

“the 12”

pt. 2



*Our Spiritual Ancestors*  
*Their Faith and Failures*

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February and April 2016

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**Jesus Christ**  
**Our Highest Calling**  
**Our Greatest Purpose**  
**Our Soul's Source and Joy**  
**And Our All-Consuming Passion**

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## INTRODUCTION to part 2

As we have begun to read the history and learn from the lives of our spiritual ancestors, “<sup>the</sup>**12**” disciples or Apostles, we realize they were not super people, with super powers and super spirituality. They were mere mortals, just as we are. They struggled, had weaknesses, acted or responded inappropriately, but were in a life-long process of growing and becoming something more.

When Jesus chose the 12, He did so, not based on who they were or what they had done, but based on what they would become, as they surrendered their lives to the Master.

Jesus chose the 12 to be with Him.<sup>[Mk.3:13]</sup>

As we learn about the 12, we neither gasp in awe at their “spirituality”, nor do we point our fingers at them, when they evidenced imperfection. We simply consider their life lessons, their examples, their development and God’s gracious patience with them, as Christ Himself, never gave up on them.

History is exciting, but even more so, as we step into history ourselves, living for Christ today, as He works in our lives and molds each of us into the child of God and servant of Christ that He wants us to become. May we never be satisfied with where we are, yet never discouraged because we are not where we will one day be. Remember, He is still working on us!

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“... let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance...”

-Hebrews 12:1b

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# **“Thomas *The Doubter*”**

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# Thomas


## *"The Doubter"*

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**Text:** Variety

August 14, 2016

**Theme:** Theme: the **12** Disciples: our spiritual descendants; Their Faith & Failure



“Philip *found* Nathanael and said to him,  
"We have found him of whom Moses in the Law  
and also the prophets wrote.." John 1:45 ESV



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Doubting is what we never want to be known for, yet it is the  
certain, inevitable precursor for any truth.

## INTRODUCTION

In our study of the original 12 disciples, we must remember, these were not super hero people. They were imperfect people, just as you and I are. When Jesus chose “The 12”, he did not do so because of who they were or what they had done, but for what they would *become* as He molded them for kingdom ministry.

Their life with Jesus was a process of growth, transformation and personal development. They, like all disciples, were disciples in training. What Jesus did for the original “12”, He can do for us today, as disciples in 2016. Jesus is in the business of changing lives. Today I want us to leave, remembering this principle.

### **‘WE WILL BE KNOWN FOR HOW WE LIVE’**

If you ever read a book about the life of Jeff Wilson, you can be sure it wasn’t written by me. But if you ever *do* read a book about my life, you will find it full of embarrassing and shameful things. It will be full of things I regret and would never want to be known for.

Imagine looking back on your life and remembering the worst thing you ever did. Not that you got caught doing. But in your memory, the worst thing you ever did. Now imagine the whole world knowing about it and you are forever in the history books with a nick-name which brands you for what you have done.

This morning, we are going to set a man free from his historical nick-name, which is associated with failure. In light of this, today we consider our past failures and present lifestyle.

Peter, *the denier*. Judas *the betrayer*. James and John, *Sons of Thunder*. Peter, *the Rock*. **THOMAS** *the doubter* (given by us, not by Christ.) God wants to set us free from the stigma of failure, and from being known for “not measuring up”. God does not want us to be known for the struggles we have or have succumbed to nor for some failure or failures of life. God wants us to be known for what He has done in our lives, for the change that He has brought about, and for the redemption that He provides through Jesus Christ. Because God can change everything, including what you are known for!

A little bit about...

## THE BACKGROUND OF THOMAS

Other than his name, Matthew, Mark and Luke record nothing about Thomas. The gospel of John records most of what we know of him, from holy Scripture.

### His Personal life

We know he was a twin.

**Joh 21:1-2** ESV After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. (2) Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together.

Thomas called “Didymus,” - also means “*twin*”.

### His Personality

Thomas may have been a very compassionate supporter of Christ.

**Joh 11:11-16** ESV After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." (12) The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." (13) Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. (14) Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, (15) and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." (16) So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

What was Thomas referring to? There are many different interpretations to this statement. (1) Some believe Thomas was referring to Jesus preparing to go to Bethany to Lazarus' family

and knew the Jews would want to kill Him, and possibly the disciples with Him. (Jn.11:53)

(2) If we look at the context in which this statement is given. Jesus has just clarified to the 12, that Lazarus was dead. And Jesus said, "let us go to him". (11:15)

**Joh 11:14-16** ESV Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, (15) and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." (16) So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

v.15) "to" or "unto", indicating direction.

v.16) "to" or "in order that", indicating purpose.

Perhaps they were going to join Jesus in dying *emotionally*. They may have meant to go with Jesus in order to grief with Jesus, or to die emotionally.<sup>[Jn.11:35]</sup> He was willing to suffer for Christ, to be a support for Him in a time of deep sorrow. So it seems that Thomas was a man of compassion. He felt the hurts of others.

## His Personal Faith

Some criticize Thomas, saying he was "slow to believe". This is due to the fact that following the Resurrection of Jesus, when the other disciples had seen Jesus, Thomas doubted. Perhaps he was more careful than the rest, not wanting to be easily lead astray.

## IT WAS THOMAS WHO NEEDED THE CONFIRMATION OF THE PROMISE OF CHRIST.

**Joh 14:3-6** ESV And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (4) And you know the way to where I am going." (5) Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going.

How can we know the way?" (6) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Because of Thomas' question, we have Christ's response, which has become such an important support verse of faith and assurance to the true believer in Christ.

The Way – The Truth – The Life – “No one comes to the Father but by Me!”

\*\* What do you believe about Jesus today? Where do you get the information for what you believe about Him? Do you believe the Truth? Are you sure? How do you know?

### ***George Washington***

What if someone asked, “Who was George Washington?” And you said, He was the first 2 headed green martian ever discovered. And then you were asked, “How do you know that?” “I just do.” Well how do you know?” “Its just what I believe.”

Sounds ludicrous doesn't it. At Least when we apply that kind of reasoning to George Washington. But when you ask someone, “Who is Jesus?” Oh, he was a good man. How do you know? “Its just what I believe”. Was He the Son of God and Savior of the World? No. How do you know? “Its just how I believe.”

When you apply that same ludicrous reasoning to Jesus, for some, it becomes completely reasonable and acceptable. We need a source of Truth and one that doesn't change. The Bible is that source of Truth and Jesus is the subject of that source of Truth.

**“I Am the way the Truth and the Life”.** I am the way to heaven. I am the Truth of God. I am the Life of all who believe in Me.

**“No one comes to the Father but by me”** – Jesus is God’s only Son and our Only Savior. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” (Acts.17:31)

### **AT JESUS RESURRECTION – “Doubting Thomas” Why?**

**Joh 20:19-20** ESV On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." (20) When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

**Joh 20:24-25** ESV Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. (25) So the other disciples told him, "**We have seen the Lord.**" But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Who among us, would dare to point the finger at Thomas as a negative example of faith, as though none of us here have ever struggled with understanding and believing certain things concerning the faith? How many of us would have responded in a similar manner?

### **MARTHA’S PROFESSION**

*Martha struggled but professed...*

**Joh 11:23-27** ESV Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." (24) Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." (25) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die,

yet shall he live, (26) and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (27) She said to him, "**Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.**"

## PETER'S PROFESSION

*Peter stumbled but professed...*

**Mat 16:13-17** ESV Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (14) And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." (15) He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" (16) Simon Peter replied, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living** God." (17) And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

*Andrew and Nathanael professed...*

**Joh 1:41** ESV [Andrew] first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "**We have found the Messiah**" (which means Christ).

**Joh 1:45** Philip found **Nathanael** and said to him, "**We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote,** Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

God is looking for believers like Thomas, who though they may not understand fully, yet they still believe. "I believe, help my unbelief."<sup>[Mk.9:24]</sup>

## THOMAS' PROFESSION OF FAITH

**Joh 20:26-31** (26) Eight days later, his disciples were inside

again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (27) Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." (28) Thomas answered him, "**My Lord and my God!**" (29) Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (30) Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; (31) but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

OK, here we have it. At a point in time, yes, Thomas doubted. As a result, he has been branded as "doubting Thomas". Today we are setting this man free from this nick-name which is synonymous with failure.

In the presence of Christ, Thomas professed His faith in Jesus, *to* Jesus, "***My Lord and my God.***" So today as we set Thomas free from the nick-name of failure, we are giving him a new nick-name – "Professing Thomas" . *Doubting Thomas* is laid to rest. "*Professing Thomas*" is born.

## THOMAS' NEED FOR EVIDENCE

[middletownbiblechurch.org]

1. Unless I see in his hands the mark or the nails
2. And put my finger into the place of the nails,
3. And put my hand into his side
4. I definitely will not believe!

## JESUS CONFIRMATION

1. See (behold) my hands,
2. Bring here your finger,
3. And bring your hand, and put it into my side,
4. And no longer be unbelieving, but believing!

