

A CHOSEN INSTRUMENT OF GOD: ACTS 9:15 IN LIGHT OF PAUL'S PASTORAL MINISTRY

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Abstract: *Paul's call, which explicates that he is a chosen instrument of God, and the success of his pastoral ministry dovetails with his Damascus road experience. Paul, who was a persecutor of Christians experienced a conversion on the road to Damascus and became an apostle to the Gentiles. Existing studies on this remarkable experience have focused more on controversies surrounding the unusual nature of the event and its veracity than on its contribution to the success of Paul's ministry. This study, therefore, investigates Acts 9:15 with a view to establishing the nexus of Paul's Damascus road experience to his call and pastoral ministry. Using Ralph Martin's grammatico-historical approach to biblical exegesis, the paper reveals that the divine grace that characterised Paul's call to the ministry, the nature and results of his preaching, and the recognition and support that he had received from the church and its leadership enabled Paul to have an effective pastoral ministry. It recommends that the promotion of the gospel and zeal for Christian message must correspond to the proclamation of the crucified Christ.*

Keywords: Chosen instrument of God, Paul's pastoral ministry, Damascus road experience

Introduction

The primary purpose of the risen Christ's appearance on the road to Damascus was to send Paul to the Gentiles.¹ This purpose is an integral part of Paul's Damascus road experience, which is told three times in Acts. To Ananias, the Lord says, "He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles" (Acts 9:15). Ananias informs Paul: "You will be a witness to all men of what you have seen and heard" (Acts 22:15). Most striking of all, in the third account,² it is the Lord himself on the Damascus road encounter "who told Paul that he is sending him to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:17-18).³ Paul expresses this same conviction in his own letters: that his calling to become apostle to the

¹ J. D. G. Dunn, "A light to the Gentiles: the significance of the Damascus Road Christophany for Paul", in *The glory of Christ in the New Testament Studies in Christology*, ed., L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1987), 251.

² The story of Paul's Damascus road experience was so important to the Early Church that it is told three times in the Acts of the Apostles. First account (Acts 9:1-19); second account (Acts 22:3-21); and third account (Acts 26:9-18).

³ G. B. Caird, *The apostolic Age* (London: Duckworth, 1955), 123. Caird avers that the third account agrees more closely than the other two with Paul's own description, and it is best to follow this version and to assume that the Gentile mission was an integral part of Paul's original call to apostleship.

Gentiles was not merely rooted in the Damascus road epiphany but constituted its chief content and its most immediate as well as most lasting impact.⁴

Paul's discussion of the revelation he received on the Damascus road is couched in the language of Old Testament prophetic calls (an example is Jeremiah 1:5). Such a language emphasises Paul's role as the one called to proclaim the word of God and points to the divine origin of the word that is proclaimed. The object of this divine revelation is Jesus Christ. This was the word of God that Paul was called to proclaim among the Gentiles. Paul used his Damascus road experience to show that his gospel to the Gentiles is rooted in divine revelation and divine calling.

The differences between the accounts of Paul's Damascus road experience in Acts and Galatians are rooted in their different purposes (Acts 9:1-19, 22:4-16, 26:12-18; Galatians 1:1-17). Essentially, the three Acts narratives agree with one another, and with the evidence contained in Galatians. Acts and Galatians are concerned with the relationship between Jews and Gentiles and see Paul's call as apostle to the Gentiles as an important factor in that relationship. Both see Paul's Damascus road experience as a revelatory and transforming event in Paul's life.⁵

Ralph P. Martin's grammatico-historical approach to biblical exegesis was used to elicit information from the selected biblical text. In this approach, an enquiry is made into what the words (Gr. *grammata*) meant to the original recipients of the passage under study. Since the original autographs of biblical texts are no longer available, the scholar should make use of the 'best' translation. Martin is of the opinion that the best translation is the one that is close to the original manuscript after it has been subjected to thorough textual criticism.⁶ In this sense, the paper probes the selected biblical text, ... Σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς ἐστίν μοι οὗτος τοῦ βαστάσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐνώπιον ἐθνῶν τε καὶ βασιλέων υἱῶν τε Ἰσραήλ... He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before

⁴ The different accounts in Acts and Galatians of Paul's activities following his conversion at least agree to the extent that they show him active in evangelism (Acts 26:17-18 and Galatians 1:23).

