

# Paul, An Example of Humility

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Amen. Beautiful song, All I Need. Wisdom, righteousness, and power.

Appreciate the songs and the volume, especially on that last one. It's a blessing to come up here and hear that. Thank you for what you shared, Jeffrey.

Our hope. Thank you. It's been a good morning so far.

I'd like to turn to Acts 7. And look at the life of Paul.

Or at least not the life of Paul. It's a long life or a big life. But look at a portion of it at least. And just see if we can glean from it and learn some things here this morning.

[ 1 : 17 ] We trust that our hearts are open to the Word of God and to what He has for us. Can you all hear me okay?

Seems really loud to me, but if it's okay with you, we'll keep going. Acts 7. We know the story of Stephen.

We know the story of Stephen. when he was here and preaching to the people.

And he actually had a pretty long message for the people here in this chapter as to going back to Moses and all that. And then in verse 54, in Acts 7, it says, When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on Him with their teeth.

But He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God and said, Behold, I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

[ 2 : 39 ] I guess that made them even angrier. Can you imagine? They gnashed on Him with their teeth. Have you ever been gnashed on? I mean, maybe a little child or something, but grown men, can you imagine?

How awful. And then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and ran upon Him with one accord. And cast him out of the city and stoned him.

And the witnesses lay down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul. I'm not sure, but without looking, I would guess that might be the first time that we read of Saul.

I don't know. Do you know James or Dan or somebody? I'm just thinking that might be the first time that he just says, A young man whose name was Saul.

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.

[ 3 : 49 ] And when he had said this, he fell asleep. A true servant of the Lord. An evangelist for God that was stoned to death for preaching the gospel.

And it's amazing here how he called on the Lord, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And then he says, he cried with a loud voice, saying, Lord, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.

Who else said something similar to that? Almost identical. You know, right? Jesus, our Lord, said, Father, forgive them.

They don't know what they're doing. And I believe that Stephen here very likely was, you know, maybe thought of that example, Jesus.

And he was just saying the same. And then in, let's go to Acts verse, or chapter 8, next chapter, verse 1. And it says, now here comes this man again, this Saul.

[ 4 : 58 ] And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time, there was a great persecution against the church, which was at Jerusalem. And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him. You can imagine a godly man like him being stoned in this new movement, this new church that Jesus was

building.

and one of their own was publicly killed. And then it says, as for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and hailing men and women, committed them to prison.

Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. You know, he was going into the houses, into their homes and dragging them.

You know, he and his men probably. But that word hailing, I think, means dragging men and women. And he was committing them to prison, taking them to prison for their faith in Jesus.

[ 6 : 24 ] So who is this man? Saul. Saul. We have a verse here in Acts 9. We'll get to that then as well.

But who is this man Saul? You know what? I'm sure we've, I think maybe a few years ago I had looked at some of this.

His background and who he was. And we have a few things. A couple things I want to just read about Saul and what his background was.

But this is just an article that I printed out. But based on the book of Acts, Paul was a Roman citizen. We remember that.

He used that one time to say, I'm a Roman, you know. And he warned them when they wanted to persecute him, I guess.

[ 7 : 20 ] But in Acts 16 and also in 22, it says, he was from a Jewish family from the city of Tarsus, a trade city on the Mediterranean, located in Asia Minor.

It was influential in trade since at least the time of Alexander the Great. Paul was a trained or a well-taught Pharisee.

In Acts 23, verse 6, describes Paul as a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. You know, we look at the Pharisees in the Bible today, we look at them as, or at least I do and probably you do too, harsh religious men.

Men that were just in darkness, if you will. They were harsh. They were, that's just how I think of a Pharisee. Somebody that's a hypocrite even.

But, and they were then, but in that day, they were actually, they were the religious leaders. They were the well-taught, the things of God. They were high up, perhaps, in society.

[ 8 : 36 ] And Paul was one of those men. In one place, it says, when he perceived, Paul, that one part of the Sadducees and the other Pharisees, it says that he was in a meeting, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am called in question.

