

Set Apart

We learn in the Book of Acts that a man named Stephen is the first person martyred in the church after Jesus' death and resurrection. When He is murdered one of the participants is a man named Saul.

Saul, if you remember, had a conversion experience with Jesus and went from persecuting follows of the Way to trying to save them. When Jesus transformed His life almost instantaneously, his name was changed to Paul. He became an Apostle of Jesus and was the greatest evangelist perhaps of all time.

When Stephen was martyred in Jerusalem by the Jewish Leadership it became clear that all followers of Jesus were marked for arrest or execution. So there was a mass exodus of believers who left Jerusalem. It became known as the Diaspora...or dispersion. It would be a pattern that became well known....persecution would move the gospel to new places and new people.

Saul himself would discover this as well. Once he converts to Christianity and tries to reach others....He too must flee.

Acts 9:26–30 (ESV) — 26 And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

No one trusted Paul's conversion at first. They thought that he had faked his conversion to try to identify believers that he could later persecute. But notice who vouched for him....Barnabas....think about how much trust they must have had in Barnabas to allow Paul to join them.

Acts 9:28 So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. 30 And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Map of Tarsus

Acts 11:19 (ESV) — 19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.

Diaspora Map 1

Notice that initially the early Jewish followers of Jesus thought that this Messiah only came to save Jewish People. So when they dispersed, they only shared the gospel with people who were already Jewish.

Acts 11:20–21 (ESV) — 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.

How could this be? People from Cyprus and Cyrene....they came and spoke to Non-Jews...Hellenists...who are the Greeks. Not only did they speak to them, but the Spirit of God was obviously with them and there were non-Jews surrendering to Jesus.....This could be a big problem. Jesus was the JEWISH messiah.

Acts 11:22–24 (ESV) — 22 The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

Barnabas was sent from the Mothership....the church in Jerusalem....to go check out this crazy thing that was happening in Antioch....

Barnabas realized that what was happening there was of God and encouraged them to continue....You must understand how radical this must have been to the Jewish people....These Hellenists are mentioned throughout the New Testament....they are called pagans. All non-Jewish people were pagans. And yet now....these pagans....were not only hearing the gospel but responding to it....

This is the plan for church growth spoken of in Ephesians 4:11–16.

Ephesians 4:11–14 (ESV) — 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Leaders in the church dedicate themselves to building strong, healthy Christians. As the saints are equipped for the work of the ministry, they grow into maturity, and do their ministry, and it causes growth of the body.

Barnabas realizes that this new church is on fire and growing faster than he or other leaders can manage....so He goes looking for help.

Acts 11:24–26 (ESV) — 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. 25 So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

Then God wanted to do something new.....after one year of intensely pouring into this new church in Antioch.....**MAP OF ANTIOCH**

Acts 13:1–2 (ESV) — 1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Notice some important points here.....During the year...Barnabas and Saul had raised up teachers and prophets. And as they were worshiping and fasting....God revealed to them, through the Holy Spirit, that He was choosing two men to be set apart for His purposes.

There is no indication that these two who had been selected by God were any better than those not chosen.....no suggestion that the others were somehow unworthy....God had simply placed His hand upon two men...that He wanted set apart.....for the work....to which He had called them.

Notice....this is not Barnabas and Saul earning a position....it is not a group of men deciding who would be their leader....their mission was not decided by them....God was choosing....God was sending....God was working out His plan.

He didn't ask for the input or opinion of the other church leaders....all He requested was that they surrender and obey what He was directing them to do.

Also notice that God didn't ask Saul or Barnabas what they thought of this idea. He didn't ask their opinion....They had surrendered to Jesus and this is what Jesus required of them. We have no indication of what these two men thought about being sent out....what their families thought....in fact they had likely just settled into a very nice routine in this new church.

These two men were being set apart by God. What does that mean exactly?

To be set apart means = to keep or save (something) for a particular purpose

In Genesis God called Abraham to be set apart from his family, friends, and where he lived. At that moment he had a choice to make to either ignore the calling or accept the calling. What did Abraham do, he chose to obey the call of God.

Who knows, but the most important part of this is he was called. In scripture it says that many are called but few are chosen.

Matthew 22:13–14 (ESV) — 13 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

So, Abraham accepted the calling and did what God asked him to do.

Every believer in Jesus Christ has been set apart by God to be different from the World around us.

1 Peter 2:9–10 (ESV) — 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

So God has a purpose for everyone of His children and we are call chosen....to be set apart....to be different....to represent God instead of ourselves....to be His people...His light....in a dark world.

Deuteronomy 7:6 (ESV) — 6 "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Leviticus 20:26 (ESV) — 26 You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.

Just like Abraham, it is important for every Christian to know God called us to be set apart from the ways, thoughts and attitudes of the world. This means every Christian who is called by God to His Son to receive Salvation is to live their life in such a way others see and know they are not molded by the world. The holy standard of behavior God commands of believers is offensive to the unholy nature of man and living by these standards of God makes Christians a hated target in the world.

Notice that in all these cases...it is God who does the choosing. The Lord your God has chosen you.....We often think that we chose Jesus.....but that is not what Jesus said.

John 15:16 (ESV) — 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

Why did God choose us? Not sure. but once chosen the purpose is to work through us to show the fruit of the Spirit of God to a world devoid of these things....true love, joy , peace, patience, kindness, self control and others....God sets us apart but we are not received.

Being set apart you will be persecuted because the world has no affection or love for Jesus Christ. Christians who are set apart do not belong to this world, they belong to Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus was and is hated by the world, so is a Christian when their life exhibits His character.

