

# The Chosen Vessel

*From a sermon delivered by Rev. T. G. Oshokoya  
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**T**he Lord wants to speak to us today on **The Chosen Vessel**.

*"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16).*

These words came from the holy lips of Jesus Christ. He was exhorting His disciples shortly before He was crucified. Another scriptural passage that is similar to the one we have just read is:

*"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).*

People often misinterpret these two scriptural passages. They twist the meaning to support themselves. On the basis of these passages, they claim to have been chosen and sent out by God to preach the Gospel.

*"Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?  
"He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him,  
being one of the twelve" (John 6:70,71).*

In this passage, Jesus again emphasised that He chose His disciples. In Luke 6:13-16, we find the record of how the Apostles were chosen by Jesus Christ Himself.

*"And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;  
"Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,  
"Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, 34  
and Simon called Zelotes,  
"And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor."*

These verses from the Holy Writ clearly indicate that Jesus had many disciples, among whom twelve were ordained Apostles and sent out to preach the Gospel. It would be improper therefore, for the other disciples (apart from these twelve) to take it upon themselves and say, "After all, we are disciples of Jesus Christ also; we can go out on our own and begin to perform wonders and miracles as we saw Jesus do." If they did that, they would have displeased the Lord Jesus. Many so-called evangelists and preachers were taught, and are teaching people, to write their names in that portion of the Scriptures that reads; "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). We should be warned that this passage was not directed to individuals indiscriminately. Evangelists have to be chosen and sent out by God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, to preach the Gospel. Those who go out to preach the Gospel without being chosen and sent do so to their own detriment. Many people who have gone out under such spurious doctrines, have met with disappointments and have come back to tell us their story of woe and failure.

Young converts and inexperienced Christians, full of misguided zeal, hardly realise that the world they are going to confront with the Gospel is much more powerful than they are. How then can one preach the Gospel

successfully to the world if he were not chosen and sent by God? Perhaps, you do not meet with any disappointment immediately you start preaching, but sooner or later, disappointments will come. Without the backing of God, one is bound to make a shipwreck of one's faith under such a situation.

Dear Evangelist, who sent you out to preach the Gospel? Was it God? Perhaps, you are under the teaching of someone who assured you that God has chosen you to preach the Gospel. Did God assure you concerning this? Who chose, ordained, and sent your so-called teacher? All the evangelists and preachers we read about in the Bible had the backing and support of God because they were chosen and sent by Him. Jesus Christ chose twelve out of His many disciples, ordained them, and sent them out to preach the Gospel.

Who laid hands on you and sent you out without the spiritual foundation and without being chosen by God? You are missing the mark, you are disobeying God. You are making God a liar. You are saying in effect that what God requires man to do before he becomes a preacher is not necessary. By your attitude, you are adding to the Word of God. Such an attitude is not pleasing to God.

***"AFTER these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come" (Luke 10:1).***

Time had elapsed since Jesus Christ chose and sent out the twelve Apostles. In the above passage, Jesus chose other seventy disciples to go and preach the Gospel and prepare the way for His visits to many cities. The seventy disciples preached to people that Jesus, the Author of Salvation was coming to their cities. We can see the backing and support of God upon the ministry of these seventy disciples because every place they visited witnessed the manifestation of God's power. The disciples even reported to Jesus Christ that evil spirits were subject unto them. Oh! glory be to God for supporting His work. This is God's own appointed way of doing things. But what about those people who have constituted themselves into an authority and are sending people out to preach the Gospel? It is clear from the Scriptures that God does not honour their work.

Jesus Christ said, 'Haven't I chosen twelve of you?' This is to show that, it was He Who chose the twelve Apostles but one of them had become the child of the devil. It is necessary that we be chosen by God. It is only those who are chosen by God that are regarded as chosen vessels. Jesus had a reason for choosing the twelve Apostles. He impresses it on our minds that it was He who chose and sent them out. 'It is not you who has chosen me.' Having the notion or feeling that one wants to work for God does not make one a chosen vessel. God has a plan for each and every one. God knows us; He knows what we are and what we are going to be.

***"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).***

We have to understand that the call embraces everyone, but to be ordained, honoured and given the commission to go and spread the Good Tidings is a different thing entirely. People who do not understand the Scriptures try to read a wrong meaning into these two ideas: to be called and to be sent. A disciple is a follower and a learner, while an apostle is one who has been schooled in the Word and things of God and sent out. God called Paul the Apostle when he was Saul of Tarsus. God met him on the way to Damascus, when he had that evil intention of bringing the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ bound and casting them into prison. You all know who Paul was. He was a learned, highly educated and qualified person as far as knowledge was concerned. He was a teacher of the Law; but he met Jesus Who spoke to him in the language he could understand. His eyes beheld the glory of God; he lost his sight and could not find his way. And so he was led to Damascus by his followers.

