

## **Chosen To Bear Fruit**

**By**

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### **Introduction**

Have you ever made some bad decisions in your life that made you feel that you were almost beyond God's forgiveness? You can't even call what you did "a mistake" to make it sound better; it was just a bad decision on your part. You may have disappointed and hurt some people very close to you. You wish you could take it back, but you can't.

Unfortunately, most Christians have had this type of experience. You may feel "unforgivable" but you're not. This study focuses on the life of one of the apostles who felt almost "unforgivable", but learned through experience, that the power, grace and love of God knows no bounds and that God will accomplish His purposes in spite of our "mistakes". Study this lesson and see for yourself.

### **Scriptures Used In This Lesson**

John 15:16

Matthew 16:13 – 23

Proverbs 19:21

Matthew 26:31 – 35

Zechariah 13:7

Matthew 26:69 – 75

Acts 2:38 – 41

### **Background**

One Sunday in church, our pastor preached on the topic, "You are Chosen". He used John 15:16 as one of his scriptures. He didn't spend a lot of time on the scripture that day, but it caught my attention. Something about my being "chosen" got me thinking. Not only was I chosen by God, I was chosen to bear fruit...fruit that would last.

At Wednesday night Bible study, we focused on the apostle Peter. Putting "two and two" together I saw how God's plan for us goes beyond what we may think or even conceive. He can even accomplish His goals in spite of our shortcomings.

## Chosen

The scripture that started this study is found in John 15:16. The word “chosen” comes from the Greek word “eklegomai”. This word has some interesting definitions:

- to pick out, choose, to pick or choose out for one's self
  - choosing one out of many, i.e. Jesus choosing his disciples
  - choosing one for an office
  - *of God choosing whom he judged fit to receive his favors and separated from the rest of mankind to be peculiarly his own and to be attended continually by his gracious oversight*
    - i.e. the Israelites
  - *of God the Father choosing Christians, as those whom he set apart from the irreligious multitude as dear unto himself, and whom he has rendered, through faith in Christ, citizens in the Messianic kingdom: (James 2:5) so that the ground of the choice lies in Christ and his merits only*

First of all, Peter was “chosen” along with his brother Andrew, by the Lord while fishing (Matthew 4:18 – 22). Not only was Peter chosen out of many, but he was also determined to be:

- *fit to receive his favors and separated from the rest of mankind to be peculiarly his own and to be attended continually by his gracious oversight.*

Just like God had chosen Israel, Jesus had chosen Peter to be separated from mankind and to be “attended continually by His gracious oversight”, i.e., taught the truths of the Kingdom of God for three years so the Church could be established and built after the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

For three years Peter heard the greatest teaching ever. He heard the law expounded upon and revelation given to passages that had been hidden for centuries. Also, Peter witnessed, and even participated in some of the greatest miracles imaginable that confirmed the teachings of Christ. He witnessed:

- Walking on Water
- The feeding of 5000
- The feeding of 4000
- The healing of his own mother
- Devils being driven out of people
- The healing of the blind, deaf and dumb
- The healing of lepers
- And so on...

So Peter was chosen.

*Do you feel like you were “chosen” by God? Why or why not? Have you been “separated from the rest of mankind to be peculiarly His own and attend continually by His gracious*

*oversight”? Have you been set aside “dear” unto God? Have you accepted Christ as your Lord and savior? Then you are “chosen”.*

**Key Point:** All Christians have been chosen by God to bear fruit...fruit that lasts.

**Key Point:** All Christians are “attended continually by His gracious oversight”. You are loved.

**Key Point:** What you “feel” is many times in opposition to God’s truth, i.e., you may not feel loved, but you are. You may not feel chosen, but you are.

### **I Get It, But I Don’t Get It**

We see in Matthew 16 how Peter, along with the other disciples, didn’t “get it”, i.e., didn’t fully realize who Christ really was or the nature of His purpose on earth. Read Matthew 16:13 – 23. In the first part of this passage we find Peter, through divine revelation from God, declaring who Jesus is, “...the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Then later when Jesus talks about how he would have to die, and be raised from the dead, Peter took Jesus aside, and began to rebuke “the Son of the living God”. Saying that Jesus’ death and resurrection “will never happen to you!”

Jesus’ response to Peter was also surprising. He said,

“Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have the mind of the things of God but the things of men.”

