting for you.” ☺ Sometimes I’d go down a certain path and it would be a detour (rather than a blind alley) and it would bring me the looonger way around. ☺ Then, when I’d get back to the main road, He’d still say, “Hi, there. I’ve been waiting for you.”

Have you ever tried to shake off God? ☺ You can’t – He just waits for you. He simply determines... You know, God is determined to have *sons*. Now, it’s okay when someone wants to acknowledge the females in an audience and includes us as “daughters.” But the truth is – there’s neither male nor female in Christ (Gal.3:28). And if we girls can’t be “sons of God” then you guys can’t be the “Bride!” ☺ So, God wants many *sons* and if it’ll make you happier – and daughters. ☺ [the Greek word is actually /tekna/ or /teknia/ better translated *children* – see e.g. John 1:12; 1Jn.3:1,2,10).

God wants a family but He doesn’t want just *any* family. He wants a family where the “kids” are the exact replica of His Son (“*conformed to His image*”). Everything in scripture will change for you if you get that point. **That is God’s will for your life – that you become more and more like Jesus!** Day by day, more and more of Jesus is to shine through your humanity. Someone has said, “More of Jesus, less of me.”

It’s no wonder that we Christians have not won thousands to Christ. It’s no wonder that we have churches full of believers and not one has won a soul for Christ that week! Or, that month! It’s no wonder that our church growth often is dependent upon “upset the applecart.” That’s when someone gets mad at another church and comes to yours. Hello. I know this is hard to hear and face, but it really is no wonder that we merely have transfers among congregations – people going from church to church to church – instead of lots of new babies every time we meet together. That’s because the not-yet-believers in our little worlds hear one thing from our mouths and see another being lived out in our lives. And *that* is hypocrisy. We are guilty too many times!

People hear us talk a good talk, but they’re looking for our lives to reflect what we’re saying – to see if we are prospering – to see if the joy of the Lord is demonstrated through our own being – to see if we are emitting that glory we talk about. We tell them it’ll be a new life – “*old things are passed away and all*

things will become new” (2 Cor.5:17). But the trouble is we often sound just as they do – just as negative as they are – just as down – just as discouraged and depressed as everyone else. We are no different from the whole population! We don’t see ourselves as the *seed* for them and their lives. Nor do we believe that planted, the seed can grow. But you see – if they don’t see anything different or of value in us – why would they want what we have?

Everything good that I want in my life I see in Jesus Christ! He is the perfection – He is God Himself – He is beautiful! He is merciful! He is true! He is just! He is perfect in all His works and in all His ways. But I didn’t actually see Him on earth – just that short span of time we know about – some thirty years or so.

And I didn’t see Him complaining. It was not a complaint in the Garden of Gethsemane when He said, “Father, if it be Thy will, let this cup pass from Me” (Mt.26:39; Mk.14:35; Lk.22:41,42). That was not a complaint! “Well, then, why – why did He weep and sweat great drops of blood?” (Lk.22:44). I think it was because – **He didn’t want to miss accomplishing the purpose for which He came.** His prayer actually was: “Oh, Father, if there’s any other way *we* can save every man – every person we call mankind – if there’s any other way to achieve that... Oh Father, then let this cup pass from Me and do it *that way!*” He was not afraid to die!

Well, it’s a worthy thought – an “I suppose...” And I’d guess you won’t be able to get away from it now either. **Great was His desire towards mankind** – and *that* motivated Him. The Son just wanted to be successful – for the Father’s sake.

It was following that time of prayer in the Garden that the mockery of a trial and the horrendous beatings all took place – and the hanging on the cross (Mt.26:67,68; 27:26-50). Jesus did it all “unto the Father.” It was for God. And Jesus knew – *They* both knew – that for awhile – for some moments of time – the Father would have to look away from His Son because He became sin! (2Cor.5:21). Father – holy Father – cannot behold sin! (Hab.1:13). I think that was the unbearable dread of the cross – Jesus knew – “the Father will have to take His eyes off Me for a few moments of time” and that was unthinkable!