⁵ H. Sewakpo, "Paul's Damascus Road Experience and its Relevance to the Pastoral Ministry in Methodist Church Nigeria, Lagos," PhD thesis (Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2014), 80.

⁶ P. M. Ralph, "Approaches to New Testament exegesis," in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. H. Marshall (London: Paternoster Press, 1997), 220-251.

the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” (Acts 9:15); and examines the nexus of Paul’s Damascene experience to his call and pastoral ministry.

Paul, a Chosen Instrument of God

Paul himself has little to say about his conversion and call, and when he does mention them it is with reserve; because they had been planned beforehand by God as a special qualification and separation for his life-work. Over his cradle in the crowded Jewish quarter of Tarsus, a divine purpose hovered. Paul had some inkling of this divine purpose when he said, in writing to the Galatians, “But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles” (Galatians 1:15, 16). No wonder, the Acts of the Apostles is significant for chronicling the spread of the gospel, not only geographically but also culturally. It records the transition from taking the gospel to an exclusively Jewish audience—with Peter preaching to a small group in the Upper Room—to the gospel going out among the Gentiles, primarily under the ministry of the apostle Paul.

Jaroslav Pelikan⁷ contends that Acts 9:15 serves as a dividing line between the two major sections of the Acts of the Apostles.⁸ The parting words of Christ before the ascension⁹ provided the charter to his eleven remaining disciples to look beyond the confines of the Holy City and the Holy Land towards the wider world (Acts 1:8). The choosing of Paul carried with it a “roving commission” to him towards the constituencies enumerated here. This is understood through Luke’s rendition of *σκεῦος* in the Acts of the Apostles, which is essential in Paul’s pastoral ministry.

The word *σκεῦος* means “a vessel, utensil for containing anything”. In Acts 9:15, it is rendered *σκεύη ὀργῆς* “vessels of wrath or persons visited by punishment” and *σκεύη ἐλέους* “vessels of mercy or persons visited

⁷ J. Pelikan, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 124-125.

⁸ The Acts of the Apostles can be neatly divided into two sections: the first dealing primarily with the ministry of Peter in Jerusalem and Samaria (Acts 1-12) and the second following Paul on his missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 13-28).

⁹ “You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

by divine favour”. Ἐκλογῆς is the genitive singular of ἐκλογή.¹⁰ Ἐκλογή means “a choice, selection”. In the New Testament, ἐκλογή always denotes the “divine choice”. Therefore, the phrase σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς generally connotes “a chosen vessel”.¹¹

Also, Löning¹² says that the title σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς is translated “chosen vessel” in Authorised Version, “chosen instrument” in the Revised Standard Version, and “instrument whom I have chosen” in the New Revised Standard Version. In 2 Corinthians 4:7, σκεῦος “vessel” seems to carry connotations of passivity, as that which receives and contains, and would suit the Paul who in a mystical rapture (and in the passive voice) “was caught up into paradise... and ... heard things that cannot be told, which may not utter” (2 Corinthians 12:4). The translation of σκεῦος “instrument” connotes activity, “not only being faithful but being a teacher”—which fits the Paul of Acts.¹³ On the word σκεῦος, Calvin aptly comments that: “The word ‘instrument’ doth show that men can do nothing, save inasmuch as God useth their industry at his pleasure. For if we be instruments, he alone is the author; the force and power to do is in his power alone.”¹⁴ Adam Clarke contends that:

σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς is properly a Hebraism, for an excellent or well-adapted instrument. Every reader of the Bible must have noticed how often the word chosen is used there to signify excelling or eminent: so we use the word choice, “choice men,” eminent persons; “choice things,” excellent articles. So in Jer 22:7: They shall cut down the choice cedars... They shall cut the most EXCELLENT of thy cedars; or thy cedar trees, which are the most excellent of their kind, they will cut down. Whoever considers the character of St. Paul, his education, attainments in natural knowledge, the distinguished part he took—first against Christianity, and afterwards, on the fullest conviction, the part he took in its favour—will at once perceive how well he was every way qualified for the great work to which God had called him.¹⁵

¹⁰ *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons Ltd., 1967), 368.

¹¹ G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd., 1986), 140.

¹² K. Löning, *Die Saulustradition in der Apostelgeschichte* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1973), 32-43.

¹³ Theophylact 9.16:125-644.

¹⁴ J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), 1: 380.

¹⁵ Adam Clarke. *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments: The Texts Printed from the Most Correct Copies of the Present Authorized Translation including the Marginal and Parallel Texts; with a Commentary and Critical Notes Designed as a Help to a Better Understanding of the Sacred Writings* (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1832), 5: 712.

The term *σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς* then denotes any instrument which may be used to accomplish a purpose, perhaps particularly with the notion of conveying or communicating. In the Scriptures, it is used to denote the instrument or agent which God employs to convey his favours to mankind; and is thus employed to represent the ministers of the Gospel, or the body of the minister (2 Corinthians 4:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:4; cf. Isaiah 13:5). Paul is called “chosen” because Christ selected him, as he did his other apostles, for this service.

For Luke Timothy Johnson,¹⁶ the term *σκεῦος* can mean any sort of instrument (1 Thessalonians 4:4; Hebrews 9:21), and sometimes is used in contexts of divine instrumentality (LXX Jeremiah 27:25; Romans 9:21-23; and 2 Timothy 2:20-21). When *σκεῦος* connotes the above meaning, the translation “vessel” is appropriate because it “carries/bears” the Lord’s name. The image is remarkably like that used by Paul himself in 2 Corinthians 4:7. This designation of Paul as “chosen,” in turn, associates him with the description of Jesus as the “elect one” (Luke 9:35; 23:35). In this sense, *σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς* literally means “a vessel of election”.

Similarly, John Gill¹⁷ says that Paul was a choice and excellent one, full of the heavenly treasure of the Gospel, full of the gifts and graces of the Spirit. He was fit and qualified for the use and service of Christ. He was “a vessel of desire” or “a desirable one”, according to the Jews. In other words, John Gill was, to render the words *σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς* literally, “a vessel of election”; both an instrument gathering in the election, or the elect of God, through the preaching of the Gospel. Paul was himself chosen of God, both to grace and glory, a vessel of mercy, and of honour prepared for glory. He was separated, predestined and appointed to the Gospel of God, to preach it among the Gentiles.

Marshall Howard¹⁸ avers that the Lord has already decided to call Paul to his service. “He has chosen him as his *σκεῦος* for the task of bearing his name before Gentiles, kings and the people of Israel. In this context,

¹⁶ L. T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*. Sacra Pagina Series 5 (Collegeville: Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1992), 165.

¹⁷ J. Gill, “Acts 9:15,” in John Gill’s exposition on the Bible New Testament, 2011, accessed March 29, 2011. www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills.../acts-9-15

¹⁸ I. H. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 171-356.

the thought of divine choice corresponds with that expressed in Acts 22:14,¹⁹ Acts 26:16,²⁰ and with Paul's own conviction in Galatians 1:15. Furthermore, John Hargreaves²¹ contends that Paul was chosen as *σκεῦος* of God to discover God's will, to treat Jesus (the Just One) as God's voice, and to listen to that voice rather than the voice of the world around.