And, this is also confirmed in Philippians 3. We actually, I think, that was, we were in Philippians 3 already this morning.

But, it was a family link. You know, he was raised that way. And, in, an earlier point in Paul's life, according to Acts 22, verse 3, it says that Paul had studied under the great Pharisaic teacher, Gamaliel, who may have been the grandson of Hillel, the elder, sometimes noted as one of the great proto-rabbis, often called teachers.

And, I think I'll stop there with his background, but, just to show that, you know, this was a man that he had been taught well. He had been taught all the things of prophecy, and, I'll just have a couple more things here.

Paul studied under one of the most respected teaching lineages in the late second temple period. He seems to have been educated beyond Torah expertise to include a deep understanding of the prophets and classical literature and philosophy.

[ 10 : 39 ] We also know that he was a tent maker. He mentions that several times. Paul himself does, and he worked with Priscilla and Aquila in Romans.

We read about that. So he was a very smart man. He was very educated, very knowledgeable of the scriptures, and then he became extremely, what's the word, just extremely aggressive against Christianity, because Christianity was in the face of what he was believing, who God is, and what God wants, and all those things.

And so these people that were claiming that Jesus rose from the dead and he was their Messiah and it's all about him and worshiping him and being born again, that was against what he believed and it was against what he was taught.

But Saul was great as far as in society. I even wrote down here, he would have probably been a great American.

He was in our time. He was smart. America likes smart people. But God wanted to change him to Paul.

[12:13] I keep saying Paul and Saul, but he was Saul. and God wanted to change him. In Philippians 3, maybe we'll just turn there.

Verse 3. Some verses here. I want to just read this to show you, and I know you know this, most of you, but just to look at, okay, everything I just said about Saul.

And now what Paul, once he was changed, says about that. So in Philippians 3, verse 3. For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Now keep in mind who's writing this. The man we just described about how confident he was. how he was so confident in his flesh that he would have other people killed for not believing like him.

I lost my place here. Verse 4. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.

[13:43] In other words, if anyone has a reason to trust in their flesh, well, I do then. Right? That's what he's saying. Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, and Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

He kept the law. He was a diehard believer of the law. But what things were gained to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

There it is. All that stuff, all that knowledge, all that experience, all that pedigree, is loss for Christ, he says.

In verse 8, Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is the law, of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness, which is of God by faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

So here we just see, again, we see how, how much Paul's credentials really meant to him after he found Jesus, after he found Christ.

[15:37] Truly he was a vessel that God could use. What about your background?

How proud are we of our background? Wow, we were taught a lot of good things. taught to work. In fact, I grew up thinking that God has a special eye for my background.

He really, you know, we were about as close to right as anybody in the world, weren't we? Ever felt that way?

I'm sure Paul did, but he said to win Christ. It's all about Jesus now. I struggle when a background or a culture or something is lifted up too high.

You know, in our age today, in our day, when we have Christ, it needs to be about Christ. That's the point I'm trying to make. Not saying that we don't appreciate things that we were taught.

[16:42] If they were good, then they were good. But, that's not what saves us or makes us right with the Lord. Now let's turn to Acts chapter 9 and go back to just before, or go back to Saul.

I just think we can learn so much from his experience and how it's written.

How it's written for us today. Acts 9, starting in verse 1, And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

This way meaning believers in Christ. Christians. Verse 3, And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.

And he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord?

[18:26] And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the bricks. And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. We'll keep reading, and then we'll come back to this.

And the men which sojourned with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. They were speechless. And Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man.

But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. And to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the street, which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus.

[ 19 : 46 ] For behold, he prayeth. Isn't that amazing? The Lord told Ananias, I didn't even catch that before, but Saul was praying by this time.

And hath seen a vision, in a vision, a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight.

So as Paul was praying, he had this, the Lord gave him this vision that a man named Ananias was coming to him to pray over him. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man how much evil he hath done to the saints at Jerusalem.