**Act 17:11** ESV Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

### **Thomas was a man full of faith and prayer**

#### ***Faith and Sight***

**Joh 20:29** ESV Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

**2Co 5:7** ESV for we walk by faith, not by sight.

### **LET'S BRING THIS HOME**

WE WILL ALL BE KNOWN FOR HOW WE LIVE OR FOR WHAT WE DO.

You may be known for how you live or for what you have done. You may have a reputation for mistakes you've made or maybe even for failures that were your fault. Today, we are setting you free from your past.

**The Later Life of Thomas** Not much is known about the later life of Thomas. We are sure that he served the Lord faithfully, but we are not sure where or how. Some say that he labored for Christ in Parthia, Persia and India. One tradition says that he suffered death

as a martyr with the use of a lance or spear. We cannot be sure about these reports

But we can be sure about what the Bible tells about Thomas.

### **THE LAST RECORD IN THE BIBLE OF THOMAS IS IN ACTS, AT THE PRAYER MTG WITH THE OTHER DISCIPLES.**

**Act 1:13** And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and **Thomas**, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.

### **We know that Thomas was a man of prayer and example**

I am thankful to the HOLY Spirit of God who moved holy me of God to share God's truth – that they included this final testimony of Thomas. Not a doubter, but a man of faith and of prayer.

Though he was known as a doubter, He became a confident, professing believer in Jesus Christ.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Today we are setting some free from their past. God' word speaks of books on judgment day.

**Rev 20:12-15** ESV And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and **books were opened**. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (13) And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. (14) Then

Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

If a person has chosen to spend their earthly life apart from God, then that is how they will spend eternity, separated from God. But this is not God's desire!

**2Pet. 3:9** ESV The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

I'm not sure of all of the contents of Jeff Wilson's book. But somehow as those books are opened, I know this; the focus will be on the good part which is – "He trusted in Jesus for the forgiveness of his sins." His whole life was redeemed. His sins were forgiven. His antics and His problems – were redeemed by Jesus Christ. His failures, His miseries, his disappointments – all redeemed; All redeemed. Christ redeemed it all and He has made sense of it all. His sins were forgiven. His soul was saved. His past was wiped clean and He received the promise of a home in heaven with God. Not because he was good. But because He trusted In Jesus Christ. "Jeff Wilson was set free!!"

How many of us would like to be set free from the failures and sins of your past? How many would like to leave here today, with a new start and a clean past? God wants to set us free and redeem your past and transform your present.

**FOR EVERY FRESH START, THERE IS A STARTING POINT.**

**(1)** Trust in Jesus as Savior. New beginnings always begin with Jesus. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

**(2)** Connect with a local church to grow together. Can you be a Christian and not attend Church. Yes. Can you be an obedient, or victorious Christian without connecting with a church family? I don't think so.

The problem is that we like to think we can do it without the help from others. That is how a lot of our problems began and that is how we continue in the problems that keep us defeated.

The local Church is simply a local gathering of Christians just like you. The church is a group of Christians who are all struggling with their problems, growing in their faith, yet helping one another. That is how it is supposed to be.

**Heb 10:24-25** ESV And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Prayer of salvation, deliverance and freedom.

### **PROFESS:**

Today I am forgiven. Today, I am starting over. Today I am set free, from the failures of my past. Today, I am not alone. Today I have a church family. These church people will encourage me. I will encourage these church people.

And thankfully, I will not be known for the problems, failures, disappointments of how I lived the earlier part of my life. My life's book had a rough start but I know it has a really great ending.

What about you? How does your life book read? What will the book of the history of your life say about how you lived? What will you be known for? Thankfully, all your life, can be redeemed by God.

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Maybe there is someone here today who needs help to be set free from your past failures or present lifestyle. When God calls you, He doesn't choose you for who you are or for what you have done. He chooses you for who you will become as He works in your life, setting you free from the past failures and sins and molds you into the person He wants you to *become*.

## LIVE BY FAITH

**Rom\_1:17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from **faith** for **faith**, as it is written, "The righteous shall **live by faith**."

**Gal\_2:20** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who **live**, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now **live** in the flesh I **live by faith** in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**Gal\_3:11** Now it is evident that no one is justified before God **by** the law, for "The righteous shall **live by faith**."

**Gal\_3:12** But the law is not of **faith**, rather "The one who does them shall **live by** them."

**Heb\_10:38** but my righteous one shall **live by faith**, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."





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# **“Matthew the Tax Collector and Simon the Zealot”**

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# "Matthew the Tax Collector & Simon the Zealot"

**Text:** Variety

August 21, 2016

**Theme:** Theme: the **12** Disciples: our spiritual Ancestors.

Matthew and Simon: Disciples in the Making and Apostles in Training.

"No one who puts his hand to the plow  
and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.

-- Luke 9: 62 ESV

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Following Jesus is like embarking on a journey of no return.  
To jump overboard or turn back is not an option. There may be  
danger. There will be hardship. But the destination is  
glorious beyond imagination.

## INTRODUCTION

Matthew the Tax Collector and Simon the Zealot - as disciples in training, they found a new life worth living. As a believer in Jesus Christ – as a Christian – Why do you do what you do? Why do you attend church? Why do you reach out into your community? What are the reasons you go to work every day? What is your purpose in living? Do we work for God and His eternal kingdom or for ourselves and what we may hope to experience and enjoy?

When Jesus called each disciple and invited them to follow Him, they could not have imagined the magnitude of the challenges that would come into their lives, because of Jesus. But neither could they have anticipated the excitement and joy filled experiences, being used mightily by God for His eternal kingdom purposes.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ involves **CHALLENGES**.

### ***Follow Me***

**Mat 4:19-20** ESV And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (20) Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

"Follow Me" and *leave everything behind*. It was a challenge to make Jesus their highest purpose and greatest interest. That challenge still stands for us today.

### ***Don't Look Back***

**Luk 9:61-62** ESV Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." (62) Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Follow me and *Don't look back*. Don't spend time thinking about what have lost. Don't waste valuable moments imagining what you might have gained or accomplished. Don't entertain thoughts that would tempt you to go back, retreat or consider giving less of yourself. Just keep focused on Christ and what He wants to make of your life!

Following Jesus as the disciples did, means significant challenge.

## **"For The Sake Of The Call"**

Stephen Curtis Chapman (Lyrics)

**CHORUS:** We will abandon it all for the sake of the call  
No other reason at all, but the sake of the call  
Wholly devoted to live and to die for the sake of the call

Nobody stood and applauded them, So they knew from the start  
This road would not lead to fame, All they really knew for sure  
Was Jesus had called to them He said "come follow Me"  
and they came With reckless abandon, they came

Empty nets lying there at the water's edge,  
Told a story that few could believe And none could explain  
How some crazy fishermen agreed to go where Jesus lead  
With no thought to what they would gain  
For Jesus had called them by name  
And they answered... **CHORUS:**

Drawn like the rivers are drawn to the sea  
There's no turning back, for the water cannot help but flow  
Once we hear the Savior's call, we'll follow wherever He leads  
Because of the love He has shown  
And because He has called us to go  
We will answer... **CHORUS:**

We will abandon it all for the sake of the call  
No other reason at all but the sake of the call  
Wholly devoted to live and to die  
Not for the sake of a creed or a cause  
Not for a dream or a promise  
Simply because it is Jesus who called  
And if we believe we'll obey...for the sake of the call.

**CHORUS:**

Being a disciple also means exciting **EXPERIENCES**. Following Jesus as a Disciple in the making, was a challenge which led to

experiences of every kind – some good experiences while other were undesirable experiences.

Pursuing Christ in hopes of good and pleasant experiences is just as mis-focused a life, as hesitating to follow Him because of the possibly perceived unpleasant experiences.

We must choose to follow Christ, for Christ's sake; expecting both good and bad challenges, resulting in both pleasant and unpleasant life-changing, disciple-making, ministry-training experiences.

## **MATTHEW THE A HATED TAX COLLECTOR**

Fishermen may have been looked down on because of their lower class and economic status. But tax collectors were hated and viewed as dirty rotten, low down, no good, scoundrels, crooks and sinners.

The call of Matthew to the apostolic band is mentioned in Mark 2:14, Matthew 9:9 and Luke 5:27-28. From these passages, we learn that Matthew would have been his Greek name, while Levi was his Jewish name.

During the day, Rome occupied the holy land. Roman leaders assigned their own people to be in charge of gathering taxes for the empire. Those who were given this charge, often hired people, from the nations they had conquered, to do the dirty work of collecting taxes. To give them incentive, they were allowed to get whatever more that they could, as long as Rome got its share. Greed often ruled the ethics of these tax collectors and as a result they were often swindlers and traitors of their own people, the Jews. As a result tax collectors were hated by the Jews. In Scripture, Tax Collectors or *Publicans*, are often listed as being

synonymous with or on the same level as drunkards<sup>[Mat.11:19]</sup>, prostitutes<sup>[Mat.21:31]</sup>, or sinners in general<sup>[Mat.9:11; Lk.15:1]</sup>. (They were known as unscrupulous people. If we recall, Zacchaeus was also in this category.(Lk.19)

## Matthew followed Jesus

**Mat 9:9** ESV As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called **Matthew** sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "*Follow me.*" And he **rose and followed him.**

As we consider Matthew's following Jesus, remember that because of the unscrupulous practices of these tax gatherers, they were quite wealthy, at the expense of others. So to Matthew's credit, whether he fully realized what he was doing at the time or not, he was walking away from a very lucrative lifestyle, in order to follow this carpenter, with his rag-tag group of misfits.

