

Associates for Scriptural Knowledge • P.O. Box 25000, Portland, OR 97298-0990 USA

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Telephone: 503 292 4352

• Internet: www.askelm.com •

E-Mail: askoffice@askelm.com

Types of People God Is Calling

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1974

Transcribed, expanded, and edited by David Sielaff, June 2004, and May 2026

Read the accompanying "[Newsletter for June 2004](#)"

Also read the accompanying "[May 2026 Newsletter](#)"



What kind of people is God calling for His work at the present time? We know that difficult times are coming. The events in the book of Revelation are not far in the future from us.¹ What kind of *ekklesia* or people does God want in these times of trouble in front of us? I know one thing for certain. Those people in the form of ecclesiastical government, who depend on a hierarchy for knowledge, for understanding, and for their own salvation as a corporate group, are in serious trouble when it comes to the future if they rely too much on the ministry.

The hierarchical system of government in God's *ekklesia* is wrong. It is not only wrong for the Christian here and now, it certainly is wrong for the future. This is because people in a hierarchical form of government are the very people who cannot withstand the things that the book of Revelation says will come upon the earth in the next few years. I will explain just why. People who depend on a ministry too much are people who can be dealt with easily by any foreign power.

Let us say for example the United States was taken over by an alien power of some kind. I know of several hierarchical church governments that could be put out of action very quickly. All you would have to do is take the leaders, put them in jail, or line them against a wall and shoot them. If you take away the leaders of people who depend on those leaders all the time, the sheep will go away and scatter. They will not know what to do. Those people stand on their own two feet; they depend too much on the ministry.

If the ministry is forcing the group to depend on them for every little thing: how you plant your garden in your front or backyard, how expert farmers are supposed to plant their crops (when the man teaching has never farmed) or when you get a sniffle you must send for a person to anoint you, or things of that

¹ The events of Revelation are just around the corner. I cannot state dogmatically any dates on when these things will occur. We will get into serious difficulty if we start to set dates. There are chronological problems. There are calendar problems. There are many types of problems in setting dates as far as the Great Tribulation are concerned and the Second Coming of Christ. The problem is not with God or with the Bible. The problem happens to be with us. We just do not have the mental capacity in our minds to put everything together. But God knows when these things will occur. In an exposition which I have on "[Mystery Babylon the Great](#)" I give 7 points for which we ought to watch. Prophecy is moving on [to fulfillment]. *ELM*

nature that involve a complete and utter dependence upon the ministry. Take a government modified from that, say a church that is run by a board, will you depend on a board of men, are you going to depend on [ASK], are we or am I the saviors of all of you? The answer is no, of course we are not.

Obviously the only type of Christian organization that can survive times of trouble is one that has individual members in it who are strong, who stand on their own two feet, that have independence but are not necessarily independent from one another. We need fellowship. We need to grow in grace and knowledge by cooperating one with another. We need to have assemblies. Getting together is essential for your Christian growth. We should not be so independent of one another that we do not support each other laterally, shoulder to shoulder. On the other hand it is wrong for one man or a group of men to begin to carry everybody. We all must get down and have our feet firmly on the ground spiritually, doctrinally.

God is calling out those who are people of independence, not necessarily that they are independent of others where you become selfish and say, "I can take care of myself." That type of attitude is not what God wants. Rather, He wants us to have independence under Him.

I know that people who are growing in grace and knowledge themselves will survive any persecution that comes along. Maybe one or two may be killed off, half the *ekklesia* could be killed off, but the *ekklesia* of God would still go on because the people are strong. They have knowledge themselves. They do not so much depend upon a minister. I have told several ministers in the past that they should get up in front of the people and speak themselves out of a job. Give the people as much knowledge and as much understanding of this Bible so that they know as much as the minister does.

If they have as much knowledge, they can stand on their own two feet when things go wrong. A good minister of God, by the time he teaches others, should have the opportunity to study the Bible more hours each day. Few people have the opportunity to do that because they have farms, businesses, and jobs to manage. But ministers have a number of hours each week that they should use to get familiar with the Bible. They have a bit more time to study, to learn, and then educate you into the biblical understanding of the Word of God so you can see those teachings for yourself. By the time he has taught you as much as he knows, he will have grown much himself.

A good minister of God will never teach himself out of a job, but he ought to try as best as he can to teach as much as he knows to all of his congregation. However, there are times when you do not have a minister and you have to stand on your own two feet. This is what God wants. God is calling out a proper type of people, to be able to do that very thing. I feel sorry for those who depend too much on ministry, on hierarchical government.

I am against hierarchical government systems. First of all, they are contrary to the Gospel, and I can prove that. Second, they are destructive and spiritually ruinous because they are not giving the truth of God so people can stand on their own two feet. I like people that treat me like an equal, not someone way up high. If I have a little bit of knowledge to give, fine. I want to give it. Let me tell you that you have all types of knowledge I do not know. I never met a person that could not teach me something. Everybody has something to give to somebody. I want to see it developed in God's people, to make a strong *ekklesia* where people can stand on their own two feet.

The Best People — You Are Among Them

God is calling the best people for the job He wants done at the present time. You are all aware what it says in First Corinthians 1:26, how not many noble are called, not many wise, not many powerful. However, even though God may call what people in the world would call foolish, He is actually calling the best people for the job. I have no doubt about that. I cannot imagine God calling people so base, so weak, so ignoble, so unknowledgeable, that they just thrash about, and then call some of them out to be members of His *ekklesia*, to lead the world in education and knowledge of God.

Yes, God is calling the best people to fulfill His will now. That is not to build you up; it is to tell you the truth. He usually calls people that the world looks at with distaste, sometimes with disgust. I know that

for a fact. God has always done that.

It has come to my mind of late that God deliberately calls people that the world would not necessarily like to be led by for any reason. God does this because He wants to show that the physical things of this world and the physical appraisals of men are not the standards by which things or people ought to be judged. Understand spiritual truth: sometimes God takes the weak of the world to show the strength of spirituality that only He can really bring out of people.

