



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

BIBLE FOUNDATIONS

Paul

From Persecutor to Apostle

The Short Answer

Paul began as Saul of Tarsus, a highly trained Jewish Pharisee who fiercely opposed the early Christian movement. He approved of Stephen's death and actively persecuted followers of Jesus. Then Saul encountered the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. The persecutor became a preacher. The man who tried to destroy the church became one of its most influential missionaries. Paul carried the Gospel throughout much of the Roman world, helped establish churches, endured extraordinary suffering for Christ, and wrote letters that became part of the New Testament. Paul's story is ultimately not about how remarkable Paul was. It is about how powerful the grace of Jesus is.

Acts 7:54-60; 8:1-3; 9:1-31; 13-28 · Galatians 1:11-24 · Philippians 3:4-11 · 1 Timothy 1:12-16

Opening Memory Anchor

The Gospel Paul once tried to destroy became the Gospel he spent the rest of his life proclaiming.



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WELCOME

This guide is meant to send you back to Scripture

Part One follows Paul's life from persecutor to apostle, missionary, church planter, teacher, prisoner, and witness to Christ. Part Two addresses the harder historical, theological, and ethical questions surrounding Paul and his writings.

Foundational truth

Paul was not the hero of Paul's story. Jesus was. The study of Paul should increase confidence in Christ's grace, not merely admiration for an extraordinary apostle.

How to use this study

- Open and read the cited passages rather than relying only on summaries.
- Distinguish what Scripture explicitly teaches from theological or historical inference.
- Use the Memory Anchors to retain major ideas.
- Where Christians disagree, note the disagreement without pretending Scripture says more than it does.

PART ONE

BEGINNER GUIDE

1. WHO WAS PAUL BEFORE HE FOLLOWED JESUS?

Before he was known primarily as Paul, he appears in Acts as Saul. Read Acts 7:54-8:3 and Philippians 3:4-6.

Saul was Jewish, from Tarsus in Cilicia, and also possessed Roman citizenship (Acts 21:39; 22:25-28). He described himself as an Israelite from Benjamin and a Pharisee extremely zealous for ancestral traditions (Romans 11:1; Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:5). Acts says he studied under Gamaliel, a respected Jewish teacher (Acts 22:3).

Saul did not begin as someone mildly skeptical about Christianity. He actively opposed it. When Stephen was killed, Saul approved of his death. Soon afterward, he entered homes, dragged away Christian men and women, and committed them to prison (Acts 7:58; 8:1-3). Later Paul said he persecuted the church, tried to destroy it, and had been a blasphemer and persecutor (Galatians 1:13-14; 1 Timothy 1:12-16). Paul never hid his past. It became part of his testimony to Christ's mercy.

Memory Anchor

Paul's past showed the seriousness of his sin. His future showed the greatness of Christ's grace.

2. WHY WAS SAUL PERSECUTING CHRISTIANS?

Saul believed he was defending faithfulness to God. The earliest Christians proclaimed something he rejected: Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, was the promised Messiah and had risen from the dead.

Saul's persecution appears to have grown from religious zeal, but zeal does not make an action righteous. A person can be deeply sincere and still be deeply wrong. Saul needed more than greater sincerity. He needed the truth about Jesus.

3. WHAT HAPPENED ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS?

Read Acts 9:1-19. Saul obtained authorization to travel to Damascus and arrest followers of Jesus. Before he reached the city, a light from heaven flashed around him and he fell to the ground. He heard, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' The speaker identified Himself as Jesus.

This shattered Saul's understanding. Jesus was not a dead false messiah. Jesus was alive. Saul entered Damascus blind for three days. God then sent Ananias, who knew Saul's reputation and was afraid. The Lord said Saul had been chosen to carry Christ's name before Gentiles, kings, and Israel (Acts 9:10-16). Ananias obeyed. Saul regained his sight, was baptized, and soon proclaimed that Jesus is the Son of God. The persecutor had become a preacher.

4. WAS THIS SIMPLY A "RELIGIOUS CONVERSION"?

Paul understood the Damascus-road encounter as something more specific: he believed he had encountered the risen Jesus. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-10. Paul included himself among those to whom the resurrected Christ appeared. He did not merely adopt a new philosophy; his understanding of God, righteousness, Scripture, Messiah, salvation, and his own life was reordered around Jesus Christ.

