

3. The Life of Apostle Paul

Paul was a pharisee (**Scriptures 1. Paul as a Pharisee**). He thought he was doing all the right things and was very strong in his beliefs. He studied scripture and obeyed all the Jewish laws. He was looked up to as a leader and teacher.

As a Pharisee, Paul's main purpose in life was to persecute Christians. (**Scriptures 2. Paul's Mission for Christians**). He was very ambitious about this and truly wanted to stop the Christian movement.

In order to get Paul's attention, the Lord did what he had to do. (**Scriptures 3. Paul Blinded**). Paul was a tough case. His conviction to persecute the Christians was strong. So, the Lord took big actions to get Paul's attention. Jesus spoke to Paul and blinded him. Paul was blind for three days. God sent a man (Ananias), who was a servant to the Lord, to touch Paul's eyes and heal him. Paul's sight came back. A few days later, Paul was teaching in the synagogues.

Christians were understandably afraid of Paul and they tried to kill him. Paul had a lot to lose by become a Christian. He was a person of power and wealth as a Pharisee. Now that he converted, the Christians hated him for persecuting them in the past, and the Pharisees felt betrayed by him, and the Jews believed he was preaching blasphemy. So, Paul had a lot of enemies coming from all directions to deal with (**Scriptures 4. Paul Had a Hard Battle with Many Enemies**). He was beaten and imprisoned several times.

The Apostle Paul's faith was so strong that God performed great miracles through him. (**Scriptures 5. Paul Performed Miracles**). He also started many churches and wrote most of the New Testament in the Holy Bible. He had a very powerful ministry and many followers.

Paul did not dwell on past, but moved forward (**Scriptures 6. Put the Past Behind Us and Move Forward**). Paul suffered with temptation to sin too and recognized his sinful nature (**Scriptures 7. Paul Recognizes His Sinful Nature**).

He was truly born again of the spirit. Even though Paul knew scripture well, he relied on Holy Spirit to get the message through (**Scriptures 8. Paul Relied on Holy Spirit**).

The story of Apostle Paul teaches us much.

It doesn't matter what you've done in the past, Jesus still loves you and wants you to follow him. Look at Paul – he was a Christian killer! Can you think of anything worst? His life ambition was to persecute Christians, yet look how the Lord used him. God loves you no matter what's in your past. You don't have to change first, Jesus will take you just like you are.

It may be hard socially to become a Christian. If your family has a different belief, they may get really upset at you. You may have to make new friends. Those things happened to me. Paul had to completely change his life and he made enemies. But it's all worth it. I can't imagine living without Christ in my heart. I lived in anger for so long. I was in my 40's when I finally accepted Christ. Now I have peace and love in my heart. Following Jesus is good! It's a pleasure to obey the Lord. It makes you feel really good. Those old things that you thought you didn't want to give up mean nothing once you have Jesus in your heart. Jesus is gentle and kind – sometimes convicting, but only for our own good. Please believe me, it is a pleasure to serve the Lord.

Scriptures 1. Paul as a Pharisee

Philippians 3:3-7 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Scriptures 2. Paul's Mission for Christians

Acts 9:1-2 Meanwhile, Saul (later called Paul) was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

Scriptures 3. Paul Blinded

Acts 9:3-12 As he (Paul, aka Saul) neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

Scriptures 4. Paul Had a Hard Battle with Many Enemies

Acts 9:19-24 Paul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah. After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him.

Acts 16:19-24 When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Scriptures 4. Paul Had a Hard Battle with Many Enemies continued

Acts 21:27-36

When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help us! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place." (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.) The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. The crowd that followed kept shouting, "Get rid of him!"

Scriptures 5. Paul Performed Miracles

Acts 19:11-12 God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

Scriptures 6. Put the Past Behind Us and Move Forward

Philippians 3:13-14 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Scriptures 7. Paul Recognizes His Sinful Nature

Romans 7:19-25 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Scriptures 8. Paul Relied on Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.