Primogenitor, or the Law of the Firstborn

Take a common Old Testament example; if there was any law that stands out above any other, it is that of primogenitor. That law shows that the father is the head of the family and that the firstborn son should take over the rule of the [extended] family when the father dies. It bypasses the mother and goes to the firstborn son. In the Old Testament it was that way. It was also that way in Egypt and Babylon, and it appears to have been universal in the Near East. It is most interesting when you check the Bible, even though God Himself brought that rule into play, He violates His own rule. In fact He violates it so many times I have come to the conclusion that the rule is just the opposite of what you might imagine.

Take for example Abraham. Abraham was not the firstborn son. He was the baby of the family. God picked him to be the father of the faithful. People of the world would have asked, why did God not pick Nahor or one of the others. Abraham had a son, Ishmael, and six other children by Keturah. He finally had a son named Isaac, and the promise came through whom? It came through the baby, Isaac.

Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Who was the firstborn? I know, maybe by the hand it was Jacob, but really Esau was the firstborn. Though Jacob needed a bit of spirituality given to him in the earlier years, nevertheless he was the man God chose to be the father of the nation Israel. He was the baby of that family.

Jacob went north to get a wife and came back with four, two wives and two concubines. Then he had 12 sons, plus one daughter Dinah. In actual fact it says he had daughters, so we do not know how many other daughters he had. [See Genesis 46:15. *DWS*] But if he had 12 sons, maybe he had 12 daughters also.

Of those 12 sons, Reuben was the firstborn, but he disqualified himself when he went into his father's concubines. Levi was next, then Simeon. They were disqualified because they were cruel in heart and they went into the Shechemites and killed them all. For Leah's children it was Judah, the fourth-born son of Jacob, who was given preeminence.

True, Joseph was the firstborn of Rachel, but he was born long after the children of Leah. Joseph sired Ephraim and Manasseh. Joseph was not the firstborn, but he got the blessing of territory, or power, of government. Manasseh was Joseph's firstborn, but to whom did God choose to give the greater blessing? He gave it to Ephraim. It is as if God picked the younger every time. He is not supposed to do that according to the laws of the Old Testament. God seems to go counter to His own laws.

Then we come to the time of Moses. He was to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, which he did quite well. But Moses was (as far as we know) the leastborn son of that family. Aaron was three years older than Moses. Why was Aaron not picked to be the leader and lead the children out of Egypt? We do not know, but God chose Moses for that honor.

When it came time to make a kingdom and King Saul disqualified himself, King David was chosen as a king that God placed great confidence in to rule. You know how He selected David? God told Samuel the Prophet to go south out of the hill country of Ephraim to a little place in Judea called Bethlehem. He was to go to the family of Jesse and anoint one of Jesse's sons as king over Israel.

Samuel went down and said to Jesse, bring your child to me because I will anoint him to be king over Israel. Jesse, according to the law of primogenitor, brings the firstborn son. Samuel says, no, I do not want him. He brings a second. No, I do not want him. Then the third. By this time Jesse is beginning to wonder what is going on. Samuel goes through the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, and he finally brings the seventh and Samuel does not want him. Jesse says surely, those are my children. Samuel asks, do you not have any others left? Jesse says I have a stripling of a lad out tending the sheepcote. That is all I have left. Samuel

said to bring him. Jesse brought him and Samuel anointed his head with oil. That was David, the leastborn son of Jesse. He was the one God picked. Why does He pick the leastborn MOST OF THE TIME?

The Genealogy of Jesus

At least Jesus' genealogy was from David, and David was a great man. But the genealogy of Christ is not much to laud over, except it goes all the way back through David to Adam. I suppose all of us should get some acclaim out of that, because we are all from Adam. But Jesus' genealogy was not all that profound.

Only four women are mentioned in Jesus' genealogy of Matthew chapter 1. The four women must have been very important, they must have had great virtues to appear in the genealogy of our Lord Himself; or so you would think. Though he had his faults, David was a man of virtue. Who were the women in Christ's genealogy? One was an incestress. Her chief role in the Bible was that she committed incest. Another was a harlot, a prostitute. Another was a foreigner and the last one was an adulteress.

The incestress was Tamar who had relations with Judah, her own father-in-law (Genesis 38:12–30). The harlot was Rahab who kept the spies from being discovered in Jericho (Joshua 2:1–24). The foreigner was Ruth, the Moabitess who went over to the land of Judah and abandoned her own people and her own gods (Ruth chapters 1–4). That was a virtuous thing to do, but she was a foreigner. The adulteress was Bathsheba who committed adultery with David (2 Samuel chapters 11–12).

Those are the four women who are virtuous enough to appear in the genealogy of our Lord. They are there for a good reason. It is to show that when you examine the genealogy of the Lord and you say, here are the women and the men (some of them were not all that good), though it was a kingly line. The inclusion of the women was to teach some of us that our genealogies may be not all that good either.²

When Christ came along He picked disciples who were fishermen, tax collectors, and people who were the opposite from what most people would pick. However, He picked the best men for the job. When one goes back to Abraham, God picked the best man. He picked the best man in Isaac. Even though Jacob's name was "Supplanter" (that is what his name meant), still he was the best man for the job. Ephraim was the best man. Moses was certainly the best man. David was the best man. Those women in the genealogies of Christ, they must have been the best for the time, even though they did ignoble acts.

Christ called people that most individuals would not call for a noble endeavor like Christianity. He is not calling what the world would consider to be the best at this present time. However, I know what He is calling happens to be the best whether it is me, you, or anyone else. We should not be arrogant or haughty over that by any means. If we start doing that, God has the ability to bring us down. He will do it. He will chastise every son that He loves (Psalm 94:12–14 and Hebrews 12:6–8). So He is calling the best people for the best job.