Kruse²² notes that in the context of Galatians 1:15, the words *σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς* reveal that:

- a) Paul was chosen by God for this task even before he was born (as had been some of the prophets of the Old Testament (Isaiah 49:1, 5 and Jeremiah 1:5),
- b) Paul's own realisation of this calling came to him by a revelation from God at a time determined by God himself,
 - It had nothing to do with anything deserving on Paul's part; it came through God's grace,
 - It involved a revelation by God of his Son Jesus Christ to Paul so that he might preach Christ to others,
 - The preaching ministry to which Paul was called had a specific scope: to the Gentiles, and
 - It came directly from God, without human mediation.

In sum, the words *σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς* well describe Paul's own conviction that God had chosen him for special work (Galatians 1:15); that God intended him to go to the Gentiles and to the Jews (Ephesians 3:1). It is probable that Paul's pastoral ministry in Gentile and Jewish worlds resulted from his Damascus road experience. Therefore, an attempt to discuss Paul's rights for effective pastoral ministry would facilitate clearer understanding of the nexus of Paul's Damascus road experience to his call and pastoral ministry.

¹⁹ God had foreordained Paul to be his servant. Paul's choice and call were prior to his response (Acts 3:20 and 26:16). That is why God had revealed *the Just One* (Messiah) to Paul.

²⁰ The reason why the Lord had appeared to Paul was in order to appoint him as a servant and witness, either to, or perhaps on the basis of, the things which Paul had already seen and would yet see.

²¹ J. Hargreaves, *A guide to Acts* (London: SPCK, 1990), 91-215.

²² C. G. Kruse. "Call, calling," in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ed. H. F. Gerald and M. P. Ralph (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 85.

Paul's rights for effective pastoral ministry

Considering how personal conversion experience enabled Paul to the surpassing knowledge of Christ and acknowledge Him as the crucified and risen Jesus, thereby witnessing Jesus Christ effectively. It is evident that Paul established his own apostolic status and proceeded to catalogue his own rights. However, he renounced these rights for the sake of the Gospel as well as for effective pastoral ministry in Corinth. On Paul's rights as an apostle, Ayodeji Adewuya says:

(a) He had the right to support from the Corinthians. The Corinthians did not question Paul's right to eat, but Paul means that he has the right to eat and drink at the expense of the churches that he serves. Paul has the right to be given food and drink for his labour.

(b) He had the right to take a wife with him. Paul suggests that the other apostles had taken their wives with them on journeys. Therefore, he would have been free to travel around with his wife, and be supported by the church if he had one. This verse is especially interesting concerning Peter (Cephas), who was obviously married.

(c) Paul had the right to be free from manual labour. Barnabas and Paul had the right to expect the churches to relieve them of the necessity to labour with their hands by accepting responsibility for their material support. If this was their right, then it was also their right to forgo that support. We might think this would give Paul and Barnabas greater respect in the sight of the Corinthian Christians. But, curiously it gave them less respect. It was almost as if the Corinthian Christians were saying, 'if Paul and Barnabas were real apostles, we would support them, but since they are not supported, we suppose they are not real apostles.'²³

Apparently, the natural children of Mary and Joseph and, significantly, Cephas were married (Matthew 8:14; 12:46-47; 13:55-56; John 2:2; 7:3; Acts 1:14; Galatians 1:17-19; 2:9-14). 1Corinthians 1:12 and 3:22 suggest that some of the Corinthian Christians held Simon Peter in considerable esteem.

Although Paul did not claim necessary expenses as 1Corinthians 9:12 shows, in theory he held himself ready to exercise this right whenever he thought fit. He did not also allow the churches to forget their obligation to him. Three different real-life situations or human activities, those of the soldier, the landowner and the hired shepherd, are introduced to reinforce the principle. On this, Samuel Abogunrin²⁴ contends that "If

²³ J. A. Adewuya, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 2009), 63.

