

Jesus Friend of Sinners ©

By Pastor Asa Dockery

When the Lord started giving me this word, I said, Lord, this is different. He said different is good. I am looking forward to sharing this word of life with you. Let's go to the scriptures.

Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV): 1 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

And you, that would be us, would it not? We are that you, that for whosoever reads this, you, He made alive. We were dead in our trespasses and sins but He has made us alive in Christ Jesus. Now that is some good news right there! We have even hardly begun and it is already good! We were dead in our trespasses and sins and He, Jesus, has made us alive!

Ephesians 2:2 (NKJV): 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air,

Aren't you glad you are no longer under Satan's domain? We are now under Christ Jesus!

Ephesians 2:2-5 (NKJV): 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

God has made us alive together with Christ by His grace. We had absolutely nothing to do with our salvation because we were still dead in our trespasses when He did it all through Christ! Isn't that something! That is love!

Ephesians 2:6-7 (NKJV): 6 and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Are you in Christ Jesus now? If you are then there are some exceeding riches He wants to pour out on you to show you off to the world! Isn't that great news?

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV): 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

For by grace we have been saved, how? We have been saved by grace through faith, it a gift of God.

The only qualification that a sinner has to have to become born again is to place their faith in Jesus as the Son of God. That is the only prerequisite or qualification that a sinner has to have to be born again. Just place their faith in Jesus as the Son of God and they will be saved. God has given to every man, woman and child a measure of faith, has He not? According to Romans chapter 12, verse 3, He has; therefore, every person which has been born has the ability and the availability to salvation. No one is excluded. It does not matter where you were born, it only matters that you have faith and that you place that faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

In fact God will reject those who come to Him based upon their own good works. Paul tells us this. It is the grace of God; it is not of works lest any man should boast. So if we come to Him with just our faith then He will save us and He will receive us. God has compassion on the sinner who has nothing to offer Him but a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart. Paul tells us, in no uncertain terms, it is faith alone in Christ that attracts the grace of God to save sinners. It attracts the grace of God. Faith is the conduit by which we are able to receive the power to become born again. Only faith will cause God to cross all types of barriers in order to reward the faith of the sinner with salvation.

I believe God is going to use this word to reveal to you His heart. You are going to see something so powerful out of the truths He has given me to share with you. If you will open your heart, He will show you His heart.

John 1:10-11 (NKJV) 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

Jesus came to His own people but His own people did not receive Him. Isn't that interesting? He came to His own but they did not receive Him as their own.

John 1:12-13 (NKJV): 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jesus came to the Jewish people. He came to those who were chosen of God to bring the Messiah into the earth, the only begotten Son to save men from their sins. God chose the Jewish people to do that through. The scripture says through you a Deliverer will be raised up; My Righteous Seed will come into the earth and through Him countless souls will be saved. There was just one little problem, His own people rejected Him. Isn't that something? God raised the children of Israel up among the nations to bring in His Righteous Seed, Jesus, into the earth, and when it came time for Jesus to come, they rejected Him. They shut Him out and would not allow Him a voice in their lives and hearts. This is sad, isn't it? But He said as many as received Him to them He gave the right, the power to become the children of God. Even though His own special people rejected Him, those which humbled themselves and believed upon Him as the Son of God, as the Messiah, as the Lamb of God which took away the sin of the world; to those which believed, He said He gave them the power to become like Him. You weren't entitled to it but you have been blessed by it. He gave them the power that endued them from on high to become a son or a daughter of God.

John said He came to His own but His own rejected Him.

Hosea 4:1 (NKJV): 1 Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land:

He is bringing a charge against them; so they are not doing something God has told them to do.

Hosea 4:1 (NKJV): "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land.

Whoa, didn't the law come through Moses? Yes. Wasn't he a descendent of Abraham? Yes. Didn't God use Moses to lead the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt? Yes. And He is telling his descendents there is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land? No wonder He is bringing a charge against them. What has gone on in Israel? They are the keepers of the light; if the light goes out there remains only darkness, right?