And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way, 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 show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way and entered into the house and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, hath appeared unto thee in the way that as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

[ 21 : 17 ] And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales. And he received sight forthwith and arose and was baptized.

And when he had received meat or food, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway, right away, he preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God.

Wow. Verse 21, But all that heard him were amazed and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on the name I'm sorry, which called on this name in Jerusalem and came hither for that intent that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests.

They were worried that this man that's preaching now is here to get us. But Saul increased the more in strength and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus proving that this is the very Christ.

And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him. But their laying away was known to Saul and they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

[ 22 : 52 ] It's so amazing. Here, the man that was trying to get Christians killed all of a sudden became the victim. Then the disciples took him by night and led him down by the wall in a basket.

I'm sure you remember that image of that in Bible stories growing up. I remember that very much. That Bible story of Saul escaping in a basket.

And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he essayed to join himself to the disciples. But they were all afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple.

But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way and that he had spoken to him and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem and he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Grecians. But they went about to slay him which when the brethren knew they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus.

[ 24 : 12 ] Last verse here. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and were edified and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied.

Isn't it an amazing story? It was reality. It was something that took place in the early church.

And I can just imagine that last verse. They had rest. But can you imagine the peace, the joy that the persecutor became one of us?

The victory that they must have felt in Jesus. and just the faith booster if you will. The way that faith and the other disciples must have rose up to know that this man, this Saul was saved.

It says that straightway back in verse 20 he preached Christ in the synagogue that he is the Son of God. he went right into the synagogue and started to preach.

[ 25 : 28 ] When did you start to preach? When did I start to preach? You know, I look back at my life, my own testimony and you can look at yours and we're not all called to maybe preach publicly but I think every Christian is called to share and of the goodness of God.

You know, and I think Christians do share. I don't want it to be something to well, I want it to be challenging yes, but not condemning.

But when's the last time we shared about or testified of God's goodness? Outside of just us as a church, you know, like to people, the goodness of God and sharing what Jesus has done for us. I know that many of us were raised that, well, you don't talk about those things. They're personal. They're in your heart. You know, you just kind of, you have all that joy but it's so deep nobody can see it, you know.

and but I believe that God would have us to share with others starting with our own family, maybe just a close friend.

[ 26 : 53 ] Sometimes it's hard to open up but to share the goodness of what Jesus has done when we find him I think is so important and it was just naturally the thing that happened to these people especially Paul.

It just came and I realized God used him for a special purpose to write much of the New Testament and you know, we're not called for that and maybe we're not like I said maybe we're not called to preach publicly and so on but I believe we are called to witness to be a witness to open our mouth at times and to share our story what God has done for us and how that will touch other lives.

Now let's go all the way back to verse six where which is this verse where Paul asked the Lord well first he asked him who are you and then Jesus said he introduced himself I'm the one you're persecuting and can you imagine the fear this bright light and just blinding and he fell to the ground and the fear that you're the one I've been persecuting you know he thought he was persecuting people false people that must have gripped his heart and then he turns and he says Lord he calls him Lord and he says what do you want me to do what do you want me to do why didn't Jesus tell him what to do and these are some points I want to make here you know

Jesus would have had the time to tell him what to do welcoming us but he didn't tell him he just told him where to go and he said someone else will tell you what to do and I've just been thinking about that you know we like to hear directly from God don't we we want to know Lord what do you want me to do even as we go through life but sometimes the Lord will say someone will tell you what to do I just think this is so especially a man like Saul who was so prevalent and so powerful that he could even have people killed now he has to go to town blind being led by his hand because he can't see going in to meet people he never met before

Christians the ones he had been persecuting and then God gave him that vision about Ananias yeah the very people that he wanted persecuted and even killed now needed to instruct him and ministered to him he needed them blind and shaken he didn't eat or drink for three days you know even Ananias was scared of this man he tried to debate with the Lord on it like Lord I've heard much evil of this man I mean how he does this and does that and the Lord basically in my own words said don't worry about that I've chosen him are you chosen this morning then the scales fell from his eyes and he could see and he was baptized you think they ministered the gospel to him the true