The First Gentile Called

The first Gentile that was called to a knowledge of the truth must have had all the credentials of birth, of race, and of position making him a noble person for him to be the first one called. In the Bible the first time you come across an event, whether it deals with a person or a group of people, God focuses on it so it can be seen that this event is very important. In the book of Acts every time Luke introduces something, and he spends time on it, it is important.³

In fact, the first Gentile ever called to a knowledge of the truth after the resurrection of Christ was the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip was ordained to a special position called **"one of the seven"** in Acts 6:3–7. He

² I had a beautiful father and mother and as far as I can know, beautiful grandparents on both sides, and great grandparents. But I heard a few stories from the time of the Civil War about my great grandparents that might cause eyebrows to go up. If I go back far enough, I know I have horse thieves in my heritage. What about the rest of you? You might be in a bad position genealogically speaking. If you are, so was our Lord. It was deliberately recorded that way. *ELM*

³ Luke is interested in the introduction of things. If you study the introductions in the book of Acts, and even the whole Bible, you find God tries to show cardinal events to help us understand the doctrines of the Bible in point after point. *ELM*

was a man filled with God's Holy Spirit. Returning to Jerusalem after preaching the Gospel in Samaria Philip was told by an angel of the Lord to go south to the road that led to Gaza (Acts 8:25–26). When Philip arrived at that place, a desert region with few people, he encountered an influential eunuch who had come to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8:27).

Philip, seeing a caravan passing by, hears the words of the book of Isaiah being read in the old Greek version, the Septuagint. Philip drew next to the chariot to speak to the man who was reading as he was traveling. He asks the man if he knows the meaning of that which he was reading. It was the words of Isaiah chapter 53 regarding the prophecies relating to Jesus. Philip then taught him the relation of the words to Jesus, making the eunuch anxious to be baptized at the first place of suitable water (Acts 8:36).⁴ He was the first Gentile ever baptized. He was evangelized by Philip, being sent there by God.

Philip, of his own volition, would not have done this. But God influenced him to be where the Ethiopian eunuch would be at that precise time in order to evangelize that particular person. Who was he? He was an Ethiopian eunuch. As far as the flesh is concerned, he was [1] a Gentile who was unable to go into the Temple of God. He could not go to the altar. He could not make an offering on the altar. That meant he was cut off from God. [2] Besides that, this Gentile was as far away, racially speaking, from a Jew as you could get.⁵ Here was a man physically speaking, as symbolically far from the altar as you could possibly get and he was the one to whom God wanted Philip to explain the Gospel.

The man had another point against him. Not only was he an Ethiopian and a Gentile, [3] he was a eunuch! Even if he would have been a Jew of noble birth, the Old Testament says a eunuch was forbidden to go into the Temple of God. God said to Philip, preach to that eunuch. Also, [4] he was in the service of a woman. Though she was Queen Candace of the Ethiopians that he was serving, he was a woman's servant, which was about as low as you could possibly get. Put these things together and what do you get? The first one that God picks has all the physical credentials of exclusion from God's divine government. But that is the one person God picked.

Peter's Dream

When Peter was in Lydda, he traveled to Joppa (near modern Tel Aviv). He got hungry one day and went on top of the roof of a believer, Simon the Tanner (Acts 9:43) to pray before lunch. Some 45+ miles north in the city of Caesarea a man by the name of Cornelius had a vision of an angel that said God wants you to send men to a man called Peter who is at Simon the Tanner's house in Joppa. Have your men bring Peter to come and speak to you.

Peter, about noon also received a vision of unclean animals wrapped in a sheet (with the four corners bound together). Peter looked in the sheet and here were all these unclean animals crawling around.

“And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter! Sacrifice and eat!’ Yet Peter said, ‘Far be it from me, Lord, for I never ate anything contaminating and unclean!’ And again, a second time, a voice came to him, ‘What God cleanses, do not you count contaminating!’ Now this occurred thrice, and straightway the utensil was taken up into heaven.”

• Acts 10:13–16 CLV

That vision occurred three times and it made an impression on Peter, but he was doubtful about the meaning of the vision. At the very time the third vision was over, Peter was told that someone was at the door who wanted to see him. Peter goes down and finds that three men came to see him, sent by a Gentile from

⁴ **EDITOR'S NOTE:** Reading Acts 8:25 Philip, Peter, and others returned to Jerusalem. After teaching the Gospel to Samaritans, an angel appeared to Philip and told him to travel the road from Jerusalem to Gaza (near the Mediterranean coast), and he would encounter an Ethiopian (verse 26). After the eunuch was baptized, Philip was supernaturally transported away (Acts 8:39). See my Commentary, “[Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch](#)” for more details. *DWS*

⁵ There was nothing wrong with him; a Chinese, an Ethiopian, it makes no difference, but he was from far away. Understand that this Ethiopian was not a Jew; he was a Gentile in the service of the Queen Candace of Ethiopia (Acts 8:27). Some have thought that he was Jewish, but there is no indication of that. He was an Ethiopian. *ELM*

Caesarea. He puzzles over the whole matter. He did not want to be disobedient to the heavenly vision, so he and the others walked north to Caesarea and Peter was introduced to Cornelius. While they were talking Cornelius and his family believed his message and God's Holy Spirit came into them, like at Pentecost.

[Dr. Martin paraphrases Acts 11:15–16:] Peter said, **“What can I do, let us baptize you, and they were baptized.”** Peter went up to Jerusalem later and told the leaders of the *ekklesia* and they were amazed about Cornelius.

“Now, on hearing these things, they are quiet, and glorify God, saying, ‘Consequently, to the nations [Gentiles] also God gives repentance unto life!’”

• Acts 11:18 CLV

They were amazed at what Peter said, yet they did not doubt his testimony. We have no other alternative but to accept it. Who was Cornelius? Cornelius was a Roman centurion. He was the least likely person you would imagine as far as a Gentile would be concerned to receive the Gospel. He was one of the members of the Roman military aristocracy, the occupiers of the country at that time. They were the most hated people in Palestine. Here was this officer in the Roman government, called to a knowledge of the truth and baptized, an officer in the occupying forces of Palestine.