Hosea 4:2-3 (NKJV): 2 By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint, With bloodshed upon bloodshed. 3 Therefore the land will mourn; And everyone who dwells there will waste away With the beasts of the field And the birds of the air; Even the fish of the sea will be taken away.

That sounds like plagues to me, right? This is what happens when God's people turn away from the truth, when they forsake righteousness and leave mercy. The only thing left when you forsake righteousness and leave mercy is judgment.

Hosea 4:4-5 (NKJV) 4 "Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; For your people are like those who contend with the priest. 5 Therefore you shall stumble in the day;

In other words truth will have no impact upon you, you will still sin.

Hosea 4:5 (NKJV): The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night;

That means the leaders are going to be groping in the darkness, because they have forsaken the truth also. They are going to lose their way.

Hosea 4:5-6 (NKJV) And I will destroy your mother. 6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me;

Now the King James Version says, priests, plural. So God is rejecting the priesthood that had rejected His truth. He rejected the priesthood that would not declare and honor the truth of God's word in the synagogue or the tabernacle.

Hosea 4:6 (NKJV): Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

This really got on God's bad side, didn't it? They had forsaken the truth, they had departed from it. They had begun doing something in place of God's word. God said what you are doing is not good; it is going to destroy your land, your livestock, it is going to destroy your children! Truth preserves a society. Truth preserves a

nation. Truth preserves a people, does it not? Yes. You must remember what we read there in Ephesians chapter two. God only rewards those who have faith in Him and have placed their trust in Him.

In Hosea's day the priests had rejected God's word, and caused the people to perish. As a result of the priests' actions God rejected them. The priests had no interest in knowing God for themselves and they refused to teach the people about God. Isn't that sad? The priests, God's chosen vessels, had no interest in knowing God so therefore they didn't teach the people about God. Instead of the people being taught about the ways of God, man's religion high-jacked the plan of God; and they made themselves the standard of righteousness and this did not bode well with God as you might imagine. They started interpreting what God said – the Pharisees. You don't hear the word Pharisee mentioned in Malachi, but four-hundred years later when God starts writing again, through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you hear something called Pharisees.

What are Pharisees? They were the men that studied God's law, and they said we will interpret what God meant to say to the people. In other words you come to us and we will tell you what you need to know. Man got in the way of God's plan. This was not God's plan, this was man's plan. God's plan was for every man to know God for himself. Man's religion high-jacked the plan of God and set themselves as the righteous standard. God did not like this so God rejected those priests.

You do not mess with God. He may allow you to think you are getting by with it for a little while but this is only because He is giving you space to repent. After that little while is over, there is going to be payment due.

Mark 7:1-5 (NKJV): 1 Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. 2 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. 3 For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. 4 When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. 5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"

Now what did I just say? These Pharisees come out of nowhere. They are going to misinterpret God's word; they have their own traditions and they exalt those traditions above the doctrines of God. Now this has been going on for several hundred years, are you catching this? They have been getting by with it. They have been projecting their religious traditions upon the Jews and not God's truth. So everything is all right in Judaism until Jesus shows up. They run into Jesus and Jesus is a self-proclaimed Rabbi, a self-proclaimed Messiah and they see this Jesus with His motley crew and they are not washing their hands. They have just come out of the market-place and they are eating bread without washing their hands. This upsets the religious crowd. So they go to Jesus, the men's Leader, and they have it out with Him. Now here is Jesus' response to them.

Mark 7:6 (NKJV): 6 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites,

This isn't going to well right from the start. Jesus begins by calling the religious leaders of His time hypocrites.