Oh, my Friends – if I don’t get anything else across to you, I pray that I can communicate **the importance of placing yourself under His eye** – every single day. Start each day... Okay, if you’re not “a morning person” as I am not – when that old alarm goes off, there are many non-spiritual thoughts that just come without invitation. ☺ Thoughts of – lying – calling in sick – and other things ☺. But – that’s the best time – the first thing in your morning – just spit it out – even before you brush your teeth: “God, I place myself under Your direction today. I choose You this day!” You’ll be surprised that it won’t take long before the song of the Lord will come into your spirit.

The “song of the Lord” rises many times when I’m voiceless. I’m not talking about singing aloud with gusto – “I love You, Lord, and I praise Your Name!” That’s later in the day after about three cups of good coffee. ☺ But right at first, the *song* rises up! I can hear it – it’s *Him!* He sings in you! Learn to recognize it! Let it come forth and flow through your own lips.

Because I’m an old lady and grew up with a certain genre of music, ☺ lots of the songs *He sings to me* – through me – inside of me – are the old hymns. It reminds me that that foundation was *FIRM!* “How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord...” We used to sing it and I still find the resounding “Yes!” of agreement rises to that truth within my spirit.

Recently I told a few younger ones, “With great pomp, we used to sing ‘Onward – Christian – Soldiers – marching as to war!’” And then I asked this question: “What has happened to *that* attitude?” We shuffle along and drag into church – for whatever reasons – family pressures sometimes, or perhaps no place else to go. But what has happened to the concept of – “We are the Army of the Lord! We are soldiers! We have before us the cross of Christ! Behind us is the strength of His glory!” (Ex.14:19; Isa.52:12; 58:8). What has happened to that?

We are so self-centered! I know the truth often hurts, but we are so full of “us.” That’s not a pleasant thing – old flesh – it stinketh! Do you realize that? “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing...” (Rom.7:18). There is nothing pleasant about the attitude of self-centeredness or self-importance. We need to reach above us – beyond the self – or the flesh – because that’s what Jesus did when He came. He was born of a woman – born into the flesh. He lived thirty years, doing what? Learning a trade He’d never use. It is true. He “*learned – obedience – by the things He suffered,*” the scripture says (Heb. 5:8).

Now, I am not without a point here – I have one! ☺ Many times our attitude is: “I’m going to be *this*...” (when I grow up! ☺) Or, “I’ve studied for *this*...” And then we meet the Lord for the first time, or in a new way on this life-long walk, and He says, “I’m going to change your course.” Far too often our response is: “You can’t change my course. This is what I am – it’s my career. I’ve studied nursing...” or, “I studied business...” or “I’ve studied some other thing...” “You can’t change my course. I’ve got too much invested in this one.” As a result of that “me” attitude, you spend the rest of your life out of the *pleasant* will of the Lord because you won’t change your course.

I see a young man in the scripture... Well, he’s fairly young, but he’s an ugly little guy really, riding along on his donkey. This little man has spent his whole life studying *desperately* to become one of the Sanhedrin (a highly respected, very learned religious leader even though very legalistic) in ancient Israel. In fact, this Saul studied under Gamaliel, one of the key Jewish teachers of the day (Ac.5:34; 22:3). Now, this man was kind of popular, because he was a gutsy little ugly guy. ☺ And I say all that because historians describe Saul of Tarsus as 4-foot-eleven with beady eyes, a long beak-nose, and slightly bowed legs. Definitely not a “hunk,” ☺ and yet a little guy *full of fire*! Listen to me, now – full of enthusiasm! Full of what many Christians would call “anointing!”

Just because someone is fervent or zealous in their presentation, in their delivery, even in their life-style – it doesn’t always mean they’re walking down the right path.

One day, Saul is riding along on the road to Damascus and in his hand he has permission – he has the writ from royalty (Ac.9:1,2; 26:12) – that anyone preaching something other than what the Old Testament taught in the Law should be killed. This official document he carried stated that *anyone* who had adopted the message that this “Christ” came to bring – this Jesus from Nazareth – Saul had official permission to kill them. He could pull them out of whatever they were doing, have them flogged and even imprisoned. He could do just about whatever he wanted to with them. He carried that authoritative paper in his hand!