Cornelius would have been the least likely convert (from a Mosaic legal perspective). So also was the Ethiopian eunuch. So was Abraham. So was Moses. So were those in Christ's genealogy. Do you see the pattern? What we get out of this is that God seems to call the least likely as a people. But those are the ones God called in the past, going against His own laws in the Old Testament, as far as the firstborn being the most important.

Saul / Paul

The man I want to discuss now was a man of letters, no question about that, fully qualified as far as education is concerned, but he was a great persecutor of the Christian church to begin with. You could call him the Adolf Eichmann of the Christian *ekklesia* in the early years of its existence. I am talking about a man called Saul, the chief man in charge of exterminating the Christian *ekklesia* in the first few years of its existence. He had orders from the high priest to destroy men, women, and children in the Christian community and exterminate it from the earth. He went about his job with gusto, as he says in his own writings.

This man was a man of great wisdom who was converted on the road to Damascus and his name was changed to Paul from Saul. The word “Saul” signifies something very great like King Saul, the first great king of Israel, tall and handsome. God then changed his name to something phonetically close to it, but He changes the first letter from an **S** to a **P**. “Paul” in Greek means “little.” It means small, insignificant.

Paul later, by writing 14 letters [epistles] of our New Testament, by all the other things that he did, could hardly be called little, but that is what God called him. From then on he had to be little. Though he was a great man and had great intellect, do you know that his intellect was the only natural attribute that he had? He was brilliant in the head, that was about it. When it came to other things, such as physical attributes, he had practically none. This is exactly what he says in his letters about himself.

Many of us tend to idealize the personalities of the Old Testament. We imagine Abraham as a tall individual, muscular, must have a beard, who would look like a Charleston Heston. We idealize the saints of old. We certainly have done it with Christ. But the apostle Paul was also quite a bit different than many people have imagined, by his own admission in the Bible. He was probably very much like some of us and indeed, he was probably by nature a lot weaker physically than many of us. I have no doubts about that at all. Look at some of the references Paul gives concerning himself. I have no doubt God picked the right man for the job, but when we really look, I am not sure he had any qualifications, not the physical ones; mental yes, he certainly had the education. That was about the only attribute that Paul had. **“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshy, as to minors in Christ”** (1 Corinthians 2:1 CLV).

The first thing he says is that he did not have an **“excellency of speech.”** Some would say, surely he

must have been a great speaker? He went into the Jewish synagogues, spoke to them, and convicted people. Yes, he did that. But he says, when I came to you Corinthians I came with speech, but it was not **“excellency of speech.”** Then he says he did not even come with wisdom, that is with man’s wisdom, or philosophy (in Greek, *sophia*). He did not come to them with that when he declared to them **“the testimony of God.”**

“for I decide not to perceive ANYTHING among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I came to be with you [1] in weakness, and [2] in fear, and [3] in much trembling ...”

• 1 Corinthians 3:2–3 CLV

This is how Paul interacted with them for 18 months. The Corinthians knew Paul. They were with him day and night. They understood his temperament, his strengths, and his weaknesses. Here is how Paul appraised himself when he was with them: **“... in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling”** (1 Corinthians 2:3 CLV). That was the demeanor of the apostle Paul at that time.

Some people when they read that, because of their idealized appraisal of Paul, interpret **“I was with you in weakness”** simply means that I am very strong, but weak compared to God. **“In fear”** meant that he was in fear of the Lord — full of strength and fear of the Lord. The phrase **“much trembling”** meant he trembled to break any of God’s commandments. Surely that it is what Paul meant, most people would say.

However, that was not what Paul meant at all. He was saying something that the people knew themselves about the temperament of the apostle Paul. When he says I came to **“you in weakness,”** physically he was weak. **“In fear,”** naturally he was a very fearful man. I do not have the slightest doubt about it. He came **“in much trembling.”** The trembling was not in fear of God (of course he feared God), but the trembling was about what was happening in Corinth with all the pressures. He was afraid most of the time. His natural constitution was one of weakness, he was naturally fearful, and he had much trembling about him. Whether we want to accept tradition or not, tradition has it that Paul was: a very short man, he had a Mediterranean, Jewish countenance, he was not very good looking, he was bald headed, he was bowed over, and he had great difficulty seeing (as we will see later).

In other words he was not good looking at all; his appearance was one of great weakness. If the tradition is correct, it agrees with most of the statements of Paul in his own words: **“I came to be with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling”** (1 Corinthians 2:3 CLV). That was the natural manner of Paul.

“... and my word and my heralding were not with the persuasive words of human wisdom, but with demonstration of spirit and of power, that your faith may not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

• 1 Corinthians 2:4–5 CLV

The Corinthians could see that there was something beyond the physical state of Paul that inspired him to preach the Gospel. His preaching was with power but it was not with excellency of speech. It was not with man’s words of wisdom — like a Greek philosopher getting up and speaking, and the oratory would roll out, and it would be beautiful.

In the days of the apostle Paul the greatest attribute a man could have in the Greek world was to be a philosopher. The second greatest attribute was to be an orator, to really speak well and communicate his philosophy to an audience. The apostle Paul said he was neither a philosopher or an orator. He was coming:

“... in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, and my word and my heralding were not with the persuasive words of human wisdom, but with demonstration of spirit and of power.”

• 1 Corinthians 2:3–4 CLV

If they looked to the apostle Paul for his physical attributes and promise, he had nothing to give them. If they looked beyond him to the spiritual message that God was giving, to God in heaven, then he was powerful indeed. But they had to look beyond the physical to get to the spiritual. Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 7, where we read about the time when he went to Macedonia (northern Greece today).