Mark 7:6-9 (NKJV): **6** He answered and said to them, "**Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'** **8** "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men --the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." **9** He said to them, "**All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.**

He told them like it was, didn't He? What had occurred in Hosea's day was still taking place in Jesus' time. The priests had removed the truth of God's law away from the ears of the people and were teaching their own traditions as God's doctrine. As you can tell, Jesus didn't appreciate the way the priests were taking care of God's house, and He began to expose them. Although the disciples disregarded the traditions of the elders by not washing their hands before eating, Jesus sided with them over the scribes and the Pharisees. Isn't that something? Why would Jesus side with His disciples who were breaking the traditions of the elders? Why did He do that? It was because of their faith. Jesus' actions stirred up great controversy among the religious crowd that day.

Let's go to Luke chapter four and see where some things begin to be revealed. Jesus has been in the wilderness for forty days, and He has been tempted by Satan during this time. Now He comes out unscathed, under the power of the Holy Spirit, and in verse fourteen is where we will pick it up.

Luke 4:14-16 (NKJV): **14** Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. **15** And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. **16** So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was,

He taught in their synagogues. He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. He was teaching the people the truth, and they glorified God because of the truth they were hearing. Now He comes to Nazareth and as His custom was He goes to synagogue. This means He went to synagogue habitually; as a Jew He has grown up going to synagogue on the Sabbath and He continues to attend.

Luke 4:16-22 (NKJV): And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. **17** And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: **18** "***The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.***" **20** Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. **21** And He began to say to them, "**Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.**" **22** So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

Jesus told the Jews and the religious leaders which were attending synagogue that day, that He was the Messiah in flesh. Can you imagine that? For thousands of years they have been hearing God is going to send a Deliverer like Moses, only He is going to be the Messiah and He will deliver us from our sin. They have been

hearing this for years. This is huge for the Jews. But Jesus, the Messiah, was about to turn the synagogue upside down. He dropped a bomb on them.

After He read that prophecy about the coming Messiah out of Isaiah, He said today this prophecy is fulfilled in your hearing. You know the jaws of the scribes, the Pharisees and the elders just dropped. Did I just hear You say what I thought You said? You are telling me You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God? Don't you know that shook them up! Not only did it shake them up, but Jesus was rejecting them. The Messiah was in the synagogue and the leaders were being rejected by Him. You say, I don't see that anywhere in this scripture. Then keep on reading. Jesus was fixing to tear that place upside down. Let's pick it up at verse twenty-two.

Luke 4:22 (NKJV): 22 So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

They would not acknowledge Him as the Son of the Living God. Do you see that? So now there is contention growing, is there not?

Luke 4:23 (NKJV): 23 He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself!'

When did they tell Him that? They said it to Him when He was being crucified on the cross. It came to pass just like He said.

Luke 4:23-24 (NKJV): 23 He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.' "
24 Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.

We read that in John chapter one did we not? He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him.

Luke 4:24-26 (NKJV): 24 Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. 25 But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; 26 but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman *who was a widow.*

Elijah was sent to none of them, none of who? Elijah was sent to none of the widows in Israel though there were many, except to Zarephath. Well, what was so special about this widow that Jesus would bring her into the conversation? She is a Gentile.

Luke 4:27 (NKJV): 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

And many lepers were in Israel. Now He is referring again to Israel but now instead of in Elijah's day, He is talking about in Elisha's time. None of them were cleansed except Naaman, another Gentile.

Luke 4:28 (NKJV): 28 So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

They were what? They were filled with wrath. Why did Jesus' statement make the Jews so angry? He had exposed their religious façade as being unbelief. Their real hearts were revealed by Jesus' truth. You see they weren't rejecting Jesus, but He was rejecting them. That is what was going on here. He was exposing them. He gave them two examples; Elijah did not go to any widow except the widow in Zarephath. He didn't go to any widow in Israel and help them out, in his own country; Elijah went to Zarephath to a Gentile widow. Elisha did not cleanse any lepers in Israel; he instead cleansed a leper who was Assyrian.