5. DID JESUS CHANGE SAUL'S NAME TO PAUL?

This is commonly repeated, but Scripture does not say Jesus renamed Saul. Acts 13:9 says, 'Saul, also called Paul.' Saul was his Jewish/Hebrew name; Paul was his Roman name. Having names suited to different cultural settings was not unusual.

Acts primarily uses Saul in the earlier Jewish-centered portion of his story and begins using Paul as his ministry increasingly moves into the Gentile Roman world. The familiar sermon line that God changed Saul's name to Paul goes beyond what Scripture explicitly states.

Biblical literacy note

A familiar Christian saying is not automatically something the Bible actually says. Always return to the text.



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6. DID PAUL IMMEDIATELY BECOME A FAMOUS MISSIONARY?

No. Read Galatians 1:11-24 alongside Acts 9:19-30. Paul says that after God's revelation of Christ to him, he went into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. Three years later he went to Jerusalem and met Peter and James. Eventually Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch, where they taught the church together (Acts 11:25-26). Paul's calling was dramatic; his ministry development was a process. God can transform a life instantly while still developing a servant over time.

7. WHAT WAS PAUL CALLED TO DO?

Paul had a special calling to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles - the non-Jewish nations (Acts 9:15; Romans 1:5; Galatians 2:7-9). This did not mean he ignored Jewish people; Acts repeatedly shows him reasoning in synagogues.

His mission belonged to the larger biblical story. God promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his offspring (Genesis 12:1-3), and Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). The Gospel was never intended for only one ethnicity, culture, language, or nation.

8. WHAT WERE PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS?

Beginning in Acts 13, Paul traveled extensively proclaiming Jesus and helping establish and strengthen churches.

First Journey - Acts 13-14: Paul and Barnabas traveled through Cyprus and parts of Asia Minor. Jerusalem Council - Acts 15: leaders addressed the Gentile-law controversy. Second Journey - Acts 15:36-18:22: Paul traveled with Silas and others through Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. Third Journey - Acts 18:23-21:17: he strengthened churches and spent significant time in Ephesus. Journey to Rome - Acts 21-28: after arrest, hearings, imprisonment, appeal to Caesar, dangerous voyage, and shipwreck, Acts ends with Paul in Rome proclaiming Jesus.

Roman roads and shipping routes, widespread Koine Greek, and Paul's Roman citizenship aided travel and communication. Christians often see these circumstances as providential. Galatians 4:4 says Christ came in the 'fullness of time,' but Scripture does not specifically say Roman infrastructure or Greek language were the reason God chose that time. Paul's journeys also included opposition, hardship, imprisonment, and danger. Yet the Gospel continued moving outward.

9. WHY WAS THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL SO IMPORTANT?

Read Acts 15:1-35. As Gentiles believed in Jesus, a major question emerged: did Gentile Christians have to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved and fully belong to God's people? Some said yes. Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed, and the issue went to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

Peter testified that God had given the Holy Spirit to Gentiles and purified their hearts by faith. James appealed to Scripture and judged that Gentile believers should not be required to become Jews in order to follow Jesus, while giving instructions supporting holiness and Jewish-Gentile fellowship. The council sent a letter communicating its decision.

The Gospel was not: Become Jewish first, then become Christian. Jews and Gentiles alike are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus. The council also showed that Paul's Gentile mission was not merely his private project; recognized Jerusalem leaders affirmed God's work among the nations.

Memory Anchor

Gentiles did not have to become Jews to belong to Jesus. Salvation is by the grace of Christ.



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10. HOW MUCH DID PAUL SUFFER?

Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. Paul describes imprisonments, beatings, lashes, stoning, shipwrecks, dangerous journeys, threats, hunger and thirst, sleepless nights, exposure, and deep concern for the churches.

Following Jesus did not make Paul's life easier. Yet he increasingly understood suffering through the cross and resurrection of Christ (Philippians 3:7-11). His confidence was not that Christians would avoid suffering, but that Christ was worth following through suffering and that resurrection ultimately stood beyond death.