“For even at our coming into Macedonia, our flesh has no ease, but we are afflicted in every-thing: outside fightings [in the streets, riots, things like that]; inside [were] fears.”

• 2 Corinthians 7:5 CLV

Yes, inside Paul and his colleagues were fears. I would think the apostle Paul would never be a fearful man. After all, he was inspired by God’s Holy Spirit. Should he ever fear for his life? Should he ever fear being injured or persecuted or things like that? Paul by nature was a very fearful man. He says that on the outside there were all types of fightings while **“within were fears.”**

“But God, Who is consoling the humble [lowly], consoles us by the presence of Titus, yet not only by his presence, but by the consolation also with which he was consoled over YOU, informing us of YOUR longing, YOUR anguish, YOUR zeal for MY sake; so that I rather rejoice ...”

• 2 Corinthians 7:6–7 CLV

Titus came from Corinth and he told Paul and the rest in Macedonia how faithful the Corinthians were, how they prayed for him, and how much they loved him. Seeing Titus’ face and his message during these fights and inward fears was a great comfort to the apostle Paul. Paul says he rejoiced.

Depression, Emotional Trauma, and Dr. Martin’s Experience

Going back to verse 6 CLV: notice: **“But God, Who is consoling the humble [lowly], consoles us ...”** There were so many inward fears and fightings that it was getting the apostle Paul down. He was “humble” [CLV] or **“cast down”** [KJV]. Paul was depressed! Here is the mighty apostle Paul (with God’s Holy Spirit backing him up), surely he would never get depressed! But of course he did, because he was a human being! He had natural fears on many occasions. When he saw Titus, Paul’s spirit was lifted up.

How many of you have ever gotten in a state of depression? Well, you do once in a while if you are human beings. I tell you, I do not want to work with anybody who does not know how it feels to be depressed. I do not want to work with anybody who does not know what it is to fear anything. I do not like to be around a person who is strong all the time.

I like to see a little weakness coming in, because it makes me feel at home. It makes me feel that if I can see strength coming out of that man through God’s Holy Spirit, maybe I can get it too. We are all in a position like that once in a while. I try to be a happy person. All of us try to be. But there are times when there is trauma in your life. Sometimes it can be pretty severe and you need comfort.

A Thought Experiment

I am depressed once and a while, but this is the way I usually illustrate it. Get a big graph and in the lower portion of the graph put your emotions, your fears, and your depressions. The Christian ought to be able to have a graph where he or she is in the upper third of the graph most of the time. If you were down at the bottom you would be so depressed you would want to commit suicide or something as evil as that. If you are in the middle zone, up and down, that is how most people are. Sometimes you go on a holiday and you have enough money in your pocket, you have your health, you are right at the top.

The Christian cannot be at the top all the time. It would be spiritually ruinous to be up there all the time, because we have to experience life. We must experience the bad with the good. We cannot really appreciate the good unless we have some bad once and a while. I do not want any of you to have any bad, but I know you will have it.

The Christian ought to have the line marking the graph mainly in the upper third. Very seldom should you go down into the lower half. I know with me that I get up on the wrong side of the bed one day and I can be as grumpy as anything. I get that way, so do you. The next day I get up and I am on top of the world. The ups and downs should be in the upper part of the graph.

I know all the promises of God ... I will be with you; I won’t do this; I won’t do that; but on the other

hand, they are the promises of God and you must put them into action by the Spirit of God. The apostle Paul knew them all. And it is beautiful to know that the apostle Paul had fears once and a while. When I have a little fear, then I can associate with Paul. I am convinced that Paul by nature was a very fearful man, much more than I am.

In the epistle of Second Corinthians we find the apostle Paul had difficulties. The only thing Paul had going for him naturally was his mind power, his ability to reason, to think, and his education. Physically Paul had poor speaking ability, he had inward fears, but the apostle Paul became great because he overruled those fears. He was able with God's Holy Spirit to go against his own nature time and time again.

Turn to Second Corinthians chapter 10 (verse 7 CLV): **“Are you looking at that on the surface?”** He is speaking to the Corinthians and he will soon talk about himself. He says, do you Corinthians look on the outward appearance? I know what mankind would do. They would look totally on the outward appearance.

“Are you looking at that on the surface? If anyone is presuming to have confidence in himself to be Christ's, let him be reckoning this again with himself, that, according as he is Christ's, thus also are we.

For if ever I, besides, should also be boasting somewhat more excessively concerning our authority (which the Lord gives us for BUILDING you up and not for PULLING you down), I SHALL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME.”

• 2 Corinthians 10:7–8 CLV

Look at those last words of this passage. **“I shall not be put to shame.”** Why would he write a statement like that? Because naturally speaking, at the beginning of v. 7, **“Are you looking at that on the surface?”** he is saying you better not do that. When the apostle Paul was looked at, he would naturally be ashamed, comparing himself with others. He says, **“I should not be ashamed.”** He says in verses 9 and 10:

“... lest I should seem as ever terrifying you through epistles, seeing that he is averring [asserting], ‘His epistles, indeed, are weighty and strong, yet his bodily presence is weak and his expression to be scorned’.”

• 2 Corinthians 10:9–10 CLV

That was their appraisal of Paul. He is talking about himself here. Whether he was bowed over, or has a bald head, I am not sure. But that he was a weak-looking individual physically, is not mere tradition, it is from the Bible. His speech was not just bad, it was contemptible [**“to be scorned”**]. That is an English word, but it fits the Greek precisely. He was a very poor speaker.

What he said was powerful and good, especially what he wrote was powerful, but the man simply was not a good speaker. He could be compared to most anybody, and he would come out last as far as speaking was concerned, and his bodily presence was weak as well. He did not have much going for him.

“Let such a one be reckoning this [neither comparing or ashamed (see verse 8)], that such as we are in word, through epistles [letters], being absent, such also, being present, are we in act. For we are not daring to judge ourselves by, or compare ourselves with, some who are commending themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, do not understand.”