²⁴ S. O. Abogunrin, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1991), 98.

a soldier on active service expects to be maintained, why not an apostle, a soldier of Christ? If a farmer expects to feed from the harvest of the farm on which he bestows his labour, why not an apostle, a labourer in God's vineyard? If a herdsman drinks from the milk of the flock he tenders, why not the apostle, a shepherd under the great Shepherd of the sheep?" For that reason, Paul and any other Christian worker who serves the spiritual interest of their members should not be denied material support or compensation.²⁵

However, the vision that Paul had on the road to Damascus enabled him not to stand tall in his rights but to gladly give up his rights in order to see people being saved. In Paul's use of *θέατρον* "spectacle", *μωροί* "fools", *ἀσθενεῖς* "weak", and *ἄτιμοι* "dishonourable/disrepute", he alludes to his experience of apostolic ministry which stands in the sharpest contrast to the Corinthians' perception of the Christian life.

Besides, Paul had a unique right to address the Corinthian Christians as his own dear children. This is because Paul would not allow division, receiving a sinful brother, taking brethren to court, fornication, idolatry, abuse of the Lord's Supper and spiritual gifts, and error concerning the resurrection since these could generate differences in doctrine, disunity of the Church, sin in the church, distraction during worship services and obstacles to acceptance of the Gospel of Christ. On this, Abogunrin says:

Paul's Christian ministry is purposeful. He practises self-discipline not out of fear that he might lose his salvation but that he might lose his crown through failure to satisfy his master. By his example Paul calls on the Corinthians to make self-sacrifice not only out of considerations for others, but for effective Christian ministry and spiritual progress.²⁶

In sum, as regards effective pastoral rights, Paul teaches that when it comes to our rights, liberties, and judgments, we must be willing to forgo them for the benefit of the church and the souls of men. But when it comes to sin and the doctrine of Christ, we must stand firm and be ready and willing to draw lines when necessary. As a corollary to the

²⁵ This command from the Lord (Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:8) means that those who preach the gospel have the right to be supported by those to whom they preach.

²⁶ S. O. Abogunrin, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1991), 103.

above submission, it is pertinent to examine the relationship between the success of Paul's pastoral ministry and his Damascene experience.

Paul's View of an Effective Pastoral Ministry

Paul's Damascus road experience resulted in the pastoral ministry of untiring work and the capability of enduring not only infinite sufferings but also death, which are outstanding in Paul.²⁷ Paul uses *διάκονοι* "ministers" to explain the place of ministers in relation to the effective pastoral ministry of the Church in 1 Corinthians 3:5. According to Godet,²⁸ ministers are not heads of schools, founders of religious societies, as having a work of their own, but simple *employés*²⁹ labouring on the work of another. They must not labour on another's account for anything at their own hand; their functions are also put in relation to Christ, as Lord of the Church, and their efficacy in relation to God, as the last source of all power.

In 1 Corinthians 3:6 and 7, Paul employs *ἐφύτυσα* "planted" and *ἐπότισεν* "watered" to state two functions for effective pastoral ministry. In the two functions of *planting* and *watering*, true success comes exclusively from the concurrence of God. Edwards avers that "God is the source of life in the physical as in the moral world. Man can indeed put the seed in contact with the soil; but life alone makes it spring and grow; and this life is not only beyond the power but even beyond the knowledge of man." However, the estimate of the fidelity of each minister will not rest on the comparison of it with another's, but on the labour of each compared with his own task and his own gift.

Paul states in 1 Corinthians 3:9, that the minister's responsibility is to enhance effective pastoral ministry. The minister's responsibility in the service of Christ is presented from the standpoint of the minister's own position: *συνεργοὶ Θεοῦ* "labourers together with God, we are at work with God Himself".³⁰

He uses the statement *τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι* "the grace of God given to me" in 1 Corinthians 3:10 to describe the inevitability of

²⁷ G. Kaitholil, *Encounter with St. Paul* (Nagasandra: St Pauls, 2008), 77.

²⁸ F. L. Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), 171-174.

²⁹ The term *employé* is a French word, which denotes a person working for another person.