Now, Jesus was born with authority (Lk.3:22; Jn.5:17ff). He knew who He was. That’s a big argument among theologians: “At what age did Jesus recognize He was the Son of God?” May I just say, “Oh, DUH!” ☺ He knew who He was when He came! Otherwise, it wouldn’t be “*learning* obedience.” This was a whole new realm for Him (in a human body), and He had to *learn* His way. His human Dad (Joseph) was a carpenter, so He probably was learning carpentry. But *He knew* He had a higher goal. He got one little shot at it in Jerusalem when he was 12 years old (Lk.2:41ff), but then they took Him back home to Nazareth. ☺

It isn’t until He’s 30 years of age that He steps out and says, “*Repent*” or, “*Change your mind! The Kingdom of Heaven is here!*” (Mt.4:17). And with that, He set Himself on a path – of persecution. Oh, He healed the sick – raised the dead – did miracles – “from the get-go” as we would say in our vernacular. From the very beginning, He did a lot of good things and multitudes followed Him – but *bigger* multitudes didn’t.

Let’s go back to the little man on the donkey. Time has passed since Jesus lived – this story isn’t recorded by Dr. Luke in the Book of Acts until chapter 9. Jesus has died, been buried, rose again, lived 40 days so everyone could see Him and give witness to it. Those who saw Him after the Resurrection were proof of it (Ac.1:2,3; 1Cor.15:6). Then He went up to Heaven (Ac.1:9-11) and just before He

ascended, He said to His disciples, “You go do it now” (Ac.1:8; Mt.28:18-20; Mk.16:15; Lk.24:46-48; Jn.17:18; 20:21). “You should be able to do greater works than I, because I’m going back to the Father (Jn.14:12) – and *you’ll have a longer time and there are more of you.*” Funny the things we miss – like what “greater things” may mean.

But this little man wasn’t there among the witnesses – he was studying the Law – the “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not.” What will it take to change such a person? Unfortunately, he is extremely successful at what he does! So successful is he that he’s known among all: “That’s Saul of Tarsus.” Saul means “sent for.” And whenever the people or Jewish leaders saw Christians rising up in these “home groups”...

How many of you are in a home group? You can look for a ***powerful*** anointing to hit that home group because that’s where it is right now! The power of God being displayed.

Every time the Jews would see a home group meeting, speaking of Jesus and His power to forgive sins and cleanse men and women, Saul would walk in and disturb the gathering (ekklesia). So, they would send for him: “Get Saul. He’ll take care of this!” And he would. He’d go in and disrupt the whole thing (Ac.9:2c).

Now, he’s riding along with the power of the Law in his hand and on his side. I want you to get this! If you catch the meaning of what I’m saying, I know you will take it on. We’re so afraid of the power of the law! We’re afraid of “majority rules.” We are too much like this defeated attitude: “What’re we going to do, Pastor? The law says...” What I’ve learned throughout all these years is: **God plus one always has been a majority!** Now I’m not suggesting you break the laws of the land – that would be contrary to Scripture. I’m saying that we need to have a spiritual perspective in every area of our lives, and not give in or up just because the media has reported some dire statistics.

But here’s the Law – it’s there in his hand – and Saul’s riding along with purpose. Suddenly, the *glory* of the Master hits him! Now the Bible describes it as a “bright light” (Ac.9:3; 26:13). And it *was* a bright light. It was so bright that instantly, he was blinded and knocked off his donkey. Plus, he heard a voice – and understood what it was saying (Ac.9:4) – “Saul, Saul!”

I’m reminded of a vision from the Lord I experienced recently (for a full description of the vision with commentary, see the message on www.iverna.org – “They Ought to Know Me!”). It’s interesting when you hear and understand what you see. It’s just a fascinating thing! Saul was *blinded*, but he *heard* a voice. Those traveling with him did not hear with the same understanding Saul heard (Ac.9:7; 22:9). They heard only the sound of a thunderous noise.