[ 31 : 09 ] Jesus the resurrected Christ what baptism means I believe he was taught all those things right there when should a person be baptized I thought of this when I read this verse and I just wrote down that when they are no longer blind but they can see when Jesus Christ is revealed and they believe and they confess the Lord Jesus and I believe that faith needs to be sealed with baptism baptism should come when Jesus comes when Jesus is revealed to you when he is when Christ is received but you know many people today they don't obey this because it's not really taught it's kind of more just an optional thing and but in this church in Acts it wasn't an option it was just something that they did yes even Paul you know if you're a young person you're still seeking and you're not sure you're saved would you at least commit that when

Jesus is revealed to you someday that you want to be baptized I think that's okay to just know that yeah I'm going to be baptized sometime you know when Jesus becomes revealed in your life it's a commitment of obedience to him when he draws you will you commit I believe that commitment is very important how does our experience in life in our Christian life measure up in one way or another to this what's on the board here I just want to look at a couple points on this because I do believe that the Lord wants to maybe stretch our minds a little bit and teach us some things about

Paul's experience have we allowed the Lord to instruct us even if he wants to use people to do so is God able to count on us to be obedient and wait to be told what we must do has our thinking and this is just something that comes to my mind you know and I want to clarify a few things and I do not want to go off track in any way Lord help us but is our thinking such that we need Jesus and we like the church we like the body of Christ all the believers and we like the fellowship we like all that and we say even that we need each other we hear that a lot don't we hear that from each other right we we need the body but for what what's the purpose and where I have been challenged with this is that this is if God wants to use another person in my life to either instruct me to encourage me to chastise me you know he wants to do that and God uses people for that many times if we have a problem or maybe a personal struggle maybe a burden that we carry maybe it's a burden we carry for our own family or something maybe it's our marriage maybe it's our neighbor maybe it's our financing our relationship struggle or something and we keep asking

God to tell us what to do Lord what do you want me to do and all the while God might be saying my friend I have a body I have a church my body there's many people right there that are willing to help you and walk together and because you might not be getting that answer from the Lord I think Paul wanted to hear that like Lord you tell me and Lord said no you go to the city and somebody will tell you now do I believe that am I saying that we can't hear from the Lord not at all I believe many times the Lord wants to speak directly into our heart through his word just the reading of his word and communicating fellowshiping with Jesus he will talk to us through his spirit and that's another yeah we need the

Holy Spirit we need all of it but the one part I think we often reject is each other and we don't look at that as yeah it's whatever that's just their opinion and sometimes maybe it is so we do need that discernment but I do believe that God wants to speak after all if it's not true then why am I even preaching why do we even have church you get the point God uses people he uses his word but he also uses each other as we interact with each other we work together we maybe challenge each other I just had to think of you Laverne a minute ago about how when you were first saved and how you went to brother Aaron Aaron and I'm sure he taught you many things but God used Aaron in your life and that's what I'm talking about rather than you could have said no I have my own [ 38 : 08 ] Jesus you have yours and you just leave me alone you could have took that approach but you are willing to sit and go to a strange place strange man's house and be taught by a godly man god blessed you for that too maybe that in a nutshell puts what I'm trying to say are we that open that vulnerable that you know I have a need I need help only a personal revelation of Jesus will save us people can never save us we can't give this to each other but God does use people to speak into each other's lives when God speaks through a brother or sister into our lives do we even consider that it may be and there's a very good chance that it is the

Lord bringing your answer and giving you direction I believe that the enemy of God has brought such a pride in the modern church that people won't listen to God through men anymore on the flip side are there men and women that walk close enough with God that can be trusted is there life such that godliness and holiness is evident that's the other side of it are there still people that we can even go to I believe so I believe there are and if so let us hear each other again