Matt-"Square Pegs" not fisherman but tax collector. One of the hated of society. Mat 9:9 Mat 10:3 Mar 3:18 Luk 6:15 Act 1:13

## Matthew threw a party for Jesus and friends

\* Though the gospel of Matthew does name its author, it is widely accepted as being the apostle Matthew. Se we have Matthew's record of his own personal account and testimony of his life with the Savior.

**Mat 9:9-11** ESV (9) As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "*Follow me.*" And he **rose and followed him.** (10) And as Jesus reclined

at table in the house, behold, *many tax collectors and sinners* came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. (11) And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

They may have been viewed as “sinners” because they were known swindlers or perhaps due to the fact that they may have been unreligious “Jewish” men, within the overall religious Hebrew culture.

We know that Andrew met Jesus and then found his brother Peter and brought Him to Jesus. Then Philip met Jesus and got Nathanael Bartholomew (or Son of Tolomai) and brought him to Jesus. For those who met Jesus, they were truly affected and truly interested in getting others around them, connected to Jesus.

Now Matthew meets Jesus, then he throws a party for Jesus and Matthew’s sinful friends. Verse 10 states, ..“*many tax collectors and sinners*” and remember, these are the words of Matthew referring to himself and his own friends.

This reminds me of Jesus meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well. Please note the progression of this story.

**Jesus Connects with and engages the woman in conversation.**

**Joh 4:6-7** ESV Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. (7) A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

**4:9** The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?"... (10) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is

saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

**4:13** Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

**Through the course of conversation, the woman becomes convicted of her sin, and convinced of Jesus' Messiahship.**

**Joh 4:28-30** ESV So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, (29) "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (30) They went out of the town and were coming to him.

So the woman met Jesus, then went back home and shared her experience with Jesus and who she believed Him to be. This is her personal testimony. Now the story takes a turn.

### **The Value of Personal Testimony**

**Joh 4:39** ESV Many Samaritans from that town believed in him *because of the woman's testimony...*"

We are not told here, if she actually shared the gospel. But she did what she was able, which was to tell the people about Jesus and her personal beliefs and conviction of who He is. So far, all the people know about Jesus is what the woman has personally shared.

Here is revealed the power of our personal testimony of faith in Christ. A woman connects with Jesus and believes. Then she goes and connects with others, in order to connect them to Christ.

At some level, these people believe in Jesus, because of the woman's testimony(v39), and her invitation to "come and see" for

themselves(v29). Then they ultimately believe in Jesus by His own word(v42) and it becomes their own first hand experience and personal testimony that they will eventually share,.

**Joh 4:40-41** ESV (40) So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. (41) And many more believed because of his word.

They came to Jesus and they believed in Him. But listen to what the people of her village say next.

**4:42** They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, *for we have heard for ourselves*, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

The woman's personal testimony, prepares the way for the others to meet Jesus and believe for themselves.

Friends we must never discount nor underestimate the power of our personal testimony. Every believer has a testimony, whether you perceive it or not. Every believer has his or her own testimony of their own personal faith experience with Jesus, whether we perceive it as significant or not. I believe our personal testimonies are crucial in our sharing the gospel with others.

Our testimony is not to replace the gospel. But our testimony certainly can complement the gospel, in that it lets others know that we are speaking from our own first-hand experience, not merely from hearsay. It communicates that we have already experienced what we are encouraging other to experience, that is a faith based connection to Christ, and eternal salvation of the soul.

**2Tim. 1:8a** ESV Therefore do not be ashamed of the *testimony* about our Lord..."

When was the last time you shared your own personal faith story with another person? How many opportunities to share your personal testimony have you passed up in a given week?

1John is the personal testimony of the Apostle John, regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ in his own life.

**1Jn 5:10-13** ESV Whoever believes in the Son of God has the *testimony* in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the *testimony* that God has borne concerning his Son. (11) And this is the *testimony*, that God gave US eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (12) Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (13) I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

To speak about our *testimony* for Jesus Christ (above), John uses the word often translated as *witness*. This word is our word for Martyr, which is most often used to refer to someone who is killed for the cause of Christ. It is the word Luke records Christ as using in Acts 1, to refer to the disciples being Jesus' "witnesses" or living testimonies of the life and teachings of our Lord Jesus throughout the world.

**Act 1:8** ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my *witnesses* [or "testimony"] in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Much later in his life, while imprisoned for his faith in Christ, John gives this personal testimony.

**Rev 1:9** ESV I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the *testimony* of Jesus.

The Apostle John was persecuted and prosecuted for being a believer and follower of Jesus. He was a living *witness* (testimony) for Jesus and awaiting his “martyr’s” punishment for being a “martyr” or witness of our Lord. His challenges were significant, and his experience with Jesus were both pleasant and unpleasant, yet even in death, he remained abandoned to Christ and did not look back!

Our personal testimonies are important. They tell of our personal connection and life experience with the person with whom we hope to connect others. This was Matthew the Tax Collector; a man who was connected to Christ and desired to connect others to Him.

*A little bit about...*

### **SIMON THE PESKY ZEALOT**

Before his calling to follow Christ, Simon was a zealous nationalist who wanted to drive out the Romans from the cities; his group tactics often resulted in bloody conflict. Both the Gospel of Luke and Book of Acts link Simon with Judas (not Iscariot) throughout their writings. Little is known about the lives of both Simon and Judas (not Iscariot). [blueletterbible.org]

Like Tax collectors, Zealots were the unscrupulous of their society. There are many in the New Testament with the name Simon. Simon Peter, Simon of Cyrene(Mak.15:21) who helped carry the cross of Christ, Simon the Leper (Mat.14:3), Simon the Pharisee

(Lk.7:40), Simon, the father of Judas Iscariot, Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9), Simon a tanner (Acts 10), and Simon the Zealot. Our man is Simon the Zealot.

## His Involvement

**Mar 3:18** ESV Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and **Simon the Zealot,**

Mat 9:9 Mat 10:3 Mar 3:18 Act 1:13

Different versions of the Bible refer to Simon in different terms or translate his description differently. In Mat.10:4, the King James version is accurately translated as Simon the “Canaanite”, referring mainly to the region of his origin. Canaanites were viewed as a zealous people. (Mat.10:4; Mk.3:18) Other places such as Lk.6:15 and Acts 1:13, his description is given as Simon “Zelotes” (Lk.6:15; Acts 1:13), or the zealot.

A Zealot was often viewed as: 1) one burning with zeal for their cause [Thayer]. Simon was a man viewed as Passionate for His cause.

## Passion

Someone has said: “I’d rather have the job of *directing* someone’s passion, than trying to *ignite* a passion.”

We might view passion as a burning inside a person’s being; an urgency, compelling purpose or an unquenchable calling.

**Jer 20:9** ESV If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a *burning fire* shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

This is a passionate, uncontainable and unquenchable sense of one's calling and purpose.

The ZEALOTS of the day, were a very "zealous" (enthusiastic) patriotic party of Jews who were strongly opposed to Roman rule. They wanted Israel to be a free nation, and they did not want to be ruled by the Romans. Today we would probably call these people members of the "Israelite Liberation Army." They wanted their country to be liberated and set free from the Roman yoke or Roman control. They felt justified to use "force" to accomplish their goal of liberation. They would use violence, robbery, and even assassination to accomplish their goal of setting their nation free.

The philosophy of the ZEALOTS was that the end justifies the means. They believed that it is all right to do evil if good shall ultimately be accomplished. Their end--LIBERATION FROM THE ROMANS--justified their means of VIOLENCE, MURDER, FORCE, etc. They were willing to do anything (even sinful things) as long as they could further their cause.

The Zealot movement probably began with the Judas uprising that we learn about in Acts 5:37. This uprising took place about the time of Christ's birth. During the time of Christ's public ministry there were many "zealots" who wanted to use force to liberate their country. Probably Barabbas and the other criminals who died next to Christ were zealots, and because they were zealots, they were enemies of Rome.

One of these zealots was named Simon. This man decided to follow Jesus Christ. He soon came to realize that Christ came primarily to liberate the *heart* not the *country*. Something that is much more terrible than Roman bondage is THE BONDAGE OF

SIN (see John 8:32-36). Simon followed the Lord Jesus, the greatest LIBERATOR of all.”

“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!” -John 8:36

The zealot movement never accomplished its purpose. In 70 A.D. the zealots so angered the Romans that the Roman army invaded Jerusalem and destroyed the city. The zealots did not succeed in setting their nation free. [middletownbiblechurch.org]

As Matthew was an unscrupulous TAX-GATHERER, and was hated by his own people. Simon was an unscrupulous ZEALOT, and was despised by his government as a part of a bunch of pesky troublemakers.

