

The Glory of Risen Jesus: Empowering Paul

Acts 9: 10-22 Key verses 15-16

Glorious resurrected Jesus showed his glory to his enemy - Saul.

Glorious Jesus expressed his great vision for Saul,

“This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

Let's take a closer look at how God chose Saul and used him in His history.

First, the election of Saul.

Saul was the most violent enemy of Christ at that time.

He ruthlessly arrested Christians and he voted for their death.

He was the most unsuitable candidate to be a minister of Christ.

But Jesus showed His great mercy and power to make His worst enemy His most zealous supporter.

Saul became the apostle Paul, who spread the Gospel all over the Roman Empire and wrote a large part of the New Testament.

Paul often testified to his new identity in Christ in his letters to churches.

Still, he did not forget that without Christ he was the worst sinner.

Jesus, who chose Saul, chooses people to be His instruments in our generation also.

We may think we are most unsuitable candidates because of our sins and weaknesses.

But Jesus saves us from our sins and calls us to be instruments in God's work.

Second, preaching the gospel to the Gentiles.

Saul's mission was to proclaim Jesus to the Gentiles.

But Saul and the Gentiles were incompatible, just as Saul and Christ were incompatible.

As a Pharisee, Saul despised the Gentiles with all his heart.

In turn, the Gentiles despised the Jewish faith, and followed their intellectual and lustful beliefs.

But Christ reconciled Saul to Himself and sent him to the pagans to proclaim to them reconciliation with God.

Saul overcame cultural and religious barriers to bring the name of Christ to the Gentiles.

To do this, he learned the humility and heart of Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross for the salvation of sinners.

Being a chosen instrument and fulfilling the Great Commission brought much suffering into Saul's life.

It was because worldly people don't want to obey God's word, repent and follow Christ.

The fact that Saul continued to obey God's commission despite suffering and persecution shows us that this was due to God's power.

Only in this way can God's commission be fulfilled through suffering and God's power.

How about you?

Are you ready to be a chosen instrument to proclaim the name of Christ?

I was called by God in 1999.

I was not as dangerous as Saul.

I was an Orthodox Christian, although I did not know Christ personally.

I thought Protestants were a cult and heretics.

I even went to the UBF Spring Bible Conference, intending to accuse the missionaries of serving a cult.

However, God spoke to me at the conference through Jesus' words, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people."

This word inspired me so much that I joined the tiny community of Almaty UBF.

Although I was embarrassed to be with Korean missionaries and very afraid to share the Gospel with strangers, the call of God helped me to preach and invite students.

In 2006, after the missionaries left, I became director of Almaty UBF.

Confidence in God's call helped me overcome misunderstandings and accusations from church members and other trials.

However, the most difficult test for me was the lusts of this world.

After some poverty training, I got a good job as a chief legal financial officer.

It was time consuming and stressful.

But in this stress, I did not seek God, but found pleasure in watching pornography.

Because of the impurity, God's vision began to lose its brightness in my heart.

I tried to repent before God, but I kept returning to this sin.

Shame and lies began to separate me from God, family and church.

Still, I continued to serve as a shepherd and leader.

God's work continued in spite of my spiritual condition.

The fact that God has preserved us as a church is the greatest confirmation of His love and mercy towards sinners.

In 2019, my father, who was an unbeliever, died.

The hope for his salvation and my hope in general disappeared.

I fell into depression.

I saw myself as useless and harmful to God's cause.

Also, I was really tired of suffering in ministry.

So, I decided to leave the leadership ministry and seek God's new direction, hoping that God would heal my heart.

My wife and I planned to leave my country and start a new ministry in a new place.

But the COVID pandemic made us stay in Almaty.

Now I see it was God's providence.

The transition of leadership was not resolved.

The church was in confusion.

When COVID restrictions were lifted, our family never found a new direction.

Then, we were invited to come to Chicago UBF.

It was not our plan, but we accepted it from God.

Fellowship with mature shepherds and the study of Hebrews cheered me up.

Also, we visited other chapters, including LA UBF where we received an answer to a prayer for direction.

Through Acts 1:7 I accepted that times and seasons are in the hands of Jesus.

I accepted as God's will to remain in leadership in Almaty.

I wasn't thrilled with it, but decided to follow it.

Before leaving for my country, Pastor Ron gave me 1 Peter 5:2 to be a shepherd of God's flock.

I ask God for mercy to keep God's vision and faithfulness to His word and not make the same mistakes.

I ask God to allow me to share God's vision with the youth of all Central Asia so that they can be saved and their lives filled with true meaning.

Through this message, I see that I cannot look only at myself, for then I find only sins and disappointment.

We must look to the glorious Jesus Christ, who saved us and gave us a great mission by grace.

We are incapable and unworthy, but only by God's grace can we participate in God's work.

I take this opportunity to speak to you, especially young people in North America, not to be afraid to take on God's mission.

I want to invite you to Kazakhstan, to Central Asia, to the Middle East, Africa, Asia, to those places where people are waiting for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

After this message there will be a World Mission evening. Perhaps God will touch your heart.

I hope some of you will accept the vision of God for the nations of the earth and will obey him.

May our God and Lord Jesus Christ be more glorified in our generation, not through our strengths and talents, but in spite of our weak bodies through the work of the Holy Spirit. Amen!