11. WHAT DID PAUL TEACH ABOUT SALVATION?

At the center of Paul's message was Jesus Christ - His death and resurrection. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 3:21-28; Romans 5:1-11; Ephesians 2:1-10; Galatians 2:15-21.

Paul taught that human beings cannot make themselves righteous before God through moral achievement. Salvation is God's gift of grace received through faith. Grace does not mean sin is unimportant; Paul rejects that conclusion in Romans 6. Christians are not saved because they perform enough good works. They are saved by grace and then called to lives transformed by that grace.

Ephesians 2 captures both truths: Saved by grace -> through faith -> created for good works.

Memory Anchor

Good works are not the price of salvation. They are part of the fruit of a life changed by grace.

12. WHAT LETTERS DID PAUL WRITE?

Thirteen New Testament letters traditionally bear Paul's name: Romans; 1-2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; 1-2 Thessalonians; 1-2 Timothy; Titus; and Philemon.

1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are commonly called the Pastoral Epistles because they contain substantial instruction concerning church leadership, sound teaching, pastoral responsibility, and Christian conduct.

Paul's letters were written to real churches and individuals facing real circumstances. They address salvation, grace, faith, unity, worship, spiritual gifts, marriage, sexuality, leadership, suffering, generosity, false teaching, conduct, resurrection, and Christ's return. They should therefore be read as Christian Scripture and as historically situated letters. Understanding why a letter was written often helps readers understand what Paul was saying.

13. WHAT WAS MOST IMPORTANT TO PAUL?

Paul's life gives a remarkably clear answer: Jesus Christ. Read Philippians 3:4-11. Paul once possessed religious credentials he considered impressive. After knowing Christ, he viewed those achievements differently. His deepest ambition became knowing Christ, proclaiming Christ, and completing the ministry entrusted to him.

Paul did not believe he had become perfect. He described himself as pressing forward toward what lay ahead (Philippians 3:12-14). The great apostle still understood himself as a disciple pursuing Jesus.

PART TWO

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

INTERMEDIATE

Interpretive posture

Where Scripture speaks clearly, believe it. Where Christians draw inferences, identify them as inferences. Where Scripture leaves mystery, trust God's character and obey what He has made clear.

14. WAS PAUL ONE OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES?

No. Paul was an apostle, but not one of the Twelve chosen during Jesus' earthly ministry. Matthias was chosen after Judas's death (Acts 1:15-26). Paul repeatedly grounded his different apostleship in Jesus Christ and his encounter with the risen Lord (1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8-10; Galatians 1:1). He believed the risen Jesus had called and commissioned him.

15. DID PAUL INVENT CHRISTIANITY?

A significant modern objection claims Jesus taught one religion while Paul later transformed it into another centered on Jesus' death, resurrection, and divine identity. The New Testament evidence does not fit that simple picture.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 Paul says he received and passed on the message that Christ died for sins, was buried, was raised, and appeared to witnesses. Many scholars believe this wording preserves early Christian tradition Paul received rather than invented. Paul also met Peter and James within the early years after his conversion (Galatians 1:18-19) and interacted with recognized Jerusalem leaders in Galatians 2. Paul and Peter sometimes disagreed, but disagreement does not show Paul invented a separate Christianity.

16. DID PAUL AND JAMES CONTRADICT EACH OTHER ABOUT FAITH AND WORKS?

Paul writes that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law (Romans 3:28). James writes that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone (James 2:24). Context matters.

Paul confronts attempts to establish righteousness before God through works. James confronts a claimed faith that shows no evidence of genuine trust. Both use Abraham. Neither teaches that people purchase salvation through moral achievement, and neither teaches that genuine faith leaves life unchanged.



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A helpful synthesis: Paul attacks works as the basis of salvation. James attacks a claimed faith that produces no fruit.

17. WHAT IS THE “NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL”?

The New Perspective on Paul (NPP) is not one interpretation but a family of scholarly approaches reconsidering Paul, first-century Judaism, justification, and 'works of the law.' E. P. Sanders argued that Judaism should not simply be portrayed as a religion of earning salvation. His term covenantal nomism described obedience functioning within an existing covenant relationship.