**LESSONS:** Passion for Christ. If we were choosing Christ’s disciples, surely we would not have picked anyone of the likes of Matthew or Simon. But remember - Jesus did not choose people to follow Him, based on who they were or what they had accomplished. Neither did He refuse to choose people because of who they were or the things they had done. He chose and chooses people for who they will become, as they surrender their lives to His Lordship, as the Master Liberator and Life Giver of all.

Apart from Christ, Simon and Matthew would have been great enemies! The fact that these two men could be together, work together, eat together, serve together, and learn together is one of the great miracles of Christ’s transforming power. Jesus Christ makes possible the UNION OF OPPOSITES! Because of Jesus Christ, Matthew and Simon had a great deal in common.

Think about the different people in the pew next to you. Or those in your family or your fellow classmates at school. Think about

your neighbors or some of the people you work around. Can you think of very real DIFFERENCES that exist between you? Can you think of some of the things that you have in common because of Jesus Christ? Is it possible for different and opposite people to get along with each other today? How? Why or Why not?

*A little bit about...*

## **CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES OF BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS**

### **Life Challenges - of following Jesus**

Jesus calls all kinds of people to follow Him, even the Matthews and the Simons. Who can you think of, whom you feel would be an unlikely person for Jesus to call to follow Him?

#### **Follow Me – Mk.1:14-19**

They left everything and followed Jesus

**Mar 1:14-19** ESV Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, (15) and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (16) Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. (17) And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." (18) And immediately they left their nets and followed him. (19) And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets.

Their challenge was to make Jesus their highest purpose and greatest interest.

**Luk 14:25-27** ESV Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, (26) "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. (27) Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Jesus' invitation to follow Him is a challenge to allow Him to fill our lives and make us into the people He has chosen us to become.

**Mat 19:27-28** ESV Then Peter said in reply, "**See, we have left everything** and followed you. What then will we have?" (28) Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, **in the new world**, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

## **Life Experiences - of following Jesus**

### **(1) GOOD EXPERIENCES**

Immediately after they left the present life behind and followed Jesus, they experienced many good and confirming things.

- ***Jesus cast out evil spirits***

**Mar 1:23-27** ESV And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, (24) "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God." (25) But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" (26) And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. (27) And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new

teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

Casting out evil spirits from those who were demon possessed. I'd say that was a pretty positive experience.

- ***Jesus healed many***

**Mar 1:29-31** ESV And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. (30) Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. (31) And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

- ***Jesus taught and modeled*** a vibrant prayer life for them

**Mar 1:35** ESV And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

His was a sterling example to follow or to pattern one's life after.

- ***Jesus healed the Leper***

**Mar 1:39-42** ESV And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. (40) And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." (41) Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." (42) And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

What an impact this experience would make on the lives of the 12 in grasping the power of the Kingdom and the Authority of the Master they were following.

- ***Jesus Sends the 12 out to do His ministry***

**Mar 6:7, 12-13** ESV (7) And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. (12) So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. (13) And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

Finally, off they go, sent by Christ, serving together, apprehensive but excited about ministry that lay ahead.

## **(2) BAD EXPERIENCES**

- **John was executed.**

**Mar 6:14** ESV King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him."

**Mar 6:29** ESV When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. [Mat.14]

John the Baptist was murdered. If the devil was looking for something to knock the wind out of their sails, this would do the trick. A close and highly esteemed co-worker in the ministry for Christ, now executed. Would they be next? How could they go on?

And so is the life of every true disciple of Jesus Christ. There are good times and encouraging experiences in ministry and there are bad or challenging times and discouraging times in ministry. Good and Bad. Ups and Downs. Victory and temporary defeat. Its just the way it is. But the solid disciple of Christ presses on. We simply must. To do anything less would be to succumb to the plan of discouragement and distraction of Satan's plans. Therefore, we don't serve Christ for the *feel good* experiences. We serve Christ because He alone is worthy of all our praise and service and life of

devotion to Him, whether through pleasant or unpleasant experiences. Jesus died for us. Should we not give our all to live for Him?

## CONCLUSION

We see the variety and unity within the family of God. These are our spiritual ancestors. The last mention of these men in Holy Writ, once again, is in Acts.

**Act 1:13** ESV And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and **Matthew**, James the son of Alphaeus and **Simon the Zealot** and Judas the son of James.

They are meeting together. Praying together. Awaiting together, the promised pouring out of God's Spirit of Holiness. And that is where we leave them, for in the next chapter, comes Pentecost.

## SIMON THE ZEALOT

According to non-Biblical, yet still historical apocryphal book, "*The Passion of Simon and Jude*", we are told their lives ended in martyrdom in Persia. [blueletterbible.org]

Their lives lived and spent for their Master, and ending in much the same manner as their co-labor for Christ, John the Baptist. Tradition says His apostolic symbol is a fish lying on a Bible, which indicates he was a former fisherman who became a fisher of men through preaching. [bibleinfo.com]

## MATTHEW THE TAX COLLECTOR

In the minds of many honest, Jewish men, these tax collectors were

regarded as criminals. In New Testament times they were classified with harlots, Gentiles and sinners (Mat.18:17; Mat. 21:31, 33; Mat.9;10; Mark 2:15,16; Luke 5:30). Tax collectors had been known to assess duty payable at impossible sums and then offer to lend the money to travelers at a high rate of interest. Such was Matthew. Yet, Jesus chose a man that all men hated and made him one of His men. It took Jesus Christ to see the potential in the tax collector of Capernaum. He was not chosen for who he was. Nor was he hindered by who he had been.

Matthew was unlike the other Apostles, who were mostly fishermen. He could use a pen, and by his pen he became one of the first to present to the world... an account of the teaching of Jesus. It is clearly impossible to estimate the debt that Christianity owes to this despised tax gatherer. The average man would have thought it impossible to reform Matthew, but to God all things are possible. Matthew became the first man to write down the teachings of Jesus. He was a missionary of the Gospel, who laid down his life for the faith of his Master. The apostolic symbol of Matthew is three money bags which reminds us that he was a tax collector before Jesus called him. [bibleinfo.com]

What kind of person does Jesus choose? All kinds. Many of them if not most, are “unlikely choices” from the human perspective. Remember, Jesus does not choose people based on who they are or what they have done. Nor does he reject those for who they are or for what they have done, like the hated, unscrupulous tax collector or the despised, untrustworthy, stab-you-in-the-back-if-he-can, Simon the Zealot.

Instead He chooses people for who they will become, as their lives are fully surrendered to Him. What does God want to do in your life? Can you ask yourself that question and imagine what the

answer might be? What does God want to do with *my* life? How does God want to use *me*?

Do you tend to feel like, “Jesus doesn’t want me”? Or “Jesus can’t use me.” My friend, those are lies, whispered into our ears by the enemy himself and unfortunately, often believed by many of us.

The next time your thoughts, regrets or the devil’s accusations get you down, feeling as though God can or will have nothing to do with you... The next time you have opportunity to share your personal testimony of the goodness and gracious salvation of God with another person, but you can’t quite find the words... then consider this hymn.

## “Since Jesus Came Into My Heart”

Rufus McDaniel

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**What a wonderful** change in my life has been wrought  
since Jesus came into my heart!  
I have light in my soul for which long I had sought,  
since Jesus came into my heart!

<p><b>REFRAIN</b> Since Jesus came into my heart, since Jesus came into my heart, floods of joy o’er my soul like the sea billows roll, since Jesus came into my heart.</p>
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**I’m possessed of a hope** that is steadfast and sure,  
since Jesus came into my heart!  
And no dark clouds of doubt now my pathway obscure,  
since Jesus came into my heart! [ **REFRAIN** ]

**There’s a light in the valley** of death now for me,  
since Jesus came into my heart!

And the gates of the city beyond I can see,  
since Jesus came into my heart! [ **REFRAIN** ]

**I shall go there to dwell** in that city, I know  
since Jesus came into my heart!  
And I'm happy, so happy, as onward I go,  
since Jesus came into my heart! [ **REFRAIN** ]

This is the very song we closed our morning worship service with this past morning. What a testimony! What a profession of faith! What a refute of all of Satan's lies to us. Say it with me – "Get thee behind me Satan!", as you sing this wonderful hymn of our faith in Jesus.

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## "Since Jesus Came Into My Heart"

Author: Rufus H. McDaniel

Rufus H. McDaniel was ordained in the Christian church in 1873. He found much joy in church music. He began writing hymns in the 1880's. He wrote, "I feel in my soul that God has something for me to do in brightening the experience of struggling souls. My chief desire is to be a blessing, if possible, to my fellow-men through these hymns and thereby glorify God in the name of his dear son 'whose I am and whom I serve.'"