Jesus knew more than any of us what the world will do to those set apart for the purposes of God. He was crucified for it.

John 15:19 (ESV) — 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

So Jesus prayed for those of us who would follow His truth....because He knew the world would reject us. He didn't however pray that we would be safe or that God would take us home....

John 17:15–18 (ESV) — 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

So all believers are set apart by God...Called to be His ambassadors on earth....to live lives that honor Him and reveal Him to the world....knowing that the world will hate them for it and they will be persecuted for their faith.

Odd way to grow a movement right? The idea of church growth from God's perspective is to live a sacrificial life for Him....let the world hate you...and then through your persecution they will see God and surrender.

That is exactly what Jesus did....and what He calls us to do.

Not exactly the best marketing plan right? I mean many would say if you want to grow the church....water down the things of God...appeal to the desires of the masses....be more like the world....don't be so rigid....don't be so intolerant.....make God more presentable....avoid the stuff that conflicts with what people want to hear.....be more entertaining....don't set yourself apart from the world....embrace it and watch your church grow.

That is the Western mindset of church growth today. It is counter to everything in Scripture. God says be like me...live lives set apart for me....my Spirit will grow in you....the world will see it and hate you for it....and through your undivided devotion to me in the midst of persecution.....they will finally see me.

Note two very critical things.....We did not choose God....He chose us.....and we don't grow His church He does.

Matthew 16:18 (ESV) — 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The church that Jesus builds knocks down the gates of Hell....the church that man builds....embraces the gates of Hell.

Remnant....don't worry about growing this church. That is not our job or our concern....look at God's outline for church growth.

Acts 2:42–47 (ESV) — 42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common.46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

The LORD added to their number day by day.

Our job....be set apart....devote yourself to the Scriptures....to being with one another....to prayer....to sharing life together...having glad and generous hearts....constantly praising God...

So being set apart is not just for pastors.....not just for Elders...or other church leaders....all who have surrendered to Jesus....are to live lives devoted to Him...set apart from the world for Him...to be used in whatever manner He desires.

That is what was happening at the persecuted church in Antioch.....There were teachers, prophets, men of God and a whole group of believers who were set apart to represent Jesus to the people of Antioch.

They were worshiping....fasting.....and praying....and then the Spirit of God gave them a new directive....

Acts 13:2–3 (ESV) — 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

So God revealed to them that of those set apart for Him....these two men were set apart for something else. He has called them....placed His hand on them.....for a new work.

Notice that they didn't immediately agree and send Barnabas and Saul out....After the Spirit spoke....they fasted and prayed to confirm what they had perceived was a directive from God.

They signified that they were all in agreement with what God was doing by laying their hands on them...

This is not something that they or we should take lightly....

1 Timothy 5:22 (ESV) — 22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

Undoubtedly, the laying on of hands in the early church was a means of connecting the message with the messenger. It provided a "sign" of agreement in what God was doing and a visible form of authentication that what was happening was not coming from man but rather from God. Laying on of hands has no power in itself. Laying on of hands is only used by God when it is done in agreement with God's Word.

So that is why we are here today The Elders of Remnant Church on behalf of our congregation...are acknowledging... What God is doing in our midst. We are affirming that God's Hand is on Ed Sabatino and to reaffirm that He has been set apart by God to be an ordained minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Like all those leaders who passed before us...you are as a congregation.. affirming the call of God on Ed's life...to set him apart for the ministry God has called him to We have explored Ed's relationship with God.. And are confirming his role as Pastor

What is a Pastor/Elder?

1 Timothy 3:1–8 (ESV) Qualifications for Overseers 3 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5–9 (ESV) Qualifications for Elders 5 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— 6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. 7 For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, 8 but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Since all of us have been set apart.....the term used for those who are set apart to be church pastors or elders....is called ordination.

The act of officially investing someone with religious authority. Several synonyms are "appoint," "institute," "make," and "establish." In current usage, the words "ordain" and "ordination" are applied to persons, signifying selection and appointment to God's service.

Why does God call some of us to be pastors? I have no idea. I know in my case I was as surprised as anyone. Tell your phone call story

Throughout the OT...God chooses and appoints who He wills The First Levites Priests were presented in front of the congregation to God

Numbers 8:9–11 (ESV) 9 And you shall bring the Levites before the tent of meeting and assemble the whole congregation of the people of Israel. 10 When you bring the Levites before the LORD, the people of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites, 11 and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the people of Israel, that they may do the service of the LORD.

God selected Joshua...

Numbers 27:15–20 (ESV) 15 Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, 16 "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation 17 who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd." 18 So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. 19 Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. 20 You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey.

In the NT. ordination was also divine choice... Neither Jesus nor any disciple came from the professional religious classes. Jesus called and ordained 12 Apostles and later insisted... "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you."

The Disciples to the early church to select 7 men who were to be set apart for leadership in the new church

Acts 6:1–7 (ESV) 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen,...and six others... 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

So we see in the early church and in the church today....that there are people among those who have been called out...who have been further called to a new purpose.

Call up Ed and Barbara and Elders

The Charge to Ed

1 Timothy 6:11–15 (ESV) 11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, 14 to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

1 Timothy 4:6–16 (ESV) 6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

11 Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 Timothy 6:20–21 (ESV) 20 Guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," 21 for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.

2 Timothy 2:22–25 (ESV) 22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 23 Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,

2 Timothy 4:1–5 (ESV) 4 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Ed do you accept this charge?

Because of your affirmation...the Elders will anoint you with oil and pray over you Then the congregation will lay hands on you and pray for you