

## **I Am What I Am**

By: Lenny Chapman

***“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain” (1Corinthians 15:10)***

The apostle Paul was one who made a difference in the history of the church. As we call to our memory his life as Saul of Tarsus, we see a man who was very zealous. A devout, learned man of the scriptures, who persecuted the early church because of his love for God. In the book of Acts it is recorded *“And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul...And Saul was consenting unto his death,”* (Acts 7:58 – 8:1).

The Lord must have seen something special in this young man as he came unto Saul while traveling on his way to Damascus with letters in hand to continue his persecution of the church. The vision that Saul encountered that day changed his life forever. Saul obeyed the direction of both the Lord and the disciple of the Lord Ananias, and was baptized in Damascus. In directing Ananias to seek out Saul the Lord told him *“for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake”* (Acts 9:10-16). What a turn of events.

Now known as Paul, that same desire to please the Lord was being used for good. Paul did suffer many great things for the Lord's name but yet never seemed to complain. Paul actually wrote in 2Cor 4:17, *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”* Light affliction? Paul suffered much and that is illustrated in his own words for us in 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of his second letter to the Corinthians. Later Paul wrote to the Philippians *“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content”* (Php 4:11).

*For me, some of Paul's most inspirational words are found in 1Cor 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” It is the by grace of God that each of us have hope. Paul self-proclaimed as the chief sinner was able to see what a gift God's grace is. It is too precious a gift to let go in vain. As God bestows his grace upon us let it not be in vain. We are all sinners and are in need of this precious gift. Let us follow Paul's example and labor abundantly to bring glory to God!*