The voice asked him a probing question: “Saul, Saul” (now, when the Lord uses your name twice, He’s **serious!** ☺). “Why persecutest thou Me?” (Ac.9:4). And little man said, “Who art thou, Lord, that I persecute you?” (vs.5a).

Here’s a message we can glean from this: the very people you’re so afraid of (like the Christians were of this Saul) – the ones that you think are so mighty and that they would be so rejecting of the Gospel if you tried to share with it them – the truth of the matter is, they’ve never *heard* Him. They’ve never *seen* Him. Never really heard *about* Him. “Oh, well, in America, everyone’s heard about Jesus.” Not really! And certainly not in the midst of the glory!

That’s why I spoke to the home groups prophetically just moments ago. The *glory of God* is going to hit you there, because there you’ll have time to talk about what has happened – and realize what it is and what it isn’t. You’ll have time to take it all in and receive from it and walk out of there like Moses with your faces glistening with His Presence and His glory! (see Ex.34:29ff).

When that happens, when He pours out His Spirit in such powerful revelation and then we gather together in the Church on Sunday, you aren’t going to be able to hold us down! It’s going to be the power! The

manifested power of His Presence! That's what makes the difference! The *glory of God* blinded Saul of Tarsus! And the voice said, "Why do you persecute Me?"

Now listen to it: Saul responds: "Who art Thou, *Lord?*" The **transfer of power** begins right there – in acknowledging lordship. Before that, "little man" was the power. He'd just walk into a situation believing: "I've got the writ. I am the authority here." Now, he says, "Who art Thou, oh 'Greater-one-than-me'?" And the answer to that is: "*I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest*" (Ac.9:5b).

I think the Bible is terribly kind, by the way, in its silence, don't you? Especially chapter 11 of Hebrews – "By faith..." "By faith Noah built an ark..." (Heb.11:7). It doesn't tell us (there) how many years it took him to accomplish that! The boat wasn't all *that* big. And then, "by faith this one..." and "by faith that one..." But when you go back in the Scriptures to read about their lives and discover the details: "Oh, boy." I like it though because it's going to do the same thing for me! ☺ "By faith, Iverna heard the word of the Lord and obeyed Him and was blessed." ☺ You see, that's all anyone needs to know. ☺ But I can hear all the angels saying, "Oh brother!" ☺ That's okay. I get a new angel every week because they quit! ☺ I hear them: "I had her last week!" ☺

Listen now, this will help you: **God never blinds you** to everything you think you know, or everything you've planned for, **without giving you a new way to go** (cf.1Cor.10:13). Are you with me? None of the people with Saul heard anything! (Ac.9:7). He turned to them and inquired, "Did you hear that?" "Yeah, we heard – thunder." "No. Didn't you hear...? Didn't you hear – the voice?" "Oh man! The guy can't see and now he's daft – besides ugly." ☺ But the word of the Lord that came to Saul was this: "Go into the city you were headed for. Go to a certain street – there's a certain man there. Knock on his door – he'll receive you." God gave him the way to go.

Now, I'm ashamed – well, not really full of shame, ☺ but it's not a proud moment when I tell you the truth about me when God gives me that kind of direction. When the Holy Spirit speaks to me and says, "Go to this church – even though I've directed you otherwise and you've not been going to church congregations these days but only are ministering at Pastors' Conferences. Go ahead and say 'Yes.' to this particular invitation." All too often my next response to His direction is: "And then what?" ☺ I'm sorry, but that's the truth. And I press Him for the rationale: "Why would You send me...? Why do You want me to go there when I said 'No' to here – here – here – here – and here?" Now He never answers that question! Never! And I... Yes, I truly do praise Him for that – because if He would satisfy my curiosity, then I would be in charge. And *that* is a very dangerous position for any Christian! We, too, are in the "me" generation!