• 2 Corinthians 10:11–12 CLV

Do you see what the apostle Paul is getting at here? These Corinthians were comparing him with others. Paul always came out last physically, and speech-wise [verbally]. But he says he will not be ashamed in their midst, no matter how bad he was. The Corinthians knew that Paul had something besides the fact that he did not have a very good appearance and could not speak well.

They knew he had the Spirit of God behind him. When he got up to speak, though he stumbled all over himself, though he did not make it plain, maybe he repeated himself time and again, and his bodily presence was weak, and he came out on the lower rung of appraisal, nevertheless he was the apostle Paul who wrote 14 letters of your Bible. If you saw him walking down the street or if he was here speaking now, there

would not be one thing about him physically that you would desire. In fact you would not even want to be around him. But he said he would not be ashamed of himself, because God made him that way. I am adding a bit to it, but that is what he is saying in those verses.

“For I am reckoning to be deficient in nothing pertaining to the paramount apostles [compared with them]. Yet even if I am plain in expression, nevertheless I am not in knowledge ...”

• **2 Corinthians 11:5–6 CLV**

That was the apostle Paul’s ace in the hand, his knowledge. He had that, plus the Spirit of God backing him up, which was even better. He was very **“plain in expression”**; his speech was contemptible. Go back to First Corinthians chapter 1, he gives a bit more about his own personality:

“For Christ does not commission me to be baptizing, but to be bringing the evangel [Gospel], not in wisdom of word, lest the cross of Christ may be made void.”

• **1 Corinthians 1:17 CLV**

His commission was not to preach with wisdom of words, because his speech was contemptible and it was very rude. It was barbaric. Nevertheless, it was the truth of the eternal God.

Paul’s Visions

Look at 2 Corinthians 12:1, **“... it is not expedient, indeed, yet I shall also be coming to apparitions and revelations of the Lord.”** Paul will glory in one regard; he will talk about visions and revelations he had:

“I am acquainted with a man in Christ, fourteen years before this, (whether in a body I am not aware, or outside of the body, I am not aware — God is aware) such a one was snatched away to the third heaven.”

• **2 Corinthians 12:2 CLV**

This man he talks about is himself, but he puts it into the third person because this man had such a glorified experience in vision of being taken into the paradise of God that he did not want to say that I, Paul, am so powerful that I was taken there. He was, after all, saying, **“It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory.”** I can glory if I want to because I was taken into the paradise of God. But he says **“that man”** was taken there, whether in or out of the body he did not know.

“... that he was snatched away into paradise and hears ineffable declarations, which it is not allowed a man to speak. Over such a one I shall be boasting; yet over myself I shall not be boasting, except in my infirmities.”

• **2 Corinthians 12:4–5 CLV**

The word **“infirmities”** here means illnesses or sicknesses. It is translated as **“diseases”** in Acts 28:9. It is the same Greek word (if you have read the articles on healing⁶) describing the impotent man for 38 years at the gate of Jerusalem who was healed by Christ, who told him to pick up his bed and walk, he had an **“infirmity”** (John 5:5). We do not know what Paul’s sicknesses were, but the word is plural. I will glory certainly, but he says, I will glory, **“in my infirmities,”** which means his weaknesses and illnesses.

“For, if ever I should be wanting to boast, I shall not be imprudent, for I shall be declaring the truth. Yet I am reticent. No one should be reckoning me to be above what he is observing of me or anything he is hearing of me.”

• **2 Corinthians 12:6 CLV**

When they looked at Paul, he was not very good. When they heard Paul, he was not very good either. He said I do not want any man to look on me higher than my physical presence.

⁶ [“Was Jesus Ever Sick?”](#) See [“Fasting — Its Use and Abuse.”](#) [“How You Can Influence God,”](#) and [“Where Is God?”](#) DWS

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

“Wherefore also, lest I should be lifted up by the transcendence of the revelations, there was given to me a splinter in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, that he may be buffeting me, lest I may be lifted up. For this I entreat the Lord thrice, that it should withdraw from me. And He has protested to me, ‘Sufficient for you is My grace, for My power in infirmity is being perfected.’ With the greatest relish, then, will I rather be glorying in my infirmities, [Why?] that the power of Christ should be tabernacling over me.”

• 2 Corinthians 12:7–9 CLV

Paul himself was weak. All the power he had came from God the Father and Jesus Christ. **“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches ...”** (2 Corinthians 12:10). Many people were reproaching him for his physical appearance, for his speech, for many things. He continues ...

“Wherefore I delight ... in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake, for, whenever I may be weak, then I am powerful. I have become imprudent; you compel me. For I ought to be commended by you ...”

• 2 Corinthians 12:10–11 CLV

But Paul was not being commended by them. They compared him with others, and who always came up least? Always the apostle Paul. So, he was given **“a thorn in the flesh,”** and people have disputed just what that was.

Some have thought there was a man going around trying to persecute him. I do not think that was the case at all. It was infirmities he talks about, sicknesses, weaknesses. He says it was **“in the flesh.”** It may be a figure of speech but on the other hand if the thorn was in the flesh it must have been some kind of physical infirmity. It persisted with him for a long time because he says he asked three times that it be taken from him. Each time he was told by God, by Christ, that His grace was sufficient for him, that His strength was made perfect in weakness.

Paul was told, no, God would not take that thorn in the flesh away from him. He would have to continue with his infirmities, along with his bodily appearance being not too great, and his contemptible speech. He must endure it all and it will not look good physically. This is what God wanted.

Jesus in the Garden — Matthew 26:36–46, Mark 14:32–42, and Luke 22:39–46

Our Lord Himself, when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane (before He was seized, tried, and crucified), went a stone's throw away from the disciples who were beginning to get sleepy and He said to them, wait here. He goes over, kneels down and says, **“Father, if it be your will, remove this cup of the crucifixion from me.”** God told him that He had to go through with it.