³⁰ F. L. Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), 174.

the grace of God for effective pastoral ministry. For Paul, the grace given him was that of founding the Church among the Gentiles, particularly at Corinth, with the totality of gifts which he had received for this mission, and the use of them which he had been enabled to make. Paul warns ministers not to borrow from human eloquence and speculation but to deliberately confine themselves to bearing testimony to the fact of salvation, leaving the Holy Spirit to act, and refraining from entering before the time into the domain of Christian speculation.

Θεμέλιον “a foundation” to describe another medium of effective pastoral ministry is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:11. He says that he has had nothing else to do other than to take the foundation laid by God Himself in the person of the living Christ, dead and risen again, and lay it in the heart by preaching, as the foundation of Christian faith and salvation. Therefore, he warns ministers who would lay another foundation that it would be the beginning of a new religion and a new Church but not the continuation of the Christian work. Hence, they should take good care as to the way in which they do it.

In 1 Corinthians 3:12 and 13, Paul’s use of χρυσόν “gold,” ἄργύριον “silver,” λίθους τιμίους “precious stones,” ξύλα “wood,” χόρτον “hay,” and καλάμην “stubble” indicates the nature of minister’s work which would be revealed by fire. The fire would try every minister’s work of what sort it is. Instead of talking about the details of the building itself, Paul turns his attention to the kind of materials ministers are using: the materials of preaching the cross for salvation, building up believers and living a Christian life that reflects their preaching. Godet, quoting Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine and Osinader says:

The apostle means to speak of the religious and moral fruits produced in the Church by preaching. The spiritual life of the members of the flock is, in a certain measure, the teaching itself received, assimilated, and realised in practice. Either the pastor, by his preaching, his conversation, his example, the daily acts of his ministry, succeeds in developing among his flock a healthy religious life, drawn from communion with Christ, abounding in the fruits of sanctification and love; and it is this strong and normal life which St. Paul describes under the figure of precious materials; or the pastor, by his pathetic discourses, his ingenious explanations, succeeds indeed in attracting a great concourse of hearers, in producing enthusiastic admiration and lively emotions; but all this stir is only external and superficial; with it all there is no real consecration to the Saviour. This faith without energy, this love without the

spirit of sacrifice, this hope without joy or elasticity, this Christianity saturated with egoism and vanity: such are the wood, hay, and stubble.³¹

The apostle himself sets us on the way of this explanation when in 1 Corinthians 13 he calls faith, hope and love “the three things which remains;” these then are the materials which will survive the trial by fire.

Paul uses *μισθός* “reward” and *ζημία* “loss” in 1 Corinthians 3:14 and 15 to describe the possible results of pastoral ministry. Paul uses *μισθός* in terms of minister’s work which would be recognised as of good quality by the Lord at his parousia. This reward cannot be salvation, for the faithful workman was already in possession of this supreme blessing when he was labouring. But it is the joy of being the object of God’s satisfaction; the happiness of being invested with glory the souls whom a faithful ministry has contributed to sanctify; and the possession of a glorious position in the new state of things established by the Lord at His parousia (Luke 19:17).

In contrast to *μισθός*, Paul uses *ζημία* in terms of minister’s work which would be proved as of consumable by the fire at the Lord’s parousia. This loss consists, above all, in the proved uselessness of the minister’s labour and in its destruction, which would negate his brilliant or profound pastoral ministry passing away in smoke. Therefore, such a minister would be refused the reward of the faithful servant, the honourable position, in Christ’s kingdom, to which he imagined himself entitled (Matthew 25:30).

Similarly in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 17, Hanlon³² avers that Paul uses *ναός* “temple” as a vital tool for effective pastoral ministry. *Ναός* is one of the metaphors which Paul employs to elucidate the concept of the Church. Paul shows that Christ is related to the Church in terms of his being its main cornerstone. Every other Christian is like a stone being built into the building. God dwells in Christ, and Christ, by the Holy Spirit, dwells in the believer (John 14:23). This means that the stability, durability and the indestructibility of the Church are attributable to the Church’s fundamental relationship with Christ, whose abiding presence in the Church is till the end of time.³³ The imagery of *ναός* beckons the

³¹ Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, 183-184.