This man who had experienced a mighty move of God in his life, had missed the purposes of God, right after a divine revelation. Before you condemn Peter, think about God working in your own life.

*Have you ever had God work mightily in your life and later missed something He was telling you, either through the Holy Spirit, circumstance, the Bible or through someone else? Have you ever left church “in tune with God”, and then found yourself frustrated, angry, hateful, or bitter by Monday afternoon? Why do you think we fall “in tune” and “out of tune” with God so easily? What can we do to keep that from happening?*

Throughout the book of Matthew see Jesus repeatedly telling the disciples that He would have to die and be resurrected. They “got it”, but they truly “didn’t get it”. It wasn’t what they were expecting. Jesus had a bigger purpose in mind; that wouldn’t be fully understood until the day of Pentecost.

### **God Gets It Done In Spite Of Us**

One of the scriptures that I am seeing at work in my life is Proverbs 19:21. Read this scripture. God, by His power, grace and mercy is able to accomplish His goals and purposes in spite of our intentions (good or bad), our “mistakes” (intentional or unintentional) and our own plans (in His will or outside His will). This is demonstrated in the life of Peter.

Read Matthew 26:31 – 35. At the Last Supper Jesus tells His disciples about His death, burial and resurrection again, and that one of them would betray Him. He also tells Peter that he would deny

knowing Him three times that evening. Peter's response was that he would never disown Jesus. Peter had "good" intentions; I am sure it was in his heart to remain loyal to Jesus, but as the scriptures foretold in Zechariah 13:7, the verse Jesus quotes, "the sheep would scatter" – including Peter.

Read Matthew 26:69 – 75. Peter denies Jesus three times. His intent was to "never fall away on the account of Jesus", but yet he did. Peter had done what he never intended to do. He had denied not only his friend and teacher, but the one whom he declared as the "Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16).

The scriptures tell us that Peter wept "bitterly" that night. The word "bitterly" comes from the Greek word "pekros" which means "with poignant grief". Poignant means "painfully affecting the feelings, piercing". So, Peter didn't just "feel bad" about what he did; his grief was painful, piercing his soul. Not only did he fall short of his goal (to never fall away from Christ), but he also took steps in the *opposite* direction by his denial.

*Have you ever fallen short of a goal in your life due to your own behavior or decisions? Have you ever done something that you knew hurt the people you loved the most and there was no way to reverse your actions or words? Have you ever gotten yourself in a situation and felt that everything was ruined? You're not alone. And there's hope. Have you ever seen God turn around the situation over time? How did He do it?*

God, by His power, love and grace is able to accomplish His goals for our lives in spite of our past actions. In the life of Peter, God accomplishes His purpose for him. Fifty days after the Resurrection, Peter received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The power of God allowed this man to boldly preach Christ to thousands that day (Acts 2:14 – 41), the same One he had denied. As a result, three thousand people were saved. Peter went from denying Christ one day to boldly preaching Christ less than two months later. God continued to work through Peter until his own death years later. The Church, which is in existence today, which has had literally billions of members through the centuries, got its start in part, by someone who denied Christ and wept with "pekros" afterward; with someone who felt life was over.

If you have ever felt the way Peter did, take heart, God can accomplish great things in your life despite your past.

**Key Point:** God can accomplish great things in your life despite your past.

**Key Point:** God will accomplish His purpose in your life.

**Key Point:** The power of the Holy Spirit and humility were the "agents of change" in Peter's life.

## Summary

Many times we make decisions in our lives that have life changing consequences, not only for ourselves, but the ones we love the most. We may feel like there is no recovery, no hope of joy, no good will ever come from the consequences we face. We feel like our "tree is barren". But through the life of Peter, we can see that we are chosen by God to bear fruit. And the only type of fruit God produces is "good" fruit.

He knew of the mistakes we would make before we were born, yet He chose us anyway. By His power, love and grace He can bear fruit in our lives and bring something good out of our “worst” decisions. The key is understanding that the fruit comes from Him through His power, not our *own* efforts. If we trust Him daily to lead our lives and are obedient to His leading, He will glorify Christ in you and you in Him. Much fruit will come from what you thought was a barren tree.

Remember:

You have been chosen by God, i.e., judged fit to receive His favors and separated from the rest of mankind to be peculiarly His own and to be attended continually by His gracious oversight. Given this, we are in a perfect position to bear fruit in our lives. Much fruit – good fruit.