

Apprehended by Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:12)

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

In Philippians 3:12, Paul wrote: “Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also *I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.*” (Emphasis added). This same verse in the King James Version reads: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also *I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*” (KJV, Emphasis added). So, we see in this verse that Paul understood that he had been “taken hold of” or “apprehended” by Jesus Christ, and for a specific purpose or place of service.

To get a better understanding of what Paul meant when he said that he had been “taken hold of” or “apprehended” by Jesus Christ, we can look at the account of his conversion on the Damascus Road, as recorded in Acts 9. As the passage begins, we see that Saul of Tarsus, who would very soon be “apprehended” by Jesus Christ, was still clearly unregenerate and “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1). Saul was on his way to Damascus to arrest any believers that he found in the synagogues there and bring them back as prisoners to stand trial before the Sanhedrin. Beginning in verse 3 we read:

“As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him, and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”
And he said, “Who are You, Lord?”
And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but *get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.*” (Acts 9:3-6, emphasis added).

We see from this passage that Saul was made to understand that whoever had just intervened in his life was indeed Lord. At this point in time, Jesus Christ intervened in the life of Saul, who was overtly hostile to the Gospel message (again Acts 9:1), and He forcefully and effectually brought him to faith in Himself. And it is the same with every one of us who comes to faith in Jesus Christ. He must intervene in our lives to bring us to faith, or we will not come to Him, because the Scriptures teach us that we are not able to come to Him on our own volition (John 6:44, 65, Romans 8:7).

Saul knew what the Gospel message was about, and he was opposed to it. He had his own plans for what he wanted to do in his life, and he was busy carrying out those plans. However, Saul was one of those who had been chosen by God before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight (Ephesians 1:4). He was one of those who was predestined to be adopted as a son of God (Ephesians 1:5).

Even though Saul was decidedly and overtly hostile to the Gospel message, in His time, God intervened in his life to bring him to faith in Christ. Saul was among those who had been “appointed to eternal life”, and therefore the time came when he did believe the Gospel message (Acts 13:48); God saw to it that he did. Saul was in fact one of those who, by God’s grace, and contrary to his own will and what he would have chosen for himself (again Acts 9:1), was created as “good ground”, upon whom the seed of the word of God fell and produced fruit (Matthew 13:1-23, John 15:8, 1 Corinthians 4:7).

Saul is an example for every one of us who, by God’s grace and mercy, will in His time be brought to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:15-16). We too will hear the Gospel message, and we too will be brought to faith in Christ, regardless of our previous hostility to the message.

Believing in Christ is not something that unregenerate man must choose to do, in order to obtain salvation for himself (Romans 9:16). Rather, belief in Christ is a faith and belief that God Himself brings about in our lives through His grace and mercy (Ephesians 2:8-9). In other words, our belief in Christ is not something that we must choose to do to get ourselves saved, rather our belief in Christ is *evidence* that we are among those whom God has chosen to bring to faith in His Son.

Like Saul, all of us who come to faith in Christ are among God’s elect. We are Jesus’ sheep, and we will hear His voice. He calls us out, and we follow Him

(John 10:2-4). All the others will not be able to hear His words, and they will therefore not be able to come to Him (John 6:44, 6:65, 8:43, 8:47, 10:25-26).

We were chosen by God before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him. We were predestined to be adopted as His sons and daughters through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:4-5). We are those who will all, in God's time, be brought to faith in His Son (John 6:37). We have received mercy from God, whereas all the rest were hardened (Romans 9:18).

By God's grace, we were created as the "good ground" in the Parable of the Sower. When the "seed" of the Gospel message fell on our ears, we heard it, and in God's time we will understand it. And as a result, we will bear fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred times what was sown (Mathew 13:23).

As believers, we too, like Paul, are those who have been "apprehended" by Christ Jesus; we have been "taken hold of" by Him (Philippians 3:12). We did not choose Him, rather He chose us, and appointed us to bear fruit that will last (John 15:16). In God's time we heard the Gospel message, and again in God's time we were brought to faith in His Son. And with our appointment to eternal life, we too, like Paul, have been assigned places of service in God's kingdom, as He decides for each of us. In God's time, those places of service will be revealed to each of us (Acts 9:6), and we will find ourselves involved in His service.