James D. G. Dunn helped popularize the phrase 'New Perspective on Paul' and emphasized Jewish identity markers in Paul's discussion of works of the law. N. T. Wright developed an influential version emphasizing Paul's place within Israel's story, God's covenant purposes, the inclusion of the nations, and themes connected with God's righteousness and faithfulness.

Some NPP interpreters emphasize circumcision, food laws, and other boundary markers. Traditional Protestant interpreters agree Jew-Gentile unity matters but argue Paul's teaching goes further: human beings broadly cannot establish righteousness before God by works. Readers do not need to master this debate to understand Paul's central proclamation: human beings need God's grace, and salvation comes through Jesus Christ.

18. WAS PAUL AGAINST WOMEN?

Paul's letters name women such as Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2), Priscilla (16:3-5), Junia (16:7), and Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3) as important participants in early Christian ministry. Galatians 3:28 teaches equal standing in Christ.

Difficult passages include 1 Corinthians 11; 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; and Titus 1:5-9. Complementarian Christians generally affirm equal dignity while reserving certain church leadership or teaching roles for qualified men. Egalitarian Christians generally understand the New Testament to permit qualified women and men at all levels of leadership. Both positions contain variations and appeal to Scripture.

Paul does not teach that women are spiritually inferior. Difficult passages must never be used to excuse domination, degradation, coercion, or abuse. Biblical authority never gives permission for sinful treatment of another person. See also Q23: the issues are not identical, but both require careful attention to context and safeguards against misuse.



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19. WHAT WAS PAUL'S 'THORN IN THE FLESH'?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Paul describes a thorn in the flesh that tormented him. He pleaded three times for it to be removed. It was not. Instead, he learned the sufficiency of God's grace and the way Christ's power could be displayed through weakness.

Scripture does not identify the thorn. Suggestions include illness, eye problems, persecution, psychological distress, spiritual opposition, or another recurring difficulty. Those proposals are interpretations. The main point does not require knowing what it was.

Memory Anchor

Sometimes God's power is displayed by removing the weakness. Sometimes it is displayed by sustaining His people through it.

20. WAS PAUL MARRIED?

Scripture does not explicitly tell readers Paul's complete marital history. In 1 Corinthians 7:7-8, Paul speaks of himself as unmarried at the time he wrote. Some suggest he may previously have been married; others believe he may always have been unmarried. Neither conclusion can be established with certainty. Scripture clearly shows Paul viewed singleness as a legitimate and potentially fruitful Christian calling, not an inferior life.

21. HOW DO ACTS AND GALATIANS FIT TOGETHER?

Acts gives a narrative of the Gospel's expansion and Paul's ministry. Galatians includes autobiographical details because Paul is defending the divine origin of his Gospel and apostleship. The accounts emphasize different information.

A key question is how Galatians 2:1-10 relates to Paul's Jerusalem visits in Acts. Some identify Galatians 2 with the famine-relief visit of Acts 11:27-30. Others identify it with the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 because both concern Paul, Gentiles, circumcision, and recognition of Paul's mission. The identification affects dating and chronology. Scripture never explicitly says which Acts visit equals Galatians 2, so confidence should remain proportional to the evidence.

Both books clearly affirm that Paul persecuted the church, encountered Christ, proclaimed the Gospel, interacted with Jerusalem leaders, and became a major missionary to the Gentiles. You do not need to master Paul's chronology to understand the central biblical point.

22. DID PAUL WRITE ALL THIRTEEN LETTERS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM?

All thirteen traditionally Pauline letters identify Paul in their openings and were generally received as Pauline through most of Christian history. Modern critical scholarship debates several.

The seven most commonly called 'undisputed' are Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Questions are particularly common concerning Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, and the Pastoral Epistles (1-2 Timothy and Titus). Arguments involve vocabulary, style, theology, church organization, and fit with Acts chronology.

Defenders of traditional authorship note that different audiences, circumstances, subjects, coworkers, and secretarial involvement can affect style. Romans 16:22 identifies Tertius as the person who physically wrote the letter. Ancient writing practices add complexity. The church has historically received these writings within the New Testament canon while scholars continue debating precise human circumstances. The study should neither ignore the debate nor present disputed conclusions as settled fact.