Paul could have told Ananias that he doesn't need to listen to him after all I saw Jesus on the way here you didn't I saw Jesus you know and and began to be proud of the fact his testimony and and all of that and yeah now I'm healed but he could have reacted that way my experience with God is probably greater than yours why are you telling me what to do well Jesus told him you're going to be told but Paul as highly educated as he was he needed to be led he needed to be told what to do he became perhaps one of the most humble godly men that God ever used what a vessel of honor he suffered for

Christ he was tortured he was in not just in prison but he was in shackles and yet he was so humble that he could say words like follow me as I follow Christ or I have fought a good fight I have finished the course pressed toward the mark we heard that this morning a vessel Jesus said I have chosen him to be a vessel I believe Jesus has chosen every believer every born again believer to be a vessel to be used in one way or another and I see that God is using many of us here today and that's a blessing let's allow him even more to use us to encourage each other just just a word of encouragement sometimes will make a brother or sister have a very good week let's turn yet to Galatians chapters chapter one Galatians 1 verse six Paul was so convinced and he stayed convinced from that time on I mean I don't I haven't read anywhere yet or heard where Paul was

where he doubted the gospel he was just on fire from the beginning and right out of the gate he was preaching and he stayed convinced and he challenged people to stay convinced in Galatians 1 verse six I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel which is not another but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ but though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed let him be cut off from God as we said before so say

[ 44 : 15 ] I now again if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received let him be accursed for do I now persuade men or God or do I seek to please men for if I please men I should not be the servant of Christ but I certify you brethren that the gospel which was preached of me is not after men for I neither received it of men neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ coming back to that personal revelation of Jesus his focus was the simple gospel Jesus where everything comes from the cross and walking in the spirit all those things but you know like we were saying earlier how that we need each other we need

God wants to speak his truth to us at times especially in our daily walk through a brother through a sister but we want to never lose focus focus that the gospel can't be taught I mean we can teach it but you know what I'm saying it is still the revelation of Jesus it is Christ being revealed personally and I don't want to ever take away from that but there is a time there are times when I believe God is saying to us that we need to also hear from each other and it will be told us in fact if we can't do that then there's something wrong are we able are we willing to be a vessel chosen a chosen vessel are we one of those that

God can use and I don't know how he plans to use everyone here are you with me that sometimes you wonder if God's really using you like he'd like to you ever have those thoughts like am I really walking or am I really ministering like you know what I mean let's keep an open heart before the Lord in those ways and say Lord I want to be all in for you to be more open and especially if we have a need for each other where we have needs and we're not just saying that because it sounds so good we're not just saying we need each other because it's so much fun and we like the fellowship and that's all part of it but no I actually need my brother

I actually need them to help me walk if there are needs here among us today why don't we find someone to talk to that we trust or maybe we don't even really trust him I doubt Saul really trusted Ananias he didn't even know him Ananias just came but look at what happened pray first ask God what do you want me to do what do you want me to do and then listen God will tell us what to do he will tell us if we need to talk to somebody and who but I believe that the gospel is very practical and very God wants us to be practical

I started early so I'm going to quit early I think that's all I have let's just pray Father we just thank you for the testimony of Saul that was later named Paul Lord we acknowledge this morning that you are the one that changes lives you did such an amazing work in this man that we can read so much about and Lord we believe that he truly was a vessel you did with him you were able to do with him what you wanted Lord and accomplish amazing things Lord I just pray that it would be a challenge to us this morning and to never underestimate the power of God of what you can do to a person that is fully surrendered to you

[ 49 : 32 ] I believe Paul became fully and totally surrendered to you so much so that nothing else mattered and it completely changed his life and so many of us that read his letters now it changes us as well so Lord we thank you for that testimony thank you for showing these things to us even today just pray God that you would help us you would rid us of anything that's prideful anything that hinders us from coming to the truth because we think that somehow our testimony is better than others or whatever it is Lord it's your testimony and it's what you want to do with us I just pray God for myself that I would have a deeper level of surrender to you Lord and that we could all just be totally surrendered and say

Lord what do you want us to do we commit ourselves to you in Jesus worthy name Amen