Paul makes his – still "Saul" at that time – but he makes his way into the city. I personally think his companions led him into Damascus (Ac.9:8), deposited him at the appointed place, and were glad to get rid of him. ☺ Strange things are happening to this little man! ☺

He goes into this house, and what shall he do? He can't *do*.... He just sits. For three days, he's just there (vs.9). He can't even eat. I mean, can you imagine what's going on in this brilliant mind? I can. I can imagine him questioning, wondering, and even muttering in despair, "I've wasted my whole life. I've been... And now I... I don't even..." Everything he'd ever seen was blinded! Every plan he'd ever made was stripped out of his hand, and now he's being accused – by the Almighty! Of persecution!

Imagine you are a newspaper reporter and go to interrogate or interview him: "What's your name?" "I'm Saul of Tarsus." "And what's your occupation?" "I have no idea." ☺ "Oh, I see you're in Judas' home (vs.11), what are you doing here?" "I have no idea." "Well, how did you come to get here?" Same response for the third time – "I've no idea." "I see – you have no occupation, you don't know why you're here, and you don't know how you got here. So, how long will you be here?" ☺

I'm using humor, Church, because it anesthetizes you. ☺ But a lot of you are in that very place today – running from reporters, hoping no one asks – fearing that maybe you have spent years in preparation for

something that really isn't and hasn't been in God's plan for your life at all. He's now blinded you to the things that were once dazzling to you. And now that *glory* has been lifted, and you're just not really sure of anything. You try to talk to people but like it was for Saul, where he's staying, the people, *his* people, weren't there. They don't know what he saw anyway! His friends didn't hear the voice as he did! They saw it as a burst of some kind of lightning or thunder. Suddenly he was blinded and then they brought him into this place and... "I don't know what's going on." Sounds a lot like despair.

"Where's the hope in this, Iverna?" Oh, I'm so glad you asked. ☺ Across town, God has prepared – a home group leader – Ananias. ☺ And He speaks to him explaining the situation and then says, "I want *you* to go there, Ananias, and lay hands on this Saul" (Ac.9:10-12). Now the response of this "chosen vessel" is to give God – unknown information. ☺ "God! I know this man! And it's good You called on me because You have no idea what You're dealing with in him! ☺ He has persecuted the Chris..."

You know there are people who follow you around with a mental pencil and paper – to mark down all your failures. They save them for posterity! ☺ "Oh, you think she's so great. Yeah, well I happen to know this about her... and I happen to know that..." That's all you'll ever know if that's what you're doing with information! I see people do it about churches. They say, "That church will never go anywhere, because – back at the foundation time, a hundred years ago, such and such and so and so and such and such..." If that's where you're stuck – you don't know *anything* about the Holy Spirit and His redemptive plan! Hour by hour, He is exerting His sanctifying power – and that person, or that Church is under the Blood!

"I can't go and pray for *him*! Lord! He's a dangerous man!" Ananias proclaims (Ac.9:13,14). And God declares, "I'm not going to talk about this. You're My servant – do it."

That's all, Church. **All we have to do is obey what He says.** "*Just do it.*" You don't have to get the "what ifs." "What if it doesn't work? What if I pray for the sick and they die?" Hey! They were going to die before you prayed – so what's lost? ☺ Let's not add another problem to it – by your disobedience – because then you'll have to answer for that. If God says, "Do it" – then just do it. If *you* don't see the response you want to see resulting from that prayer (as in healing), or the prophetic word you spoke, it doesn't matter – *you* obeyed. Now, walk in victory. Sing the song of the Lord. You could even sound somewhat like a childlike chant, or something a little bit sing-songy: "I obeyed the Lord!" Well, maybe it isn't that way, but that's how I feel sometimes: "Neener-neener-nee-ner." ☺

You see – no matter what you did with what I ministered in obedience to His explicit direction – I'm not responsible for that. If you don't receive the word given, that's your responsibility. Because I gave what God told me to give. I gave what the Holy Spirit said He was going to deliver to you. Does that make sense?

Ananias goes over there in obedience, walks into the house and – I love this man's heart! – because the first words out of his mouth are: "Brother Saul." (Ac.9:17). Don't you love that? ☺ I surely do! It reveals a lot to me about what was in his heart – towards God.