So what Jesus is saying is I am reminding you of a time when the prophet of God came to Israel; and you rejected the prophet of God and because you did, God could do no mighty works in your midst. Then God sent you another prophet, Elisha, with a double portion anointing and he could have cleansed lepers in Israel, but because you rejected the word of God, Elisha with a double portion anointing could not cleanse any lepers in Israel. He had to tell an Assyrian, a Gentile, your faith has made you whole!

See faith caused God to send prophets to Gentiles! The unbelief of the scribes, the Pharisees and the elders rejected God and it caused God to reject them, but the faith of the Gentile attracted God's grace to them and He saved them. He delivered them. Isn't that amazing!

Jesus a Friend of sinners! They were Gentiles. They were outside of Abraham's covenant. There was something about sinners that attracted Jesus to them. They were not religious. They did not have a façade about them that was false. They did not have an air about them that esteemed the traditions of the elders above God. When they heard and saw Jesus, they said there is something about this Man; there is something about this Jesus!

The Syro-Phoenician woman comes to Jesus and says, 'Lord, my daughter is at death's door. Come and heal her.' She being a Greek, a Gentile; Jesus said, 'It is not meet for Me to give the King's bread to the dogs.' He referred to her people as dogs, which was the Jew's term for them. She answered Him, 'Yes, Lord, but even the dogs get to eat of the crumbs which fall from the King's table.'

And Jesus looked at that woman, and I believe a tear came into His eyes because He had been preaching His heart out to the Jews and they had rejected Him, but here is this Gentile woman getting down before Him and saying, 'I accept what you called me because apart from You I am nothing. I am a dog, but even the dogs get to eat the crumbs.' And Jesus looks at her and says, 'I have not seen so great a faith, no not in all of Israel.' And it came out of a Gentile woman.

Now later on He had a man come to Him which says, 'we have been sent to You by a leader, a Centurion, who has a servant that is sick unto death. He sent us to ask that You send Your word to him that his servant might be healed because he feels he is not worthy for You to come under his roof.' And Jesus marveled at their saying. And once again He says to this soldier, a Gentile, 'I have not seen in all of Israel such great faith as this. Go; tell your leader that his servant is healed.' And at that hour the servant was made whole. Faith attracted the grace which made them whole and saved them. Isn't that something!

So when Jesus declared the word of the Lord there in Luke 4:18, about He being the Messiah, Who had come with the Spirit of the Lord upon Him to minister to the hurting and the broken; the Jews were sitting there with the mindset, this is just Joseph's son, just the carpenter's son. He is a blasphemer. They rejected Him but then He began to give them accounts of how God had already rejected them. When He did, it stirred up great wrath in the Jews which were sitting in the synagogue that day. Isn't that something? Truth exposed the lies and they were angered by it.

Now let's look at Mark chapter three. Jesus is choosing His disciples and He is grooming them for the ministry.

Mark 3:13-14 (NKJV): 13 And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. 14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach,

Now He has called out twelve, and He said come to Me. I am going to do some work in you and then I am going to send you out to preach My gospel, the gospel of the Kingdom.

Mark 3:15-20 (NKJV): 15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: 16 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, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the *son* of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; 19 and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house. 20 Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

Now Jesus, the Jews' Messiah and the Savior of the world, chose men to serve as His priests. Notice He overlooked those who were brought up under the Levitical Priesthood, and rather chose as His priests 12 sinners. Jesus is the Friend of sinners.

You would think the Messiah would come into the synagogue and they would have this great conclave as they do at the Vatican. They call in all the cardinals; we are going to appoint twelve men that are going to lead the Messiah's kingdom. They will usher in His kingdom into the earth. We are going to have this great conclave in Jerusalem for the Messiah is here! We are going to pick out twelve of you and you are going to sit on twelve thrones around Jesus' throne!