23. DID PAUL SUPPORT SLAVERY?

This is an important and difficult question. Slavery was deeply embedded in the Roman world. It was not identical in every respect to later race-based Atlantic chattel slavery, but that distinction must not make ancient slavery seem harmless. Enslaved people could experience coercion, exploitation, punishment, sexual vulnerability, family separation, and severe loss of freedom.

Paul did not organize a political abolition movement, and Scripture should not be made to say that he did. Yet his teaching contains important statements about slavery, freedom, spiritual equality, and Christian masters.

In 1 Corinthians 7:20-24 Paul says social status does not determine standing with God and, in a debated verse, appears in many translations to permit or encourage taking freedom when genuinely available. In Philemon 8-21 Paul calls Onesimus, an enslaved man connected with Philemon, 'a beloved brother,' asks Philemon to receive him as he would Paul, and offers to take responsibility for any debt. The letter does not explicitly command emancipation, and Christians disagree about how strongly it should be inferred.

Ephesians 6:5-9 and Colossians 3:22-4:1 address slaves and masters, reminding masters they too have a Master in heaven. Galatians 3:28 says slave/free status does not determine standing in Christ. Later some Christians misused household-code commands to defend race-based slavery and demand submission; others appealed to the Bible's broader teaching on dignity, justice, brotherhood in Christ, and love to oppose slavery and support abolition.

A careful conclusion: Paul addressed Christians inside an existing slave system without explicitly launching a political abolition program. At the same time, his Gospel challenged social status as a measure of worth, placed slave and master under the same Lord, allowed freedom where possible, and radically reframed Onesimus as a beloved brother rather than merely property. These texts must never be used to justify trafficking, forced labor, exploitation, racism, coercion, or abuse.



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24. HOW DID PAUL DIE?

Acts does not record Paul's death. It ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome, openly proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about Jesus (Acts 28:30-31). Early Christian tradition associates his death with martyrdom in Rome under Nero, commonly in the AD 60s.

One important early witness is 1 Clement, usually dated near the end of the first century, which remembers Paul as having endured persecution and suffering before his death. Later tradition commonly describes execution by beheading. Because Paul was a Roman citizen, this is historically plausible, but the New Testament does not record the method. These details are early Christian tradition, not explicit Scripture.

25. WHAT CAN PAUL TEACH SOMEONE WHO THINKS THEIR PAST DISQUALIFIES THEM?

Paul had persecuted Christians. He could not undo that history. Grace did not make his past imaginary; grace changed his relationship to it. Read 1 Timothy 1:12-16. Paul saw himself as an example of Christ's extraordinary patience and mercy.

This does not mean consequences always disappear, repentance eliminates the need to make things right where possible, or leaders may use conversion to excuse abuse, criminal behavior, or ongoing unrepentant sin. Paul's story teaches something different: no history of sin places a repentant sinner beyond the saving reach of Jesus Christ. The Gospel does not say, 'Your past never mattered.' It says Christ's grace is greater.

26. WHAT DOES PAUL'S LIFE TEACH ABOUT CALLING?

Paul had an extraordinary apostolic calling. Most Christians will not receive his particular assignment, but his life illustrates broader principles. God's calling begins with belonging to Christ. Calling is not primarily about becoming impressive; it is about faithfulness.

Paul planted churches, preached to crowds, debated philosophers, disciplined leaders, wrote letters, made tents, endured imprisonment, survived a shipwreck, and sometimes served Christ while restricted. His circumstances changed; his mission remained centered on Christ. Christian usefulness is not measured only by visibility, platform, title, or public success.

27. WHAT WAS THE SECRET OF PAUL'S ENDURANCE?

It was not confidence in Paul. It was confidence in Christ. Paul knew weakness, fear, disappointment, conflict, physical suffering, and abandonment. Yet his writings repeatedly return to God's sufficiency, faithfulness, grace, power, and promises. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; 12:9-10; Philippians 4:10-13; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18.

The resurrection changed the horizon. If Christ is risen, suffering is temporary. If Christ is risen, faithful labor is not wasted. If Christ is risen, death does not have the final word.