And suddenly ...

I like the old songs – the hymns of the old Church. You'll just have to forgive me for constant reference to them, but we used to sing one – just sort of as a little ditty: "I care not what church you belong to, just as long as for Calvary you stand. For if your heart is as my heart, you're my brother... you're my sister... so give me your hand." That was the attitude Ananias carried in his heart. And that's why God could trust him with the message/ministry.

The Lord said about Saul, "I called him – he's Mine! I'm going to use him, and I'll show him the things he must suffer for My sake" (Ac.9:15,16). Did you notice that the Lord says to the one who is ministering to Saul: "I will show him the things he must suffer." We make a big mistake when we try to take on that

task. It belongs solely to God. We need to be obedient to what God directs and not add our two cents into the mix.

“Immediately ...” (Ac.9:18). You do realize, don’t you, that everything God does is – “all of a sudden!” It doesn’t matter how long it takes for Him to do it. ☺ Here for Saul, it was three days. Saul couldn’t eat – or sleep. He didn’t know where he was – or what was going on. He was getting no fresh word. He was just breathing in and breathing out, waiting. But when it was God’s moment – when something had transpired in his spirit to a place where he was – listen, because if you get this, I promise that the whole message will save your life! When he, Saul, was ready – was prepared – to see in his new world (I am pausing here to let that sink in – I hope). When Saul was ready to see another route – or another way to go – or a new path that he was to take... When he was sufficiently prepared...

It took three days! I don’t know why it took three days. God could have sent Ananias to him sooner than that! Remember? It took three days for Jonah in the belly of the whale! Why three days for him? “Well – so he could be a type of Jesus in the...” Oh, puh-leeze! ☺ It took three days because Jonah was mad at God for two of them! ☺ “I’ve been serving You! Walking around – prophesying to this godless city! And just because I didn’t want to go back to it again – You swallowed me up in this *guppy* (or whatever it is!).” ☺

The third day, Jonah says, “I have a creative idea! I will bless the Lord.” ☺ What he actually says is, “*I will offer a sacrifice of praise to my God*” (Jon.2:9). Oh, brilliant, Jonah! And – as soon as he began to praise the Lord from the belly of that whale (which was, of course, God’s provision!), the fish opened its mouth *::cough!::spew!::* and Jonah was free!

Come on, admit it. We do the same thing only we say it this way: “Well, if the Lord will just heal me....” “If He’ll just deliver me....” “If He’ll give me a job....” “If He’ll give me a husband....” “If He’ll give me a mate....” “If He’ll reinstate my home....” “If He...” “If He...” “If He...” “If He will... – *then* I will praise Him.” Nah! You never will. I’m sorry, but you never will really praise Him – because **He’s waiting for you to praise Him because of Who He is – not for what He does** or already did.

Immediately – the scales fell from Saul’s eyes and he could see clearly! When comprehension comes, never take it for granted! Always be grateful for what God gives!

When you’re seeing things... If you’re getting anything from the 17 sermons I’ve preached to you today ☺ – if only one of them hits you with the revelation you need for where you are right now – you also need to be responding in your spirit: “Oh, thank You, God! I needed that! I thank You for it!”

Immediately – Saul’s whole world changes! Look, everything he had believed in – everything he had talked about – everything he had lived for – is now gone! And the very circles that believe what he now believes would never open up for his ministry – because they’re afraid of him. (Pause here again and consider that!). Saul of Tarsus had been persecuting the believers – with a vengeance! And now? Was their trust supposed to be as fast and complete as his conversion?

“I have to stay in this vocation because there’s nothing else open for me.” You see, my Friend – if God is moving you, **He will** move you – even if He has to shut down the whole organization you’re in now just to release you to something else. ☺ Oh, you hate this, don’t you? ☺ Some truth is just so hard to see – and harder to accept.