Dianne Shapiro, from "The Singers and Their Songs: sketches of living gospel hymn writers" by Charles Hutchinson Gabriel (Chicago: The Rodeheaver Company, 1916





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# **“James and Thaddaeus”**

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# "James and Thaddaeus"

## *-When No One Knows Your Fame-*

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**Text:** Variety

August 28, 2016

**Theme:** Theme: the **12** Disciples: our spiritual Ancestors.

Matthew and Simon: Disciples in the Making and Apostles in Training.

{ "When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place." –Acts 2:1 }

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"Talent is God given. Be humble. Fame is man-given. Be grateful. Conceit is self-given. *Be careful.*"

—John Wooden

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## INTRODUCTION

**Cheers Theme:** "Where Everybody Knows Your Name"

This was a feel good program, with a feel good theme song, about a feel good place, surrounded by feel good people. A Place Where everybody knew everyone's names. No loners here.

Today our focus is on James the Lesser and Thaddaeus who historically speaking, these men didn't really make their marks.

## **INTRODUCTION** (Mat. 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15 and Acts 1:13)

Of “the 12”, James and Thaddaeus may be the disciples we actually know the least about. WE aren't told that they did anything bad, but neither are we told much of their positive impact as part of “the **12**”.

## **JAMES**

*James the Younger or the Lesser.* (Mk15:40)

What kind of disciple was he? What kind of ministry was involved in? What impact did he make on the world around him? For the most part, we aren't told. How did he contribute to the band of “the 12”?

**Mar 3:16-19** ESV He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); (17) James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); (18) Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and **James** the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, (19) and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

## **His family** (Mk.3:18)

We know James was the son of Alphaeus. He was brother to Matthew or Levi, the Son of Alphaeus. (Mar 2:14 ) That fact that his father's name is mentioned was not to indicate any notoriety, but for identification purposes from the other people named “James”.

Another point in regard to his family, it was his mother who was present when Jesus was crucified.

**Mar 15:40** ESV There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.

His mother was a devout disciple of Jesus, and James the Lesser was one of “<sup>the</sup>12”. James *the Lesser* has an important lesson for us today, but we will pick that up shortly.

*Now there was also a disciple named ...*

### **THADDAEUS**

Thaddaeus, Judas (Lk.6:15), Lebbaeus (Mat.10:3) ( possibly Jude

**Mar 3:18** ESV (18) Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and **Thaddaeus**, and Simon the Zealot, (19) and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

He was not afraid to ask Jesus to clarify His lessons.

**Jn 21:15-25** KJV (21) He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. (22) **Judas** saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? (23) Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (24) He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. (25) These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

Jesus did not come to engage the whole world, so much as he came to influence **the 12**, who would in turn, influence others, who would then influence others.

Thaddaeus – not much from Scripture to paint a picture of who he really was, what he was like, or what he accomplished as one of “<sup>the</sup>**12**”. But like James, Thaddaeus does leave us with a solid, life lesson. Which, we will look at in just a moment.

### **WHAT ABOUT YOU AND ME?....**

As Christians, why do we do what we do? Why do we give to the church? Why do we attend the meetings? Why are we involved in connecting with our community? Why do we help others in need?

Is there an interest in notoriety? Is there any desire to be noticed for what we are doing? Or maybe to be mentioned for what we have done?

### **Great without notoriety**

Is it possible to be great without being famous? We want to have a great church. We want to be great preachers or singers. We want to have great ministry and be great disciple makers. Can we be great at anything and not have notoriety?

Great in God’s sight is humbled servitude. This may be embarrassing or considered degrading to serve.

<p><b>Mat 20:25-28</b> ESV But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. (26) It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, (27) and whoever would be first among you must be your</p>
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slave, (28) even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Several years ago, Bill Hybels wrote a book entitled, "*Descending Into Greatness*". Taken from this verse, the book looks at our society where "upward mobility" seems to be the highest goal. And the book asks a tough question: "Do Christians place God's desires first - or their own?" *Descending Into Greatness*, takes the example of Christ's downward journey as it was meant to be; the radical and essential attitude for every Christian.

If you desire to be great, then be the servant. If you desire to be first, then be a slave.

J.Oswald Sanders refers to this as "the Master's Master Principle". The one who is great, must be servant. The one who is first, must be slave. (*Spiritual Leadership*, JO Sanders)

## The Example of Moses

In Numbers chapter 12 – Aaron and Miriam are talking about Moses behind his back and they think they are talking about him behind God's back. And God calls them out. "Come out to the tent of meeting".

**Num 12:6-8** ESV (6) And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. (7) Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. (8) With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

God does not refer to Moses as "my Leader" Moses. Instead He refers to him as "My Servant", Moses. When a true servant of God

refers to themselves as a “servant” of God, it is a reference to their own humble view of themselves. But when God refers to someone as “His servant”, it is a reference of Greatness, like receiving a medal of honor from God.

Being a Christian or true follower of Christ is not meant to be a “religious” way of gaining notoriety or fame, or “celebrity” status.

### **John’s Perspective**

\* An example from another disciple of Jesus, who descended into greatness was John the Baptist. When speaking about Jesus, John said...

**Joh 3:30-31** ESV “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (31) He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.

John the Baptist lived meagerly<sup>1</sup>, ministered obscurely<sup>2</sup>, died prematurely<sup>3</sup>, yet left an indelible mark on the world. He gives us this perspective on the proper attitude of any follower of Christ; “Christ must increase; I must decrease”.

Boy those are red flags for any potential ministry. Red flag #1: Live Meagerly? Don’t you know ministry is expensive. Unappreciated ministers don’t tend to get paid much. WE need our needs met!

Red flag #2: Minister Obscurely? Now I came here to reach my community, not to remain unknown. We have to make a name for ourselves, because nobody else is going to do it for us, right?

Red flag #3: Died Prematurely? Now wait a minute. I can’t very well impact the Kingdom of God if I’m dead now can I?

With all the “How To” Christian books for sale, one you’ll never see is “How to Become Like John”. I can’t imagine that selling very many copies.

Can you imagine applying for a ministerial position and on the application, there is a brief job description.

- 1) Must be willing to live meagerly.
- 2) Will be expected to minister obscurely.
- 3) Most likely you will die prematurely.

“After praying this one through, the LORD just isn’t giving me a peace about this move.”

And yet, Jesus tells us that there is no man greater than John. (Lk.7:28) God tells us that servitude, and humility are the path to greatness.

## **CONCLUSION**

Actually when we think about it, most of the disciples were " little known disciples." We know a great deal about Peter and John, but we know much less about Andrew and James. Philip's name is mentioned only in a few places. We would know nothing about Bartholomew (Nathanael) and Thomas apart from the bits of information that we learn from the Gospel of John about these two men. Apart from the day that Christ called Matthew, we know nothing else about this man. We know nothing about Simon except that he was a Zealot. At least seven out of the 12 disciples were "little known men." Their names were known, but they are not known for much.

If someone today were to write a "Gospel," they would probably write at least a full chapter on each of the twelve disciples! This is

not what the four gospel writers did as they were guided by the Holy Spirit.

In the gospel writers, the Apostles were not the theme. The Lord Jesus Christ was their theme or their main subject. Christ was the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (Malachi 4:2). In His brightness these gospel writers lost sight of some of the attendant stars.  
[middletownbiblechurch]

So how do we measure up to James and Thaddaeus? You say, “how can we measure up? We aren’t really told what they did?” – Exactly.

How do we measure up, in being content remaining out of the spotlight of ministerial history? In being satisfied with serving Christ and others, while the world at large takes no notice of us?

### **Lessons from James and Thaddaeus**

- 1) Humility is a sign of Greatness and is noteworthy from heaven’s perspective.
- 2) Serving others demonstrates the true heart and likeness of Jesus Christ.
- 3) Notoriety does not necessary exemplify Greatness.

### **JAMES**

Tradition says that James died as a martyr and his body was sawed in pieces.<sup>[Heb.11:36-38]</sup> As a result, the saw became his apostolic symbol. [Bibleinfo]

### **THADDAEUS**

It is said that Jude went to preach the gospel in Edessa near the Euphrates River. There he healed many and many believed in the name of the Master. He went from there to preach the Gospel in other places. We are told that he was killed with arrows at Ararat.

The chosen symbol for him is the ship because he was a missionary thought to be a fisherman. [Bibleinfo]

We also know, that like the others, James the Lesser and Thaddaeus were present in that historical prayer meeting as the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost.

**Act 1:13** **ESV** And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, **James** the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and **Judas** the son of James.

(\* Judas being short for Thaddaeus)

Heaven knows our works and our hearts. Earthly history books are filled with names of notable people and events of human history. But it will be heaven's history books, which will bear record of the innumerable, faithful servants of Christ who were unnamed and unnoticed by the world – yet who served Christ faithfully and effectively for all we know, and who died in obscurity. These lived and died, unbeknownst to the rest of the world, but who were welcomed into their eternal dwelling with God Himself as their escort.

**Psa 23:4** **ESV** Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; ...

The books will be opened

**Rev 20:12** **ESV** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

The same is true today. In the Church there may be people who are little seen and little noticed. Are these people important? They are! Every part of the body is important. Every person in the body of Christ is important.