³² J. K. Hanlon, “Paul Pastor of Communities for Today,” Association of Catholic Priests, 2011: 63-64, accessed August 19, 2011, <http://www.associationofcatholicpriests>

³³ U. A. Ezech. “The Pauline Church-identity,” *The Nigerian Journal of Theology* 24 (2010): 198.

Church to think about how the presence of God is experienced when its members gather together and to reflect seriously on what it means to be a holy community in an unholy world. Also, Paul uses *ναός* to show the danger that awaits people who destroy the Church.

He employs *σοφία* “wisdom” and *μωρόν* “foolishness” in 1 Corinthians 3:18-23 to describe another crystal vehicle for effective pastoral ministry. Paul uses *σοφία* and *μωρόν* to mean a minister, while preaching the gospel assumes the part of the wise man and the reputation of an intellectual. Such a minister should assure himself that he would not attain true wisdom till he has renounced this imaginary wisdom in order to own his ignorance in what concerns the grace of salvation, and, after taking hold of Christ crucified, who is *μωρόν* to the wise of this world, to draw from Him the Divine wisdom which He has revealed to the world.³⁴

In 1 Corinthians 4:1-25, Paul uses *ὑπηρέτης* “servant” and *οἰκονόμος* “steward” to establish their responsibilities towards enhancing effective pastoral ministry. The term *ὑπηρέτης* strictly denotes a man who acts as rower under the orders of someone; he is a man labouring freely in the service of others. The term *οἰκονόμος* denotes, among the ancients, a confidential slave to whom the master instructs the direction of his house, and in particular the care of distributing to all the servants their tasks and provisions (Luke 12:42). This means ministers are administrators of a truth which is not theirs, but their master’s. It relates to the inward and spiritual side of the work of the ministry. So, as labouring in the active service of Christ, the Head of the Church, and charged with distributing to it the truths of God, they have to give account before these supreme authorities and not before the members of the Church.

They go where Christ sends them, and deliver what God has given them. They are not to be judged in this respect. The only thing that can be asked of them is to be faithful in the way in which they fulfil the missions entrusted to them, and to which they conform their teaching to the measure of light which they have received.³⁵ Therefore, if a minister can focus on the judgment seat of Christ, where he/she is confident of giving account of his/her ministry before an all-knowing Lord,

³⁴ Godet, *First Corinthians*, 195-196.

³⁵ Godet, *First Corinthians*, 204-205.

he/she can discount the tainted and biased criticisms of others. This is true of Abogunrin's marks of God's true ministers, which are the absurdity of party-spirit, the correct estimate of the pastoral office, the apostolic suffering, and a personal appeal for reconciliation.³⁶

Conclusion

The paper reveals that the nexus of Paul's Damascus road experience to his call and pastoral ministry is evident in the study of Acts 9:15. The terms *σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς* well describe Paul's own conviction that God had chosen him to witness the risen Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews. Consequently, Paul sacrificed his rights, namely liberties and judgments at the altar of the risen Christ for the benefit of the Church and the souls of men. The divine grace that characterised Paul's call to the ministry, the nature and results of his preaching, and the recognition and support that he had received from the church and its leadership enabled Paul to have an effective pastoral ministry.

The paper brings to the fore what church ministers are, what they are not, and their place in relation to the church. All of these, in Paul's view, are the hallmark of effective pastoral ministry. Having effective pastoral ministry is dependent on a genuine encounter with the Lord; Christians and pastoral ministries should stand firm and be willing to proclaim the crucified Christ as well as draw lines when necessary between sin and the doctrine of Christ as enshrined in Acts 9:15.

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³⁶ Abogunrin, *The First letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, 58-68.