God does not make mistakes. By the time God called Saul of Tarsus, there were already established Apostles, who had been involved in the spread of the Gospel. Jesus Christ chose them, ordained them and sent them out. Among the miracles the Lord wrought through them were, raising of the dead and restoring of sight to the blind. The Apostles founded and established churches all over the place. They had churches in many places with ordained and appointed people to oversee them. When God met Saul of Tarsus, He never minced words. Paul inquired from God what He would have him do. God told him to go and be taught the way of the Gospel. Paul needed to know, he had to learn, so he had to be taught. In spite of his high academic status and position, God made him realise that he still needed to learn. He was for three long days without sight or food. Do you know what followed? God sent Ananias to him.

***"And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.  
"And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:10, 11).***

There are many people today who believe and teach that praying for a long time is not necessary. Just pray a snapshot prayer and everything will be all right. But God did not allow that kind of prayer for Paul. Paul prayed for three consecutive days because the account says, 'for he prayeth.'

***"Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:  
"And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.  
"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:  
"For I will chew him bow great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:13-16).***

That is the sound doctrine to which we have been called and on which we are established. That is why we have God's backing and help. We do not preach anything erroneous. God is not the author of confusion. In spite of Saul's social and academic status, he still had to submit to the Apostles appointed by God, to be prayed for. Paul, in spite of all he had attained, could not help himself out of the condition he found himself. One would have thought that at that time, when there was a great need to reap the plenteous harvest, Paul would have launched out immediately to spread and proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with all his academic achievements and eloquence, win thousands for the Lord. But he had to wait for God's time. God told him that Ananias, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ, would come to pray for him.

Ananias was informed by God to go and pray for Saul so that the scales on his eyes might be removed to enable him regain his sight and have a clear understanding of the Scriptures. But Ananias was reluctant to go. He told God that he had heard of the havoc Saul had done to the people of God. God admonished him to forget all he had heard or known about Saul because He had laid His hands on him to be a chosen vessel, to spread His Gospel before kings, the gentiles and the Children of Israel. Do you know it has always been my pleasure that God should lay His hands on me and make me a chosen vessel? I believe this is the will of God for everyone of you. Whether you are literate or illiterate, it does not matter in the sight of God. Whatever may be your social status, until God calls you, honours, ordains and chooses you, you must wait upon Him. One would have thought that after God had called Saul, and Ananias had come to pray for him that he would launch out immediately, but he never did that. He still needed to subject himself to the teachings of the Gospel. The detail of this account is found in Acts 22:12-16.

***"And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,  
"Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.  
"And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.  
"For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.  
"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."***

What we have to know is that there is a great difference between our call and our being chosen as we see in Acts 13:1-3.

***"NOW there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.***

***"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them  
"And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.***

I want you to take note of that clause: Separate me Barnabas and Saul. God had called Barnabas and Saul into this work but by this proclamation, He separated them, chose them and ordained them. Before that time, Saul was not ordained but with the pronouncement from the Holy Spirit, he was ordained and sent out. "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Thus, he started his ministry.

Thanks be to God for the method by which He does His work. Here was Paul the Apostle called, chosen and sent by the Church Authority. He had the backing of the church. Wherever he went, he had the support and prayer of the church. One thing we all need to note is the fact that the success of his ministry was not through the eloquence of speech; rather, we read of his suffering, imprisonments and of people hurling stones at Paul.

***"AND I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.  
"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:1, 4).***

There was a time he was imprisoned and a great earthquake opened the prison doors and Paul was released.

***"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.  
"And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.  
"And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.  
"But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.  
"Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,  
"And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?  
"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.  
"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house" (Acts 16:25-32).***

An account from the Bible says, 'the power of God so filled his life that the aprons or handkerchiefs from his body healed the sick.'

***"And God wrought, special miracles by the hands of Paul:  
"So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them" (Acts 19:11, 12).***

Paul had learnt about the way of God. He had embraced the whole doctrine of Jesus Christ and was well equipped to launch out for the Gospel. He had the backing of God, and as a result, his ministry was successful. Now, you need to ask yourself whether you have known and come across sound doctrine. Have you been schooled by God, equipped, called and sent out? The devil confronted the seven sons of Sceva because God did not send them.

***"Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.***

***"And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.'***

***"And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?***

***"And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (Acts 19:13-16).***

Well, you who have not been rooted and grounded in the Word of God, why do you want to endanger your life by going out to do that which you have not been commissioned to do? You are bound to meet with failures and disappointments. Why don't you stay where God has placed you and remain there until God will choose you and send you out? We have come across people who claim to have the power of healing either on their right or left hand but with time, they discovered their folly, and subjected themselves to sound doctrine.

