CHAPTER 1

CALLED BY GOD
Qualified by God

Galatians 1:1–2

Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—and all the brothers and sisters with me, to the churches in Galatia:

Paul begins this letter to the Galatians as he does some of his other epistles, by establishing in the first sentence that he is an apostle called by God, not by man. I am sure he does this because there were many who questioned his commission and authority. Where did he get the right to teach others, especially since he had formerly persecuted the church of Jesus Christ? What qualified him?

Many are called into the gospel ministry in much the same way as Paul. God calls them and qualifies them by anointing them for a special task. This perplexes those who don’t understand that God chooses who He uses for reasons that often make no sense to us. Paul’s past as one who persecuted Christians certainly did not qualify him. It actually would have disqualified him had that been the criteria for God being able to use him.

Having a sinful past prior to receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord does not disqualify anyone from being used by God.
In fact, it may actually help us have compassion for those who are deceived and are living sinful lives, as we once were, and who need to be rescued and restored. Nothing helps us understand someone in trouble more than having had the same trouble ourselves.

Paul teaches that God chooses and uses what the world considers foolish in order to show the folly of worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 1:27–28). Those whom God chooses to use for His work are very different from those the world would choose. God often chooses people who do not have the right qualifications for the job based on worldly standards, but they do have the right heart. Their motives are pure, and they love Jesus greatly.

When God was ready to replace King Saul, He told the prophet Samuel that He would anoint someone from the house of Jesse as the new king (1 Sam. 16:1). Samuel went and examined all of Jesse’s sons one by one. God rejected each one, so he asked if any of the brothers were not there. The one God chose was the one the family believed was so unlikely they had not even brought him in from the field for consideration. The one God chose was named David, and Samuel anointed him to be king (1 Sam. 16:1–13). God doesn’t look on the outward man, but on the heart (v. 7), and David had a heart filled with desire for God.

We might say Paul also had a heart for God, and he had formerly been a zealous and committed Pharisee. He had a lot of zeal for God, but it was zeal without knowledge. Although he had done many terrible things, he actually believed he
was serving God as he did them. When Jesus confronted him on the Damascus road, he was quick to repent and ready to do whatever Jesus asked him to do (Acts 9:1–19). After this encounter with the living Christ, Paul was never the same. He was saved by grace, certainly not by any of his own good works. He was deeply convinced of the truth that we are saved by grace alone and not by our works, and his mission in life became to teach others that same truth.

No one is more qualified to teach others a truth than those who have firsthand experience with what they are trying to teach. Paul had a fire in him that no amount of criticism or judgment from others could put out. He was called by God—not by man—to teach the message of grace; therefore, man could not stop what God had begun.

If you have been invited to do a job for God, you can be assured that nothing in your past can hinder you. God sees your heart, and He sees who you are becoming, not merely who you have been in the past. If we wish to walk with God, we must look forward. We have no eyes in the back of our head, and we might let that convince us that we are not to spend our lives looking back but, rather, looking to the future. Don’t look at the wrong things you have done; look at the right things you can do.
Personal Reflection

In what ways are you qualified for God to use you? How could He use your past to help others?
Grace and Peace

Galatians 1:3–5

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul adds his normal and frequent greeting, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” His greeting was much more beneficial to its recipients than most of our greetings might be today. We may greet a person with the words hello or hi, but Paul wishes those he meets the power of amazing grace in their lives and the peace of God, which is truly wonderful.

Unless we understand grace, we will never have peace, and Paul desires peace for every person. After all, what is life really worth if we don’t have peace? No matter what else we have—power, position, riches, influential friends, or possessions—it is worth nothing if we don’t have peace to go along with it. Peace leads us to joy, and I think what every person desires above all else is to be happy. Paul says that the Kingdom of God is not about meat and drink (things), but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17), and to that I say, “Amen!” We want to know that we
are right with God and to have peace and joy. As Matthew 6:33 teaches us, if we will seek first the Kingdom of God and His way of being and doing, all the other things we desire will be added to us. The psalmist says, “Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart” (Ps. 37:4 NKJV).

Sadly, we often spend a great deal of our lives searching for what we think will make us happy, but we find once we obtain each thing, it is unable to provide us with what we thought it would. We go from possession to possession, job to job, relationship to relationship, or even religion to religion searching and searching, but all the while the simplicity of the gospel is available if we will open our eyes and see it. God created us for His pleasure and ours, and nothing else will ever satisfy us except a deep and intimate relationship with Him, putting Him and His will first in all things. This world is not our home, and I doubt that we can ever be completely satisfied as long as we dwell here. In fact, as believers in Christ, I think a part of us is always longing for our eternal home where we will see Jesus face-to-face.

Consider this Scripture verse and then ask yourself if you are pursuing the right things in your life:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires
pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

1 John 2:15–17

I urge everyone to spend their time on earth preparing for eternity. If we spend our time merely trying to have what the world offers, we will always end up disappointed. We may and should enjoy the things of the world, but God must always come first. I like to say, “Enjoy whatever God gives you as much as possible, but don’t become so attached to it that you feel you cannot be happy without it.”

I remember quite often that everything I purchase is already in the process of decay and that it is not eternal. If you ever wonder if that is true, just drive by a junkyard and consider that all the junk you are looking at was once someone’s dream. It was shiny and new, but now it is old, worn-out, and forgotten. Let us remember what Jesus says: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matt. 6:19–20).

In his greeting to the Galatians, Paul says that Jesus gave Himself so that we might be delivered from this present evil world according to the will of God (Gal. 1:4). Although we sojourn here for a period of time, we are to be in the world but not of it (John 17:14–16). You might say that those of us who are saved by God’s grace remain here to help the world,
not to expect the world to help us. We can bring joy to the world by sharing the good news of the gospel, but the world cannot bring true lasting joy to us. The important thing is to not get attached to it and to always remember that we are merely passing through. Before long we will all stand before God. What an amazingly wonderful day that will be! Then and only then can we be completely satisfied. Through Christ we can be content while we are on earth, but our complete satisfaction is only found in Him.

Personal Reflection
In what ways are you seeking God above all else?

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