**1Cor.12:22-23** ESV On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, (23) and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor,”

James and Thaddaeus served uneventfully, yet faithfully and without notoriety.

**Col 3:23** ESV Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,

What are some things you and I can do to be faithful even in our obscurity? Do we need to feel famous, before we feel we are making a difference for Christ? What can we do at home? at church? At work? At the store? In my neighborhood?

**Luk 19:17** ESV ....'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.'

What opportunities do you have to evidence humility? What challenges do you face in demonstrating contentment where God has placed you? What opportunities do I have to serve others and reflect the heart and likeness of my Lord Jesus Christ?

## CONCLUSION

Lord, this doesn't come naturally for us. You must do this supernaturally. Lord, however you view us today, we humbly view

ourselves as are your servants. We **are** nothing without you, we can **do** nothing without you. Thank you for every opportunity to serve you and others.





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# **“Judas and Mattias”**

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# "Judas and Mattias"

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Chances and 2<sup>nd</sup> Choices

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**Text:** Variety

September 11, 2016

**Theme:** Theme: the **12** Disciples: our spiritual Ancestors.

**Mat 10:2a, 4b ESV** The names of the twelve apostles are these:...Judas Iscariot, *who betrayed him* ."

"A 2<sup>nd</sup> chance is a gift – it is the unexpected opportunity to experience something you missed, see something you overlooked, touch someone you'd ignored, do something you'd like to do differently, or to express something that needed to be shared.

### INTRODUCTION

Our series is "the**12**", referring to "the 12" original disciples or Apostles of Jesus Christ. Sometimes we view the 12 as nearly Super heroes. Matthew, Peter, Andrew, Spider Man, James, Superman etc. But the 12 disciples were normal humans just like we are. Jesus did not choose the 12 because of who they were or for what they had done. They were chosen for who they would become, as they surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ.

Can you Imagine life without 2<sup>nd</sup> chances? What would it be like. Imagine one mistake at work or just once, failing to meet your quota and you get fired. How could you ever keep a job? Imagine one offense in a relationship and that friendship is over or that marriage is ended. If we had no 2<sup>nd</sup> chances in relationships, I dare say, we'd all be friendless and we'd all be single! Imagine making some bad choices today, and thinking, "well, tomorrow's a new day. I'll have a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance to make things right then." But that new day comes goes and that 2<sup>nd</sup> chance never arrives.

Sounds like the things that nightmares are made of. We would be living with the consequences of our actions, with no 2<sup>nd</sup> chances, no make ups or make overs. But thanks be to God, He is the God of second chances.

*A little bit about...*

## **JUDAS AND A 2<sup>ND</sup> CHANCE**

Judas was a traitor or the Betrayer. The name "JUDAS" is a Greek name which means "JUDAH," the name of one of the 12 sons of Jacob (Gen. 29:35). The name "Judah" means "God be praised".

### **Judas was one of the 12 disciples**

**Mat 10:2-4 ESV** The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; (3) Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; (4) Simon the Zealot, and **Judas Iscariot, who betrayed** him.

Judas was a disciple or a learner of Jesus, whether or not he believed his words. He was also a follower of Jesus, at least one

who physically followed Him around from city to city, either out of curiosity or tagging along with hopes of enjoying the financial benefits. (see section below)

### **Judas was a thief**

**Joh 12:3-6** ESV Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. (4) But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, (5) "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" (6) He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because **he was a thief**, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.

**JUDAS** wound up being the treasurer of "the12". There seems to be no certain reason as to why Judas betrayed his master; but it is not his betrayal that put Jesus on the cross-it was *our sins*. His apostolic symbol is a hangman's noose, or a money purse with pieces of silver falling from it. [bibleinfo.com]

Judas' true colors were showing early on. He developed a reputation of being dishonest, even among the closest of the 12. He evidenced the character and earned the reputation of a suspicious person, who was not to be trusted among those who knew him best. He was known as a thief.

### **Judas was a tool of Satan**

**Joh 13:26-27** ESV Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

(27) Then after he had taken the morsel, ***Satan entered into him.*** Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."

Judas was not merely a suspicious person, but one whom Satan was using and influencing, like a servant who was doing his master's dirty work.

### **Judas was a Betrayer**

This is unfortunately, how he is best known. He was a traitor or the betrayer of Jesus.

**Mat 26:14** ESV Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests

**Mat 26:15-16** ESV (15) and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. (16) And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

**Mat 26:21-25** ESV And as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." (22) And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" (23) He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. (24) The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." (25) Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so."

**Mat 26:47** ESV While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

**Mat 27:3-5** ESV Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, (4) saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." (5) And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. [comp.Acts.1:16-19]

This is how Judas ended. And yet, he was no worse than any other. Peter denied knowing Christ 3 times. During the crucifixion all the disciples scattered and abandoned Jesus. Was Judas worse than any of these? I don't think so.

### **Judas the Son of Perdition**

**Joh 17:12** ESV While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost **except the son of destruction**, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. [2Thes. 2:3]

Jesus' prayer described Judas as the son of perdition. Perdition is a word meaning destruction and is often used to refer to eternal judgment (Mat.7:13; Rom.9:22; Phil.3:19; ). It seems this was intended to indicate the eternal destiny of this disciple. His eternal destiny would be eternal destruction. Can a person like that get a second chance? Do they deserve it?

### **Judas and a 2<sup>nd</sup> change**

Nowhere in Holy Scripture does it imply that once a person realizes their own sinfulness and truly repents and seeks forgiveness and turns to Christ– nowhere are we told that person

cannot be forgiven. God is the God of second chances – for Judas, for you and for me.

I believe Judas had a second chance to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” and be saved. <sup>[Acts16:31]</sup>

**1Jn 1:9** ESV If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Many ask, “Does Judas hanging himself, mean that he lost his salvation? I would say that we actually have no indication that Judas was ever truly saved. Jesus did choose Judas to be one of his disciples. HE was with Jesus for 3 ½ years, hearing his teaching, witnessing his miracles. HE lived in close knit community with the other “12” and shared in spiritual conversation, day after day, after day. So was he ever really saved?

*Jesus spoke to the larger group of his disciples...*

**Joh 6:70-71** ESV Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." (71) He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

**Joh 13:10-11** ESV Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." (11) For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

**Joh 13:27** ESV Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."

Judas future was foretold in Scripture. Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave.

**Zec 11:12-13** ESV Then I said to them, "If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. (13) Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"--the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter.

It seems from Jesus' own words that Judas was most likely never a true believer in Jesus.

## **SO WHY DID JUDAS BETRAY JESUS?**

Motivation? It may have been the money. Inclination: perhaps because...

**1) He never truly believed.** (Jn.6:64)

**Joh 6:64** ESV But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus **knew from the beginning** who those were who did not **believe**, and who it was who would betray him.)

**2) He rejected the evidence and resisted the opportunity to believe and be saved.** The more a person rejects Jesus or refuses to seriously consider Jesus, the easier it becomes to reject Him the next time.

**3) He repeatedly put on a religious front, living a lie.** This happened time after time and day after day and year after year.

**4) Satan entered into Judas and prompted him to betray Jesus.** So many opportunities to be around Jesus and to reject Him. We will come back to this in a moment.

*Now A little bit about...*

## **MATTIAS AND THE 2<sup>ND</sup> CHOICE**

2<sup>nd</sup> choice actually meant last choice.

### **Mattias the 2<sup>nd</sup> Choice (Acts 1:21)**

In front of about 120 followers of Christ, Peter gave an account of the life, ministry, and the death of Judas Iscariot. Because of the absence of Judas, Peter recommended that a new disciple should be selected - one who had been with them since the Lord's baptism, to His resurrection.

**Act 1:21-26** ESV So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, (22) beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us--one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." (23) And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. (24) And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen (25) to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." (26) And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

These followers of Christ gathered together to cast lots between two candidates, Joseph and Matthias. They drew lots, which was a common practice in decision making, and the lots fell to Matthias. And Scripture tells us that "he was numbered with the eleven apostles" ([Acts 1:26](#)).

We know that Mattias was with the 12 and followed Jesus from the time of Christ's baptism and being an eyewitness of His resurrection.

Before Acts chapter 1, we aren't sure if he is specifically mentioned or not. After Acts 1, we know he is never mentioned in Scripture again. Tradition is uncertain at best. One tradition has Mattias preaching among the "meat eaters" in the interior of Ethiopia, and buried near the sea harbor of Hyssus . Another tradition says he was stoned and beheaded in Jerusalem.

Ever get upset, troubled, or disturbed that you don't get the notoriety you feel you deserve? Consider the example of Mattias. For Mattias, it was not about being first pick, or 2<sup>nd</sup> choice, or last in line. It was about the awesome privilege of being a true follower and servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. HE did not seem to be upset or offended that he was 2<sup>nd</sup> choice. He was simply glad to be chosen and to be a part of those who would carry on the ministry and message of their Lord in His absence.

## WHAT ABOUT US?

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Chance My own sins and concerns**

Have you ever wondered, "Am I chosen? Am I destined to destruction?" Jerry Fallwell, used to say: "If you are a believer in Jesus, then you know you are one of the "chosen"!"

