The Redemption of Paul and Its Aftermath

Introduction

- **The Power of Transformation:** No one is beyond the reach of God’s grace.
- **The Ultimate Example:** Saul of Tarsus began as the chief enemy of the early church but became its most prolific missionary.
- **The Lesson for Us:** His life demonstrates what happens when a person surrenders completely to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Saul (or Paul)

- **Dual Names:** He had both names from birth—**Saul** (his Hebrew name) and **Paul** (his Latin or Roman cognomen), which was a common practice for Hellenistic Jews with Roman citizenship.

- **No Divine Change:** Unlike Simon, whose name was changed by Jesus to Peter, there is no scriptural record of Jesus or God changing Saul's name to Paul upon his conversion.

Saul (or Paul)

- **Audience Shift:** He used the Hebrew name **Saul** primarily when speaking or ministering to Jewish communities, and transitioned to using his Roman name **Paul** when preaching to Gentiles in the Greco-Roman world.

- **Scriptural Introduction:** In **Acts 13:9**, the author simply notes that "Saul, who was also Paul," begins using the Roman name as his Gentile-focused ministry expands.

The Pre-Missionary Years of Paul

- **The Pre-Missionary Years (c. AD 33 – 46)**
- Before embarking on his large-scale journeys, Paul spent years in preparation, preaching locally, and maturing in the faith.
- **c. AD 33/34: Conversion** on the road to Damascus (**Acts 9**).
- **c. AD 34 – 37:** Time spent in **Arabia** and return to Damascus (**Galatians 1:17–18**).
- **c. AD 37:** First visit to Jerusalem as a Christian; flees to **Tarsus** for safety (**Acts 9:26–30**).
- **c. AD 43:** Barnabas brings Paul to **Antioch** to help lead the growing Gentile church (**Acts 11:25–26**).

Saul the Persecutor

- **The Radical Pharisee**
- **Acts 22:3**
- 3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.

- **Galatians 1:13-14**
- 13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; 14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

Saul the Persecutor

- **The Death of Stephen**
- **Acts 7:58-8:1**
- **58** When they had driven him out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59** They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” **60** Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep.
- **8** Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Saul the Persecutor

- **Havoc on the Church**

- **Acts 9:1-2**
- **9** Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, **2** and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Saul the Persecutor

- **Havoc on the Church**

- **Acts 26:9-11**
- 9 “So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things
  hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And this is just what
  I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in
  prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but
  also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against
  them. 11 And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I
  tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at
  them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

The Conversion of Saul

- **The Heavenly Vision**

- **Acts 9:3-6**
- **3** As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; **4** and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” **5** And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He *said*, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, **6** but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.”

The Conversion of Saul

- **The Three Days of Blindness**

- **Acts 9:8-11**
- 8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open,
  he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they
  brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without
  sight, and neither ate nor drank. 10 Now there was a disciple at
  Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision,
  “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” 11 And the Lord *said*
  to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire
  at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he
  is praying,

The Conversion of Saul

- **The Response of Obedience**

- **Acts 22:16**
- 16 Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’

The Pre-Missionary Years of Paul

- **The Response:** He did not wait or keep his faith a secret; he immediately identified with local Christians and preached Jesus.

- **Acts 9:19–20**
- **19** and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, **20** and immediately he *began* to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”

The Withdrawal to Arabia: Revelation and Reflection

- **The Action:** Paul traveled into the Arabian desert for a portion of a three-year period.

- **Galatians 1:17**
- 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

The Withdrawal to Arabia: Revelation and Reflection

- **Revelation of the Gospel:** He received the gospel directly by revelation from Jesus Christ rather than human tradition, meditating on the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Jesus.

- **Galatians 1:11–12**
- 11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Persecution and Escape: The Cost of Discipleship

- **The Action:** Returning to Damascus, Paul so powerfully proved that Jesus was the Christ that local Jews plotted to kill him.
- **Acts 9:22–25**
- 22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ. 23 When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; 25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through *an opening in* the wall, lowering him in a large basket.

Persecution and Escape: The Cost of Discipleship

- **The Action:** Returning to Damascus, Paul so powerfully proved that Jesus was the Christ that local Jews plotted to kill him.

- **2 Corinthians 11:32–33**
- 32 In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,
33 and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and *so* escaped his hands.

The First Visit to Jerusalem and the Validation of Barnabas

- **The Action:** Three years post-conversion, Paul traveled to Jerusalem to see Peter.

- **Galatians 1:18**
- **18** Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days.

The First Visit to Jerusalem and the Validation of Barnabas

- **The Obstacle:** The disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of him, remembering his bloody past as a persecutor.

- **Acts 9:26**
- **26** When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.

The First Visit to Jerusalem and the Validation of Barnabas

- **The Bridge:** Barnabas stepped in, testified to Paul's genuine conversion, and introduced him to the apostles.

- **Acts 9:27**
- 27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

Hidden Years in Tarsus and Preparation in Antioch

- **The Action:** When Hellenists in Jerusalem also plotted to kill him, the brethren sent him away to his hometown of Tarsus in Cilicia.

- **Acts 9:29–30**
- 29 And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic *Jews*; but they were attempting to put him to death. 30 But when the brethren learned *of it*, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

- **Galatians 1:21**
- 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

Hidden Years in Tarsus and Preparation in Antioch

- **The Collaboration:** Later, Barnabas sought Paul out in Tarsus and brought him to Antioch to teach the growing church for a full year.

- **Acts 11:25–26**
- **25** And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; **26** and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and ***the disciples were first called Christians*** in Antioch.

What We Can Take From Paul

- **A Tireless Worker for Christ**
- **His brethren were there for him**
- **No One is Too Far Gone**
- **The Same Plan of Salvation**