Jesus goes back to His disciples, finds them getting drowsy, so He returns and asks God the same thing again. God tells Him the same thing. A third time Jesus asks, will you remove this cup from me? God the Father says **“No,”** you must go through with it.

The answer He got the first time was **“No,”** you must go through with it. The answer He got the second time was **“No,”** and the answer He got the third time was **“No.”** You would think that maybe the first **“No”** would have been sufficient. But with His human emotions He asked two more times. When He got a third **“No”** (and He knew it was a third **“No”**) He did not ask any more. He had to do it.

Here is the apostle Paul using that same example, there is no doubt about it. He would say, look, this physical infirmity is injuring my ministry. I cannot do this, I cannot do that. So Paul got down on his knees and he asked God to remove it. God said **“No,”** **“My grace is sufficient for you, My strength is made perfect in weakness.”** This went on for another period of time, a year or so, and Paul said this is getting me down. It is interfering with my ministry. So he got down on his knees and asked for relief. God told him **“No.”** So that gives Paul an idea that maybe he will go ahead and he can survive. He goes on for a while and it gets him down again, so he asks once more. Do you know what God said the third time? **“My grace is**

sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect in weakness.” The answer, Paul, is “**No.**”

Persistence Versus Three Times Asking

We have the example of the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1–8 who went back time and time again asking an unjust judge for a ruling in her favor. Jesus said to do the same with God! Here is the difference: It is perfectly good to do so if you do NOT know the answer. But if you get an answer from God and you know it is “**No.**,” maybe that should be enough.

On the other hand, if the trouble creeps up on you and you say, I will ask again and God says “**No.**,” a second time. That ought to be enough. Still if you are really “down in the dumps” that you think you must have release from whatever it is, and you ask Him a third time, and He says “**No.**,” that is enough. It ought to be enough the first time, but Paul did it three times. Christ did it three times. I think we all have three times to ask such things.

Paul’s situation was so troublesome that he asked three times for the “thorn” be removed. God said, “**My strength is made perfect in weakness.**” You will keep your infirmities to keep you from being haughty, because of the divine revelations I have given you. This must have persisted for a long time.

Paul’s Infirmity, What Was It?

“... brethren, I beseech you. In nothing do you injure me. Now you are aware that during an infirmity of the flesh I bring the evangel to you formerly.”

• **Galatians 4:12–13 CLV**

The first time Paul preached to the Galatians in central Asia Minor, he was a sick man. I do not know what the sickness was, but we can look at some evidence. “... **you are aware that during an infirmity of the flesh,**” does not mean just some skin abrasion. It means he was very sick and it was in the flesh. It goes on in verse 14:

“And your trial, in my flesh, you do not scorn, neither do you loathe it, but as a messenger of God you receive me, as Christ Jesus.”

• **Galatians 4:14 CLV**

It was such a trial that naturally and normally people would have despised him and rejected him. Can you imagine? Here is someone like me [Paul says] for the first time coming into your midst and here I am preaching — obviously sick — but still preaching. If it was an inward sickness like an intestinal problem that you cannot see, no one would despise me for that. You would not reject me on that.

But if it was something you could see on the outside and an obvious sickness of some kind where you could despise or reject me and I said “**depend on Jesus Christ and He will heal you of your afflictions**” — You could look at me right in the eye and say, “**Physician, heal yourself**” (Luke 4:23). Why are you coming preaching to us as sick as you are. The natural tendency would be to despise anything I would say if I was sick like that, at the same time I am saying, “**trust in Christ.**” It must have been a real trial to the apostle Paul. “**Where, then, is your happiness? For I am testifying to you, that, if possible, gouging out your eyes,⁷ you would give them to me**” (Galatians 4:15 CLV).

The Galatians did not despise him, did not reject him. That is what he is recalling to their attention. Though his bodily presence was weak, he could not speak worthily of anything, he was crude of speech (it was contemptible), and he did not give man’s wisdom like the philosophers of the Greeks. He was a sick

⁷ Some think Paul had serious eye trouble, and he could hardly see. However, it could be that this is a figure of speech, that the Galatians would have taken out their chief organ of sin, which most hold in the highest esteem — eyesight, more than taste, more than hearing. But eyesight is the chief sense that we all have. Most people feel it would be disastrous to go blind. It may be a figure of speech that they would have plucked out their chief sense organs for Paul to be rid of his sickness or great trial he had in his flesh. That was how much they loved him. *ELM*

man when he preached, yet they did not despise or reject him in his trial. They received him as an angel of God.

God's Choices

What does all this show? It shows that God picked a man in the apostle Paul who had all the physical attributes going against him. The only thing he had was a good intellect, but he had the Spirit of God, and God used the apostle Paul with all those bad physical attributes. He did not want the Galatians or the Corinthians looking to the physical or for their desires to stop there. They had to go beyond through the physical to the spiritual in heaven. That is the kind of man God called when He called the apostle Paul.

When Jesus became the Christ on this earth (through His incarnation), He took on the seed of Abraham, not with the countenance like an Adonis, for no man even desired Jesus (Isaiah 52:2).

- There was Isaac, the baby of the family.
- There was Jacob, the baby of the family.
- There was Ephraim, the baby of the family.
- There was Moses, the baby of the family.
- There was David, the baby of the family.
- There was Christ who had all those women with “bad” virtues in his genealogy.
- There were the fishermen from Galilee; near the bottom of the social hierarchy.
- There were tax collectors with whom Jesus socialized; considered to be the scum of the earth.
- There was Saul (later Paul) an apostle, who admitted to murdering Christians.

Not all of us are like “those people” in Bible history, morally or physically speaking. That is true. However, the ones that God did call to serve Him and Christ were, like you, the ones best suited for the job has you doing now.