***"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues" (Mark 16:17).***

This is the power which God has given the Church. As Paul and Barnabas believed it, we too believe, that is why we experience these signs today. But some people claim that the power is given to individuals. If it were so, one would have thought that since Paul met Jesus face to face on his way to Damascus, he had already received authority to go and preach, since no one is greater than Jesus. But contrary to that, the dialogue between him and Jesus Christ led him to a definite experience with the Lord. Jesus would have told Paul all he needed to know if He wanted to, *since* He was God - the Alpha and Omega - but He directed Saul to Ananias, where he would be taught the details of his mission. God is not the author of confusion and the spirits of the prophets are subject one to another.

***"Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22).***

This was Paul writing an admonition to Timothy whom he had appointed a leader over a group. He warned him that he should not make the mistake of laying hands on new people. He made Timothy understand that it will be a mistake to quickly lay hands on people. Before the laying on of hands, such an individual must be a Christian in good standing - one who has been tried and proved by God. Some people allege that when highly educated people come into our midst, we do not recognise or give them very high positions in the Church. It is true they may be learned, but are they learned in the things of God? For Bible Christians, the choice of workers in the Lord's vineyard is according to the Bible standard.

***"THIS is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach" (1 Timothy 3:1, 2).***

Paul later met with the Apostles who would not rush into giving him any assignment in spite of the fact that they had heard of his conversion. It was admirable and good that Paul was educated, but his academic status would not influence the Apostles, since that was not the most important qualification. They waited upon God to appoint Paul. That is God's' standard, it may not please us but it is the right method. It takes a crucified man to preach the crucified Saviour. So, God needs tried people, the brave and true, who will not shrink or faint in time of trouble. People who have anchored their ship to the eternal Rock of Ages; those grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.

***"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;  
"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;***

*"(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)*

*"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*

*"Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

*"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;*

*"Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*

*"And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.*

*"Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.*

*"Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.*

*"For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 3:3-13).*

Paul, though a gentleman, an educated person, a teacher of the law, yet the Apostles of Jesus Christ, at his conversion, did not lay hands on him suddenly. This is what we do today. We never appoint people suddenly; we wait until God will afford the opportunity before we do so, because we do not want to have hands in the sins of other people. They should first of all be examined. This is not just mere setting up of a committee to find out or consult friends to inquire about such candidates. The Lord alone can direct aright, for He sees the heart of man; He knows the end of every individual from his beginning. I have some feelings in me about the danger that is lurking in the way of the people who do contrary.

Some people complain or feel that they have not been appointed to work for God because the Ministry does not know them and their worth. No, it is more than that. If you want to work for God, keep telling Him as you consecrate deeper and deeper each day. As you do this continually, time will prove you. The doctrine which you preach and stand for will prove you. The trials, temptations, and difficulties that will come across your way will prove you and it is your reaction and attitude to those life situations that will confirm you either as a deacon, teacher or preacher. Do you expect us to lay hands on people who will not accept sound teachings, who will not take to correction, who will not wait for God's time, or make God's will uppermost in their lives? Do you want us to lay hands on such people and send them out? That is why the Bible says that such people must first be proved. You will be proved by your life, by the trials and the troubles that will come your way.

We want to see what your attitude to every aspect of life is. The Scriptures tell us that anybody who cannot control his own house cannot be lord over the work of God. It is not the knowledge acquired or the high academic status that you have, that will qualify you; it is not the understanding or wisdom. If that were the requisite qualification, you would have found many people being appointed.

*"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25).*

Paul was not chosen by God because of his social and academic status.

*"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;*

*"And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:*

*"That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).*

This is quite different from what many people teach. Many people think that God will use highly qualified academicians to teach and change the hearts of highly qualified people like them. But the Scriptures

tell us that, it is the simple at heart that God will use to do that great work. "And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." Before we go to another verse, just read what God was asking.

***"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Corinthians 1:20).***

God says, He 'has made foolish, the wisdom of this world.' For the foolishness of God is wiser than men. In short, God can use anybody or anything.

***"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.***

***"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.***

***"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:19-21).***

It is clear what the Lord requires. The foundation of God stands sure. God has not changed, His foundation remains ever the same. And He is telling you that everyone who names the name of Jesus Christ should depart from iniquity — "everyone." He says, `Each individual who wants to serve God in truth should depart from iniquity.' Quit false doctrine. Quit unrighteousness. Seeing how God wants you to be separated from the world and from sin, from false teaching, corruption and disobedience; you should sever yourself from those teachings which are contradictory and rebellious to the standard of the Gospel.

I charge you to embrace sound doctrine, for it stands out clearly. It is complete, and it is the voice of God. It is life; it will take you to Heaven.

***"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.***

***"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:15,16).***

In the days of the Apostles, some people went out to teach others false teachings. The Apostles said, 'Although, they had come out from amongst us, they are not part of us.' In a great house, we don't only have vessels of gold and silver. There are vessels of wood and earth. You have to decide which vessel you want to be.