No, it isn't done that way by Jesus. Rather Jesus comes and He goes into the world and picks out twelve deadbeats, twelve sinners, twelve unlearned, unkempt, and uncouth men. Boy, don't you know that was a slap in the face to the scribes, the Pharisees and to the elders! He claims to be the Messiah and He picked who? Has He not heard Simon talk lately? Every other word is a cuss word. Does He not know Matthew is a tax-collector; he is the lowest of the low, he rips people off? These tax-collectors embezzle funds for themselves and they become rich off of the people, glorying in the authority Rome has given them over their own people.

Yet these are the very ones Jesus picks! No wonder He stirred up so much controversy. He overlooks the Levitical Priesthood to choose these men who are unlearned. And they were unlearned, uneducated in the law and the scriptures and I can give you scripture to prove it.

Look in Acts chapter four, verse nine. Simon Peter has stood up for Christ, God has poured His Spirit out upon him and used him mightily to preach the gospel and thousands were saved on the Day of Pentecost, and now a miracle has been wrought through his hands by the Spirit of God, and the rulers of the synagogue are calling Simon Peter in to question. And as they are judging him, Simon Peter is refuting them. He is making his own case.

Acts 4:9-10 (NKJV): 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

He just preached a sermon in that one paragraph. He let them know that Jesus did this miracle through him and the only way Jesus could do this miracle through him was Jesus had been resurrected and he preaches that. You crucified Him but God raised Him up from the dead, and it is He, Jesus, who has made this man whole.

Acts 4:10-13 (NKJV): . . . that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. ¹¹ This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' ¹² Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." ¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that *they were uneducated and untrained men*, they marveled. Jesus got twelve uneducated and untrained men in the law. Why would Jesus do this? It is easier to train someone who is ignorant than it is to change someone who is lost and that has been hardened through religion.

When the spirit of religion rejected the truth, Jesus rejected them. He said you will not be My priest over My people. I will go and pick for Me twelve sinners. They were untrained and uneducated and yet these people marveled at them and they realized that they had been with Jesus. This should encourage some pastors, preachers and teachers that have wanted to come forward and answer God's call, but say, I don't know how I am going to do it. You are going to put your faith in Jesus; that is how you are going to do it. These were common men, who held common jobs outside of the walls of Judaism and they were the ones that received Jesus when He told them 'follow Me.'

Jesus went into the synagogue, preached the truth, and the leaders rejected Him. He then goes out into the highways and byways and finds these fishermen washing and mending their nets, and all He says is follow Me. They leave everything to follow Him. You have Jesus preaching His heart out over here in the synagogue and nobody responds. He goes out into the world and speaks to sinners and He speaks a simple command, come and follow Me and they immediately leave all to follow Him. Where is the faith at? It is in the world. It is in the world.

The only prerequisite for these men to qualify to become great apostles of the church was their faith and willingness to leave all to follow Jesus. This is the only prerequisite Jesus asks of us, that we have enough faith to leave this world's pleasures and come and follow Him.

Now to add insult to the priests' injured faith Jesus chose one disciple, Judas Iscariot, who in John chapter 6 verse 70, I believe it is Jesus calls a devil. Jesus chose a devil to serve Him in His presbytery over the priests of Israel. Isn't that amazing? He said I have chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil. You will betray Me.

Acts 1:15 (NKJV): ¹⁵ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples

Jesus has picked all of them; He has made them apostles after His passion. Judas is dead, he killed himself. And Peter stood up in the midst of them all to speak.

Acts 1:15-17 (NKJV): ¹⁵ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, ¹⁶ "Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning

Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; 17 for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."

So Peter stands up in the midst of those present and he says, Judas has killed himself and this is as it was prophesied by King David, and now he must be replaced.