PAUL AND THE BIGGER BIBLICAL STORY

- Genesis 12 - God promises that all nations will be blessed through Abraham.
- The Prophets - God's purposes extend beyond Israel to the nations.
- Jesus - The promised Messiah comes, dies for sins, and rises from the dead.
- The Great Commission - Jesus sends His followers to make disciples of all nations.
- Acts - The Gospel moves outward from Jerusalem toward the nations.
- Paul - A former persecutor becomes a major messenger of Christ among the Gentiles.
- Revelation 7:9-10 - A redeemed multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language worships before God's throne.

Paul was not the hero of that story. Jesus is.

HOW DOES PAUL POINT TO JESUS?

Paul does not primarily point to Jesus through symbolic parallels. He points to Jesus by proclaiming Him directly.

Paul's Message	Scripture
Christ crucified	1 Corinthians 1:18-25
Christ risen	1 Corinthians 15:3-8
Justification through Christ	Romans 3:21-26
Peace with God through Christ	Romans 5:1
New life in Christ	2 Corinthians 5:17
Freedom from condemnation in Christ	Romans 8:1
Christ's return	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Resurrection	1 Corinthians 15

Paul's life was remarkable because Jesus had captured it. His theology was powerful because Jesus stood at its center. His hope was secure because Jesus had risen. His mission mattered because the Gospel belonged to Jesus - not Paul.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

1. DO NOT ASSUME SOMEONE IS BEYOND GOD'S REACH.

Ananias knew exactly who Saul was. God knew too. Pray for people who seem far from Christ without assuming their present hostility determines their future.



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2. LET SCRIPTURE CORRECT FAMILIAR ASSUMPTIONS.

Even the popular "Saul became Paul" story reminds readers to check what the Bible actually says. Open the text. Read the context. Keep learning.

3. DO NOT BUILD YOUR IDENTITY ON YOUR RESUME.

Paul possessed impressive credentials and counted them as loss compared with knowing Christ (Philippians 3:4-11). Achievements may be useful. They make poor saviors.

4. EXPECT CHRISTIAN GROWTH TO TAKE TIME.

Paul experienced a dramatic encounter with Jesus, but his life of discipleship and ministry unfolded over years. Transformation can be real without being instantaneous in every area.

5. DO NOT CONFUSE SUFFERING WITH GOD'S ABSENCE.

Paul suffered while faithfully obeying Christ. Hardship is not automatic evidence that someone has missed God's will.

6. LET THE GOSPEL SHAPE HOW PEOPLE ARE TREATED.

Philemon reminds readers that Christian faith cannot be separated from how another person is regarded. People are not possessions, tools, social categories, or means to an end. Reject exploitation, coercion, and abuse.

7. KEEP JESUS AT THE CENTER.

Paul's legacy is enormous, yet he repeatedly directed attention away from human boasting and toward Christ. Christian discipleship asks not, "How can someone become impressive?" but, "How can this life faithfully belong to Jesus?"



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REVIEW AND RETENTION

1. What was Paul's name when he first appears in Acts?

Saul.

2. What was Saul doing to Christians?

Persecuting and imprisoning them.

3. What changed his life?

He encountered the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus.

4. Who did God send to Saul in Damascus?

Ananias.

5. Did Jesus explicitly rename Saul "Paul"?

No. Scripture says he was "Saul, also called Paul."

6. To whom was Paul's ministry especially directed?

The Gentiles, although he also continually proclaimed Christ to Jewish people.

7. What major question did the Jerusalem Council address?

Whether Gentile believers needed circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law in order to be saved and belong to God's people.

8. What stood at the center of Paul's Gospel?

Jesus Christ - especially His death for sins and resurrection.

9. What does Scripture identify as Paul's thorn in the flesh?

It does not identify it.

10. Was Paul one of the original Twelve?

No. He was an apostle specially called by the risen Christ.

11. What are the Pastoral Epistles?

1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus.

12. Who was Onesimus?

An enslaved man connected with Philemon whom Paul came to regard as a beloved brother in Christ.