As I see the whole picture, we’re on God’s big chessboard and He plans to get us to a “checkmate” position. ☺ We, as *seed*, become very comfortable if we’re in a garden that is sprouting beauty. Hello? And sometimes the only way that He can scatter us – the *seed*... Well, sometimes He just blows His wonderful soothing breath, His warm and wonderful south wind, and gently blows the seeds from the flowers – like the fuzzy little dandelion seeds. They softly float away landing in another place – and we get to stay right there and sink in. But it’s not always that way. It’s not always so easy.

Sometimes, He begins to move us out of where we are into the “new” (and different) – and it’s a very frightening immediate position. It is. I understand it, believe me. I have lived what I’m saying to you. But I see it happening more now! ***It’s the Kingdom move.*** We *have* to move. “Well, I... I’ve just never... You know, I’m not comfortable in – in a foreign country. And I just – I just never could go, Pastor. Thank you for the invitation – but you go and we’ll bless you and – and – here’s a dime....” You understand, don’t you? ☺ God is positioning His people to carry out His divine plan.

He is going to *thrust seed!* He wants all of you – everything – every part of what pertains to you. Maybe you should take your vacation on a mission’s trip! ☺ Not a bad idea! God wants all of us available for *sowing* – not to stay there as missionaries, but to go and see and spread – and make a difference! “*Go ye into...*” What? Your little garden? No. What does it say? “*All the world.*” And do what? (Mt.28:18ff; Mk.16:15f). “Well, I’m not a preacher.” Listen: “preach” just means “tell.” You “tell” of the love and goodness of God by your life. We tell more by our *doings* than we do with our mouths. And count on people watching you! Everywhere you go – at home or abroad.

If you lined up every full-time preacher across the earth – even all of us who are perfect ☺ – if you lined up all of us, we still would not make a very long line. You’d take one look and have to say, “That’s not nearly enough. They can’t possibly do it all! There never will be a generation where they *all* hear of Jesus and see His glory manifested.” And you’d be absolutely right! God never intended it to be that way – with only the preachers doing the preaching. The five-fold ministry (Eph.4:11-13) is an *enabling* ministry. It’s to enable you as the *seed* to understand what you have to do and then to do it: Let the pod open up! And let the seed come forth! For years, no, for generations, we have kept it right *here* in the pulpit and *here* on the platform. And the people in the pews just have eaten and eaten until they have become very fat sheep! With glistening coats!

Can you take another extreme statement? ***When you get full – and you are not giving out – you will transfer hunger to judging.*** (Let that one sink in too!) Because when you’re full and no longer really hungry, you’ll start *deciding* things like: “I like this worship leader, but not that one.” “I like this song, but not that one.” “I like this pastor, but not that one.” “I receive this, but I don’t like that.” That’s because you’re full and don’t think you need to eat very much. It’s like going to the second Thanksgiving dinner – just to please some family members. You really don’t want any more to eat!

Saul, in one blast of glory, found his purpose – and it changed his entire journey (including his name and reputation). We can follow his new-life’s journey through the New Testament. We can see his successes and failures, acceptance and rejection, imprisonments, healings, deaths, miracles, hunger – having plenty and then not enough (e.g.2Cor.4:8ff; 11:23ff; Phil.4:11,12). But do you know what *we* do? We try to specialize only on the positives.

I have even heard people say, “I have the ministry of....” I still hear that today – even after all the teaching that’s been out there to balance that erred thought. “Well, I have the ministry of – this.” And “I have the ministry of – that...” You don’t have the ministry of *anything* – you have the ministry of *everything!* **The Holy Spirit in you is the gift!** Everything else that follows is an expression of Him.

So, don’t be guilty of saying something like: “I have the ministry of – hospitality.” Yes you do – if you’re a Christian, DUH! ☺ We all are to be hospitable toward one another! We’re all to be a blessing! (Rom.12:13; 1Pet.3:8,9; 4:9,10; 5:5,6; 1Tim.3:2; Heb.13:2). We’re all to be kind to one another (Eph.4:32), to befriend one another (Rom.12:10), to encourage one another (Col.3:16; 1Thes.5:14), to build up one another (Rom.14:19; 15:2), to comfort one another (Rom.12:15; 2Cor.1:4; 1Thes.4:18; 5:18). That’s what being a Christian is all about. It’s in the Good Book!