The Bible urges us to:

**1) "Make your election sure." – *Reinforce your faith.***

**2Pet. 1:10 MKJV** Therefore, brothers, rather be diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you shall never fall.

Strengthen your faith. Exercise your faith.

**2) "Cultivate your own salvation".** Feed it. Live it. Nurture it.

**Phil. 2:12 MKJV** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, cultivate your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Take time and put forth the effort to nurture your own faith. Resolve to continue to do your part in growing and maturing spiritually.

**3) Prove your faith. Obey. Sacrifice. Demonstrate your character and reflect your values.** Live a life that leaves no doubt as to what you believe or who it is that you represent. Chose to live for Christ every day and to honor Him in every decision.

Live like a Christian. If you live like an unbeliever, everyone will think you are an unbeliever and you will even believe it yourself.

May the life and death of Judas be a serious warning to each one of us. If you are unsaved today you will experience AN ETERNITY OF SUFFERING just like Judas, UNLESS you come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation before it is too late.

[middletownbiblechurch]

We all have a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance. We all have opportunities to repent and turn away from a sinful life or destructive practices. We all have opportunity to trust in Jesus and become one of His devoted disciples.

Simply put – when an opportunity to repent from some personal sin comes to mind, make the most of that opportunity!

**2<sup>nd</sup> Choice - Whether First or last**

May the life of Mattias be an example for us – that we never long for notoriety so that we are not pleased to be even 2<sup>nd</sup> choice in following and serving Jesus Christ.

May we be reminded that fame in this life, may actually detract from our blessings in the next life.

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **SO WHY DID JUDAS BETRAY JESUS?** (cont'd)

- 1) He never believed.** (Jn.6:64)
- 2) He rejected the evidence and resisted the opportunity to believe and be saved.**
- 3) He repeatedly put on a religious front, living a lie.**
- 4) Satan entered into Judas and prompted him to betray Jesus.**

#### **1) Be Aware**

This kind of character does not develop overnight. It does not typically, come upon a person, out of nowhere. This kind of character is developed over time. It is nurtured day after day, temptation after temptation ... little-by-little becoming more-and-more of a manifestation of darkness—evidencing the heart of the evil one who has entered into him.

He was already greedy. He was already a thief. He was already untrustworthy. He was already the perfect one for Satan to use for his dirty work.

He never showed interest in Jesus taking his life and making something really *super* out of that life.

#### **2) Take Care**

**(1) Take care,** that you do not deceive yourselves, into thinking that as long as you have not robbed a bank or murdered someone, or been caught for the crimes you have committed, that you are scott free and on your way to heaven.

**(2) Take care**, that after hearing the messages over and over your entire lifetime, that “God loves you” – that “Jesus died for your sins” that you will not be held accountable for what you have heard.

**(3) Take care**, for in telling others that you are interested in spiritual things, you have your own religion, you do your own thing, in your own home, but never really do – take care that in living a lie, you eventually actually begin to believe the lie that you, yourself, concocted. And listen to me – that while believing your own lie, you teach your children to do the same. Their eternity is your responsibility. That is no small matter.

**(4) Take care**, in that the more you refuse to trust and follow Christ – the more you reject messages that you feel may be true- and the more you live the lie, the more you open yourself up to someone else, who is very real and very persuasive and who also desires to be a part of your life – that is Satan.

Your life will be filled with and affected by, whoever you allow to fill your heart and influence your faith. Invite Christ in and He will fill and change your life and the life of your family. Refuse Christ, and the devil will be more than happy to come in, take hold of your life and lead you in the same path that he led Judas, dark and eternal destruction.

### **3) Be Reminded**

Judas had a price. Do you have a price? What would it take for you to lay aside the spiritual truth that you know, and Jesus Christ whom you know, for some personal pursuit or pleasure of this earthly life?

One sin and you are responsible for Jesus on the cross. One pet sin, one excuse to keep living the way you enjoy, one “thinking Jesus understands and won’t care if you do this” and you have denied Jesus Christ.

**Be Reminded** - It was not Judas’ betrayal of Jesus that is to blame for his crucifixion, it is your sin and my own sin. If anyone deserves to have fingers pointed at them, as the calloused reason for the treatment that Jesus endured on the cross, it is everyone one of us here today.

Many here today, have trusted Christ as Savior and are living their life, growing, and grappling with their faith, day by day – yet going forward with Jesus.

Some – like Judas, may seem religious – may seem part of the community of Christ followers – may talk a good talk, yet are on the path to eternal judgment for their sins, everyday living a lie, because they have rejected Christ.

Every day we are faced with a 2<sup>nd</sup> choice - Receive Jesus or Reject Jesus.

**Joh 3:17-18** ESV For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because *he has not believed* in the name of the only Son of God.

If we leave here today unforgiven, it’s not God’s fault. God demonstrated His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”(Rom.5:8) You realize that isn’t fair don’t we? We should each be punished for our own sins. But Jesus, God’s only Son was a sinless Savior. He did not deserve to die, but

He took our place – He was punished for our sins. That is UnFair!  
But that's true. That is grace.

If any of us leave her today rejecting Jesus – refusing to believe in Him – refusing to put Him first above all things 0 then we have no one to blame for our eternal destiny but ourselves.(v18b)

Where are you today? Do you need a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance? God has one for you right now? A 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance to start over. You have the opportunity for your sins to be forgiven and for your soul to be saved from eternal punishment. You have the 2<sup>nd</sup> chance to receive the gift of eternal life and spend eternity with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Will you receive Jesus now and experience that 2<sup>nd</sup> chance?

**A** – Admit you have sinned and need a Savior.

**B** – Believe in Jesus as Gods only Son and your own personal Savior.

**C** – Confess Jesus as your Lord. Choose to follow and obey His commands.

**D.** – Disciple others into becoming Disciples for Jesus Chirst.



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# **“The Apostle Paul”**

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# "The Apostle Paul: *A Transformed Terrorist*"

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**Text:** Acts and Pauline Epistles

September 18, 2016

**Theme:** Theme: the **12** Disciples: our spiritual Ancestors.  
Matthew and Simon: Disciples in the Making and Apostles in Training.

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*"...that I may know him..."*  
--Philippians 3:10 "...

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When a man turns against family, friends and faith, you know that  
something deep inside has changed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
-rp journey

## INTRODUCTION

The culture of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus was on edge. In the time of JC, uprisings and rebellions against the government were common place. The holy Land was under the rule of the Roman Empire. There were many Jewish groups or nationalists, who

longed to see Israel freed from foreign domination, so much that they were willing to use violent force to accomplish that. Simon the zealot, who was one of “<sup>the</sup>12”, and was thought to be one of those nationalist.

With the person of Jesus Christ, there was a new fear – that the followers of this Jesus would declare Jesus King and reject the Roman Emperor. So the gov. of Rome did not want any trouble out of Jesus or his followers. And the Jews did not want Jesus who was thought to be Messiah and Son of God – upsetting their religious apple cart.

So at this point, Jesus has crucified, risen and ascended into heaven. Pentecost has come and the Holy Spirit has fallen. The church has been born and the 12 apostles and many more disciples were now spreading the good news of Jesus throughout the known world.

With the ministry of Christ continuing in full swing, Jesus now chose His 13<sup>th</sup> apostle. Saul was also called Paul.(Acts 13:9) And as we enter our lesson today, it is important to know that the New Testament tells us more about the Apostle Paul than it does about all of the other 12 disciples combined!

*Lets Meet a man named Saul.....*

## **SAUL OF TARSUS**

\* This part of the storm examines some of the life of Paul before He comes to faith in Christ. If the person of Christ was not controversial enough, the Apostle Paul made up the difference. A brief summary of this Saul of Tarsus. He was born as an Israelite in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3; Philippians 3:5). His original name was Saul. He studied under Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3) and became a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5). He was present at the stoning

of Stephen (Acts 7:58; 8:1) and later became a persecutor of the church (Acts 8:1-3; Philippians 3:6). While he was seeking to have Christians bound, he was converted on the road to Damascus as Christ appeared to him (Acts 9:1-9). He went into Damascus (Acts 9:10-19) and then to Arabia for a period of time (Galatians 1:17) before returning to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-29; Galatians 1:18). Eventually, he met with Barnabas and ministered with him in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). He soon began to go on various missionary journeys to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. He was then imprisoned in Rome on two occasions and was martyred under Caesar Nero. Paul, the author of thirteen New Testament Epistles, [blueletterbible]

The life of the Apostle Paul is a realistic, physical example of both sides of our Christian, Spiritual warfare. As Saul of Tarsus, he was the source of persecution to the early church. As the apostle Paul, he was the recipient of Christian persecution.

### **A Religious Zealot**

Saul of Tarsus was a very religious Jew. Are you a religious person? Do you go to church more than once a week? Do you give thanks before eating meals? Do you read the Bible? Do you pray?