Acts 1:20-26 (NKJV): 20 "For it is written in the book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.' 21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." 23 And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen 25 to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." 26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Let another take his office. They are following scripture in replacing Judas and giving his office to another, but they are not just giving it to anyone. They have chosen two men who were with them as Jesus went in and out among them. Get that. They are to be men who were eye witness to Jesus' resurrection. Once that was determined they asked God to choose between the two men and the lot fell on Matthias and he replaced Judas. They chose by casting lots which was the practice under the old system, under the old Levitical order. They are doing something in the New Testament which had been practiced in the Old Testament times.

The apostles believed that in order to be an apostle, (and this is still held true in certain circles today in the church,) they believed that in order to be an apostle they had to have been with Jesus while He was on the earth. Therefore when they prayed and asked God about whom to pick, they only gave God two options. God, these are your only two options for these are the only two men who walked with us when Jesus was here on the earth. I hope this is not laborious, but God had someone else in mind.

God rejected their method of choosing an apostle by straws for He chose a man; get this, which was raised up as a Pharisee. Isn't that something? Jesus had rejected the Pharisees, that Levitical system, He rejected them as being apostles of the faith, and then when the apostles are choosing Judas' replacement they go back under the old system and they cast a lot, and we know there is nothing written in the New Testament by Matthias. And yet Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee, was chosen by Jesus, Himself, on the road to Damascus. Saul stricken from his horse by a light, rose up blind, and was guided by men for three days in darkness before he is healed; and later he goes off to the mountains and by revelation of the Spirit was shown the manifold and hidden wisdom of God; and God used this Pharisee. It is pretty interesting, isn't it?

If you hear this teaching you could come to the conclusion that religious people don't have a chance but you must hear that Jesus put Paul into the midst as if to say, don't put Me in a box. I can do all things at all times. All I need is someone that will have faith in Me and I can change them. I can even transform a religious person that is willing.

Let's look at Paul's own writing about himself in Philippians chapter 3.

Philippians 3:4-7 (NKJV): 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

He said concerning the law he was a Pharisee, but, he continues, what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Jesus looked beyond Saul's religious façade and He saw a heart that said I will hunger after Christ when Christ shows Himself to me.

Philippians 3:7-11 (NKJV): 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

He counted all he lost as rubbish for the joy of gaining Christ. Not only to gain Christ but that he be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness which came by the law, but that which is through Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith. Wow, God has a sense of humor, doesn't He? Even though Saul was a Pharisee he was still a sinner and the Lord saved him, transformed him and allowed him to write two-thirds of the New Testament. Where is Matthias? He is not mentioned.

The Lord, I believe, is wanting us to get our eyes off of the way the church is being run right now by men and to get our focus back on Jesus, the Friend of sinners. We have an opportunity to reach out to sinners like never before through, not only one on one contact and through churches, but through the vast resources which the church has through use of the media.

Luke 5:27-29 (NKJV): 27 After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." 28 So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. 29 Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house.

Jesus has saved this tax collector which no one likes. The people have great disdain for him because of his profession, yet Jesus wants to be associated with this man. They say you can tell a lot about a man by the people He hangs out with. Jesus was surrounded with sinners.

Luke 5:29-32 (NKJV): 29 Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. 30 And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Even though his name is called Levi here in Luke, in Matthew he is called Matthew. We know that it is the same man so why is there a discrepancy? Levi was Matthew's Jewish name however, because he worked for the Romans he took on a Greek name; in order to fit in with the Roman system he changed his identity. His parents had named him Levi, and Levi came from the name of the man that God had appointed as head of the Levites; so his parents had this knowing within themselves that Levi was going to be a priest. But Levi had not turned out like a priest to this point; he rather had become a low-down tax collector which nobody wanted in their life. Jesus didn't see Matthew, He saw Levi. He didn't see a tax collector, Jesus saw a priest. He called

those things that be not as though they were. Levi was not living up to his name but Jesus overlooked his shortcomings and saw his faith, his need for a savior and called Levi out of the world to serve Him and Levi became the priest his parents had envisioned him to become. Isn't that awesome?

What has God called you to become through His Son Jesus?