I’m sorry, but if you say, “I have the ministry of....,” you’ll put a ceiling over your growth! Take the ceiling off! *Function* as He lets you function and that’s wonderful, but *expect* that there will be expansion

as well. We are not locked into or limited to a single type of ministry. If we're truly submitted to Him, He will use us as *He* wills in any given moment, meeting whatever need exists.

There are people reading this message – some of you never have – listen now – never have prophesied because you say, “I’m not a Prophet.” Neither are most of us who prophesy! We don’t *occupy that specific office* in the 5-fold capacity (Eph.4:11-13). Here’s an example of a prophetic word – a *word of knowledge* (1Cor.12:8): in a congregational service or meeting, when someone believes he (or she) has received a word from the Lord, and goes through proper channels (defined by that church leadership) – received permission to give the word publicly from the platform or microphone – and then says something like: “I think there’s someone here who keeps trying and isn’t making it...” Now when that occurs, the word should encourage you (everyone) to say, “Alright, Lord! I believe You’re going to do it in me.” That’s prophecy or prophesying.

Some of you sit in the service, week after week after week – and then in your home groups as well – and you never *expect* the Holy Spirit to speak through you. **Expectation is akin to faith.** “Use me, Lord. Use me, Lord.” “Well, I’m not, you know, articulate.” Neither was Moses – he stuttered (Ex.4:10ff). So, God gave him Aaron to do the talking (Ex.4:14ff) (and that was one of his biggest problems! ☺). It’s simply that we always want a substitute. “Let so-and-so do it. They do it so powerfully!”

Well, sometimes there’s a person in your group (or wherever you are) – there may be a person right next to you who simply needs to know God is saying something – and it doesn’t have to be beautifully spoken. In fact, if you copy someone else’s delivery it really sounds tinny. If you’re a meeker, more quiet person and you, with great gusto, declare: “The Almighty would speak unto thee...” how strange that would be! You don’t talk that way, so come on, let it go! Just say, “Hey kid... ☺ I don’t know how you’ll take this, but I serve God and I believe in praying. And I pray for you. In fact, I was just praying for you and I feel, really, that God is saying something to you.” I promise you, they’re going to listen – because they’re curious. “Oh, yeah? What’d He say?” Then, if you just want to have a little fun, you could say, “Do you really want to know?” ☺

Here’s my closing. Saul **learned his purpose** – **followed the path** – and **expected the prize**. Then, when he had trained the upcoming generation and placed them in positions of authority in their local churches, his farewell was something like this: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course which the Lord, the righteous Judge, laid up for me. There is a crown of righteousness – and not for me only, but to all who love His appearing...” (2Tim.4:7,8).

When do we love His appearing? When I want to get out of this mess! *::Not!:: ::Reject!:: ::Wrong answer!:: We love His appearing* when we know His voice is heard to say, “*Well done good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of My Kingdom*” (Mt.25:21,23; Ps.16:11; Jn.15:10,11).

“Father, I ask You for a fresh anointing on these people who have heard or read this message. I pray that You will raise up literally *hundreds* who have never been used before in the general assembly. I’m asking that every *seedpod* will pop open. I pray that those who have just taken in and taken in from You shall *explode* with the Word. I pray a new, fresh **boldness** to Your people to be unafraid to say, “God said!” I ask You that they shall reap as they sow! I pray it will be such a quick work in the Church and through Your people that the ‘reaper will overtake the sower’ (Ams.9:13) for Lord, we’re in those days and it’s time for us to be a part of that. I thank You for it.”

“I pray especially for Pastors and leaders – I ask You my God, that they will hear clearly – so clearly – the direction of the Lord – and all we need to hear is just the next step. What’s our next step, Father? We need to hear You clearly, the next step. And, I’m asking Lord that the **Power of Your Presence** will make a way for Your people to minister in Your Name. Because as the Church goes, so goes The Kingdom of God! And You taught us to pray, ‘Thy Kingdom come!’” Amen.