Saul was a very religious Jew. He describes his religious life in Philippians 3:4-6. He came from a religious Jewish home; he was circumcised as a little baby; he did everything that a religious Jew was supposed to do; and he did so well at keeping the Ten Commandments that no one could accuse him of breaking any of them (see Phil. 3:6). Yet Saul had a dark side.

*Saul was not only a religious zealot...*

### **A Religious Terrorist**

\* How such a devout Jew could carry out the acts of violence he

did and think he was going God's work is unthinkable. We know that Saul was responsible for the martyrdom of Stephen (Act 7:58).

In Acts chapter 6, deacons were selected by the early church for the purpose of serving and helping widows in the church family. One deacon in particular as a man named Stephen and Scripture tells us he was full of grace and power.<sup>[Acts 6:8]</sup> He preached powerfully concerning Jesus as the Messiah and his messages were deeply convicting to his audience. In fact, so convicting was his message, that the crowd sought to silence him by stoning him to death. The fact is, devoutly religious people can be genuinely deceived.

Act 7:58 Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Act 8:1 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Act 8:3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

Act 9:1-2 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest (2) and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem

Have you ever thought that a particular person would in no way, ever become a Christ follower? Maybe because of their language

or lifestyle or antagonism toward religion in general or toward Christianity specifically. Saul of Tarsus was such a man. As the book of Acts presents the story of Saul's background, it builds an attitude of disbelief that he could ever be saved. So this is a little about Saul's background and life before he meets Christ.

But please remember this today:

**NO ONE IS EVER OUTSIDE THE REACH OF GOD'S  
AMAZING SAVING AND LIFE TRANSFORMING GRACE!**

## **PAUL'S CONVERSION**

On the road to Damascus, Paul's conversion was nothing short of a miracle of God's amazing saving and life transforming grace!

### **Gods Grace toward Paul**

**Act 9:1-6** ESV But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest (2) and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (3) Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. (4) And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (5) And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

Interesting that Jesus considers persecution of His church as personal persecution. He takes the abuse and mistreatment of his church quite personally. So what is Jesus about to do to Saul the terrorist? Zap him? Smite him? Destroy him?

## Pauls' Transformation

God prepares Saul for His own personal use.

**Act 9:6-8** ESV (6) But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." (7) The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. (8) Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

Now God appears to a disciple named Ananias and also appears to Saul and He brings them together for His purpose.

**Acts 9:9-16** (9) And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. **(13)** But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. (14) And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." (15) But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. (16) For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." **17) So Ananias departed** and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." (18) And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; (19) and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus

So Ananias comes to Saul and prayed for him and something like scales fall from his eyes and he was baptized.

Remember...

**NO ONE IS EVER OUTSIDE THE REACH OF GOD'S AMAZING SAVING AND LIFE TRANSFORMING GRACE!**

**BTW** - Immediately following this morning's message, a lady stopped me in our foyer and I asked her about a certain common friend we shared. She said, "oh He's never going to change! He will always be \_\_\_\_\_." At which time, I reminded her about the mornings emphasis that no one is outside the reach of God's grace! She replied, "Oh yeah".

## AFTER CONVERSION

Paul's conversion was not merely one of salvation but of life transformation and devotion to Jesus Christ. And this former religious terrorist wrote 13 of our New Testament books of the Bible..

### Paul experienced immediate fruitfulness in ministry

**Act 9:20-22** ESV And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." (21) And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" (22) But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

### Christ was first and greatest in Saul's life.

Paul's life was caught up in serving Christ. The person of the

message that Paul tried to eradicate has now become his Master and Purpose.

**Phil. 3:7-9** ESV But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (9) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith--

Jesus Christ – the one whom Paul had been persecuting had now become his greatest Purpose, his highest Calling, his soul’s Source and Joy and his all-consuming Passion.

When Saul of Tarsus met Jesus of Nazareth on the road to Damascus, he was dramatically changed. He was never the same and eventually died for this cause.

**Q:** How has Jesus *changed* your life? How is he *changing* your life? We are all on a spiritual journey and an ongoing process of life change.

### **Notoriety, Position, Power, Authority**

While these were things Saul had, they were not things he held onto.

**Php 3:4-6** ESV though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: (5) circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; (6) as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

We could say Saul was a Jewish religious celebrity hot shot. His passion and energies before Christ, are now channeled towards Christ as a true believer and devoted follower. That which he used to passionately desire to stamp out, he now passionately seeks to promote.

**Q:** How has your love for Jesus affected your life's interests? How does following Jesus Christ affect how you use things and/or spend your time?

**Rom. 1:1** Paul, a **servant** of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

**Tit 1:1** ESV Paul, a **servant** of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness,

It is important to note that Paul was not a fair-weather follower of Christ. He endured many storms of life, persecution and personal struggles.

### **Paul's Suffering and Sacrifice**

Paul's Suffering and Sacrifice of Christ was monumental. If anyone would have been excused for slacking up and taking a break because of persecution, disappointment and hardship, it would have been Paul. He had good reason, but never used any excuse to relent in his service for Christ. Pain, hardship, rejection, exhaustion, prison, NEVER did Paul slack up in his passion for the gospel of Christ. Even imprisonment did not diminish his fervor for Christ, he only ministered differently.

In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 Paul tells us about the different ways in which he suffered. It is almost hard to believe that any man could have gone through all of these things.

**2Cor. 11:23-28** ESV Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one--I am talking like a madman--with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. (24) Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. (25) Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; (26) on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; (27) in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. (28) And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

Quitting was not an option. Resting was not an option. Running and hiding was not an option. Vacationing was not an option. If anyone had a good excuse to stop serving Jesus Christ, we might say Paul did. He's had enough, let him go into hiding. He's suffered enough, let him spend a few years recovering. But Paul gave no excuses and never stopped serving His Lord and Master.

**Act 14:19-20** ESV But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. (20) But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

Acts 1-13 focused mainly on the ministry of the Apostle Peter. Acts 14-28 are focused mainly on the ministry of the Apostle Paul. About half the book of Acts is written about Paul. His 13 NT books were full of encouragement, correction and challenge to the Christians and churches he knew.

## THE LAST MENTION OF PAUL IN THE BIBLE

**2Tim 4:6** ESV For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

It is possible that the apostle Peter was martyred around the same time, during this period of early persecution of Christians. The tradition is that Peter was crucified upside down and that Paul was beheaded due to the fact that Paul was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28), and Roman citizens were normally exempt from crucifixion. [gotquestions]

## YOU AND ME TODAY

What does your spiritual life look like today? How would you describe your relationship with Jesus Christ? Do you have salvation, but are not a disciple? Do you attend church, but are not actively involved in serving? Are you sold out and fired up?

How are you connected to the family life of your church? How are you involved in the mission and ministries of your church?

Can you say that ***Jesus Christ*** is your highest Calling, Your greatest Purpose, your Soul's Source and Joy, And your all consuming Passion?

## CONCLUSION

- 1) God can reach anyone, anywhere. Keep praying for the spiritual lives of friends and loved ones. Keep loving them. Keep sharing with them as you have opportunity.
- 2) God can use you in ways you had not expected. Keep serving Christ and being obedient to His will for your life, regardless of inconvenience or how pleasant or unpleasant it may be.

Paul was highly qualified to reach the Jews, but was called to the Gentiles.

Rom 11:13 Now I am speaking to you **Gentiles**. Inasmuch then as I am an **apostle** to the **Gentiles**, I magnify my ministry

1Ti 2:7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an **apostle** (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the **Gentiles** in faith and truth.

While we don't look to Paul as a perfect person, we do look to him as a great example of a true and devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

If anyone had an excuse to slack up from ministry it would have been Paul, but he never did. Why not? What was different about Paul? What was his secret?

**Phil. 3:10-14** (10) that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (11) that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (12) Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. (13) Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

A pastor once asked me; "Do you know what a Jesus freak is?" Not exactly I responded. He said, "someone who loves Jesus more than you do." Now I think I may know Paul's secret.





# ***Don't close this booklet yet***

*without considering this all important question.*

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## **Is Jesus Christ the Savior or *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?**

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;  
--Romans 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come  
from God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only  
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should  
not perish, but have everlasting life. --John 3:16

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him  
to die in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is  
eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
-- Romans 6:23

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of  
Jesus Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were  
still sinners, Christ died for us. ---Romans 5:8

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord  
will be saved." -- Rom 10:13

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his  
name, he gave the right to become children of God,  
- John 1:12

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you  
are truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your sins  
and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

## The ABCs

**A** - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

**B** - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

**C** - Confess your sins to God. He already knows. Also Confess Jesus as you LORD. He desires and deserves to be your Lord.

**Prayer**: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

**Connect** with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

**Commit** yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

**Heb 10:24-25** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

**Act 2:41-42** So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:  
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Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, [www.christefca.org](http://www.christefca.org)

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*It is our prayer that you find **Jesus Christ** to be...*  
*your highest calling,*  
*your greatest purpose,*  
*your soul's source and joy,*  
*and your all-consuming passion.*

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*May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.*

*--- Downloadable free resources at: [www.christefca.org](http://www.christefca.org) --*

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