13. What does 1 Corinthians 7 show about slavery and Christian identity?

Social status does not determine a believer's standing in Christ, and freedom may be received when genuinely available.

14. What ultimately explains Paul's transformation?

The grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.

KEY TERMS

Apostle - A person sent with a commission. Paul understood himself as specifically commissioned by Jesus Christ.

Complementarian - A Christian framework generally affirming equal value for men and women while understanding certain church or family roles as distinct.

Covenantal Nomism - A scholarly term associated especially with E. P. Sanders for the view that Jewish obedience functioned within God's covenant rather than primarily as a system for earning entrance into it.

Egalitarian - A Christian framework generally understanding Scripture to permit qualified women and men to serve in all levels of church leadership.

Gentile - A person who is not Jewish.

Grace - God's undeserved favor. Salvation cannot be earned; it is God's gift.

Household Codes - A modern term for New Testament passages addressing household relationships, including husbands/wives, parents/children, and slaves/masters; examples include Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and Colossians 3:18-4:1.

Justification - God's declaration that a sinner is righteous before Him through faith in Christ.

Koine Greek - The widely used form of Greek spoken and written across much of the eastern Mediterranean world during the New Testament period.

New Perspective on Paul - A family of modern scholarly approaches reconsidering Paul in light of first-century Judaism, especially justification and "works of the law."

Pastoral Epistles - The traditional collective name for 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus.

Pharisee - A member of an influential Jewish movement in the New Testament period known for serious attention to the Law and ancestral traditions.

Resurrection - Being raised from death to life. Jesus' bodily resurrection stands at the center of Paul's Gospel and Christian hope.

Slavery in the Roman World - A diverse but coercive social institution in which enslaved people were legally controlled by others and could face severe exploitation and loss of freedom. It was not identical to later race-based Atlantic slavery, but neither was it morally harmless.

FINAL MEMORY ANCHORS

Memory Anchor

The Gospel Paul once tried to destroy became the Gospel he spent the rest of his life proclaiming.

Memory Anchor

Paul's past showed the seriousness of his sin. His future showed the greatness of Christ's grace.

Memory Anchor

Gentiles did not have to become Jews to belong to Jesus. Salvation is by the grace of Christ.

Memory Anchor



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Good works are not the price of salvation. They are part of the fruit of a life changed by grace.

Memory Anchor

Sometimes God's power is displayed by removing the weakness. Sometimes it is displayed by sustaining His people through it.

Memory Anchor

In Christ, social status never determines spiritual worth.

Memory Anchor

Paul was not the hero of Paul's story. Jesus was.

A SCRIPTURE PATH FOR CONTINUED STUDY

Acts 7:54-8:3 - Saul persecutes the church
Acts 9:1-31 - Saul encounters Jesus
Acts 11:19-30 - Barnabas and Saul at Antioch
Acts 13-14 - First missionary journey
Acts 15 - Jerusalem Council
Acts 16-18 - Second missionary journey
Acts 18-21 - Third missionary journey
Acts 21-28 - Arrest, trials, voyage, and Rome
Galatians 1-2 - Paul's own account of his early ministry
Romans 3-5 - Justification, grace, and peace with God
1 Corinthians 7:20-24 - Slavery, freedom, and identity in Christ
Philippians 3 - What knowing Christ meant to Paul
2 Corinthians 11-12 - Paul's suffering and weakness
Philemon - Paul, Onesimus, Christian brotherhood, and slavery
1 Timothy 1:12-16 - Paul's testimony to Christ's mercy
1 Corinthians 15 - The resurrection at the heart of Paul's hope

CLOSING THOUGHT

Few people in the New Testament seem less likely to become followers of Jesus than Saul of Tarsus. He opposed Christ's followers. He tried to destroy the church. Then he met Jesus.

Paul never forgot who he had been, but neither did he allow his former life to become greater than the grace that had rescued him. Years later, the former persecutor could look at everything he had once valued and say that knowing Christ was better.

That is the heart of Paul's story. Not the greatness of an apostle. Not the brilliance of a theologian. Not the courage of a missionary. But the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.

The persecutor became a preacher. The enemy became a servant. The sinner received mercy. And Jesus received the glory.

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