Conclusion

We have a spiritual job to do. God has picked the right man and the right woman in every case. What He wants now at this crucial hour in history (and I have no doubts about this at all), that He is calling out people from churches that are fine and good in many ways.⁸ All of you have come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Timothy 3:7; Hebrews 10:26) and He has called you out. God is calling you now because you are the best people for the job. You may not be the most noble, as far as the world looks at it, but God is calling us, people who are to step out with independence.

We are not being independent, in the sense of being separate one from another; that is selfishness. There is a minority of people who go that way, saying they can take care of their own self and not worry about anybody, any organization, or any man from now on.

In my case I feel I want independence, I want to stand on my own two feet, but I want to shoulder support alongside with you on one side. I would hope that you could have a little shoulder support on one side or the other from me, and all of us work together. Let us have our independence. Let us stay within the liberty that God has called us, as in Galatians chapter 5: **“For freedom Christ frees us! Stand firm, then, and be not again enthralled with the yoke of slavery”** (Galatians 5:1 CLV). Many of us have been in yokes

⁸ In 1974. Dr. Martin was referring to a hierarchical structure church organization that he, and many others separated from. Dr. Martin began to work as the chief teacher with an independent biblical research organization (and not a church with a congregation). *DWS*

of bondage. Anytime you are in a yoke of bondage, you are not standing on your own two feet. You are doing it for someone else.

Now we are working under the Bible, not under a yoke. Now we need to take our independence and rejoice in it, because God is calling people now who will be persecution free, as far as this *ekklesia* is concerned. That is a fact. If you are all growing in the grace and knowledge of God and you are really learning yourself that you know as much as the minister and anybody else, that is the most beautiful situation you could possibly imagine. You are being the type of Christian that God wants in the first place.

If you ever get back into hierarchical governments where one man rules, you are putting on yokes of bondage once again. Cooperate together as brothers and sisters should cooperate.

“... we may be approaching with a true heart, in the assurance of faith, with hearts sprinkled from a wicked conscience, and a body bathed in clean water. We may be retaining the avowal of the expectation [hope] without wavering, for faithful is He Who promises. And we may be considering one another to incite to love and ideal acts, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves, according as the custom of some is, but entreating, and so much rather as you are observing the day drawing near.”

• **Hebrews 10:22–25 CLV**

Do not neglect assembling yourselves. Listen to online presentations on the ASK website (often indicated at the beginning of articles). Read a wide variety of material. Study the Holy Scriptures. God has called you now for independence and liberty so you can help thousands of others in the future that He wants also to be His full sons and daughters to stand on their own two feet as well. This is the type of individual He wants. People are telling me that they are now standing on their own two feet. They have had a great load off their backs. They are now loving Jesus Christ and God the Father as they never have before because they now know that God wants them and loves them individually.

Old billboards during the Second World War had statements like **“Come and join the Army,”** or **“Join the Navy and see the World”** or something similar. **“Join some organization.”** Maybe it is necessary physically speaking, but I wonder how many of you notice lately that about 4 years ago the Defense Department decided on a different advertising scheme. They are now saying that the Army wants to join you! All of a sudden young men and women are saying that the Army looks upon them as important, as individuals.

I turn that around from a Christian point of view. In the old days people joined the church, “come and join God.” But God is really saying, “Come, I want to join with YOU as an individual. If He joins you and others, we are all joined together in a proper type of organization. That is what God wants. He wants to join YOU as individuals. He will not accept YOU any other way. YOU must stand on your own two feet.

“For YOU are observing YOUR calling, brethren, that there are

- [1] **NOT MANY wise according to the flesh;**
- [2] **NOT MANY powerful,**
- [3] **NOT MANY noble, but**
 - **the STUPIDITY of the world** [that means YOU and me!] **GOD CHOOSES,**
[Why?] **that He may be disgracing the wise, and**
 - **[GOD CHOOSES] the weakness of the world**
 - **GOD CHOOSES, that He may be disgracing the strong, and**
 - **the ignoble and the contemptible things of the world GOD CHOOSES, and**
 - **[GOD CHOOSES] that which is not, that He should be discarding that which is,**
[Why?] **so that NO FLESH AT ALL SHOULD BE BOASTING in God’s sight.**
 - **Yet YOU, of Him, are in Christ Jesus, Who became to US wisdom from God,**

besides righteousness and holiness and deliverance, that, according as it is written, **‘He who is boasting, in the Lord let him be boasting.’**”

• **1 Corinthians 1:26–31 CLV**

Under God you will not only survive, but you will grow the way God wants you to grow — as one of His called-out ones. You were chosen to fulfill a purpose that you will perform in God’s own time. In the meantime, your responsibility is to learn, study and mature as a child of God.

“Yet be growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory now, as well as for the day of the eon. Amen!”

• **2 Peter 3:18 CLV**

Finally, Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians tells us more about what God and Christ are accomplishing through us and the goals we will accomplish:

“... toward the adjusting of the saints [WHY?] for the work of dispensing, for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ,

[WHY?] that we may by no means still be minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching, by human caprice, by craftiness with a view to the systematizing of the deception.

Now, being true, in love we should be making all grow into Him, Who is the Head — Christ — out of Whom the entire body, being articulated together and united through every assimilation of the supply, in accord with the operation in measure of each one’s part, is making for the growth of the body,

**for the UPBUILDING of itself in love. For the PERFECTING of the saints,
for the WORK of the ministry, for the EDIFYING of the body of Christ:**

[This continues until WHEN?]

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

[WHY?]

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love,

[So WE]

may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

• **Ephesians 4:12–16 CLV**

Additional Articles to Review

[“Christian in Name Only”](#)

[“How to Be Happy”](#)

[“The Corinthian Experience”](#)

[“How to Worship God”](#)

[“God: Contradictions and Harmony”](#)

[“How You Can Influence God”](#)

[“God’s Inspiration Made Clear”](#)

[“How to Give to God”](#)

[“The Importance of First Century History”](#)

Ernest L. Martin, 1974
David Sielaff, 2004, May 2026