01 Aug 2026 : Archie Falisi : Apostle Paul’s Transformation, Persecutor to Proclaimer of Christ

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Speaker 1
Thank you, everyone, for making the time and effort to come here on this first Saturday of August, 2026. Welcome to the Chapel of the Opened Book. We are the Marine Publishing Trust, and today, on this first Saturday study. As you know, we have a study on the first Saturday of each month, and today being Saturday the first of August, we will continue our biblical study series surrounding the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. We have looked at his early life, his background, who he was, what he was, and what he had become as a result of his conversion on the road to Damascus.

Speaker 1
Brisson ascended, glorified Christ had confronted Saul of Tarsus, and from his being confronted, he was challenged, and he was changed, and he was chosen to be the honoured vessel of Christ to bear his name. So we’ve got a lot to cover. We will refresh our memories regarding what we have gone through in our previous study. The last time I spoke is about three months ago. We are taking the studies in turns, where one month it’s myself, then it’s Michael Garsdang, then it’s Jonathan Titzwell, and then I’m back to resume from the study that I gave previously. Because it’s been three months since I last gave this study regarding the Apostle Paul in the Book of Acts, we will have a

Speaker 1
Brief refresher course, just to remind you what we have covered and why, and where the study is going regarding the Apostle Paul. Why Paul is important to us, specifically because he is the Apostle to the Gentiles. God had chosen him as the main instrument to preach the gospel to the non-Jews, which is us, which the Bible refers to as Gentiles. We are Gentiles, and Paul was specifically chosen because of his background, his mindset, his motivations, and because of his faithfulness. He was very committed to the Lord and what the Lord had required of him. So we have a few, but two or three passages of scripture to start us off. We’ve got John chapter fifteen.

Speaker 1
Verse 17 through to chapter 16, verse 4. That'll be the main one. Then we move fast forward to the Book of Acts, which is conveniently for us after the Gospel of John, so we don't need to travel far. Everything will be in a chronological order as to chapter, with main points highlighted. We begin with John, the Gospel of John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. Then we move forward to the historical narratives, from the Book of Acts, which was written by Luke. So we do have a lot to go through, and it is being recorded. Hopefully, this study will be on the website next week with the transcript. Now the recordings of each study on a Wednesday.

Speaker 1
Sunday and Saturdays are recorded, but there'll be a transcript with that, with the relevant scriptures, and it's there for you if you want to review the study, if you want to go back to it, or if you happen to miss the study and you were not able to attend the meeting. So thank you everyone for joining us, both on Zoom, here at the chapel, and for us, the study of who the Apostle Paul was. His background before his conversion and after his conversion is very important to us, and how God was able to use Saul of Tarsus, who was the main persecutor and opposition to the early Jewish Church in Jerusalem. How God was able to intervene within his life and turn this man's mind and heart around, so instead of opposing Christ and persecuting Christ.

Speaker 1
He was proclaiming Christ from being the one who would be the destroyer of the Church of God to becoming the defender of the Church of God. This is the many important contrast here of how the Lord changed the mind and heart of Saul of Tarsus. As we know, Saul of Tarsus, we seem to know more about his background, who he was, what he was, compared to the twelve apostles. When we think about the twelve apostles, we know very little regarding their backgrounds. For example, we know very little as to which tribes they actually come from. Can we honestly say we know what tribe Peter came from? What tribe John the apostle came from?

Speaker 1
Because it's not stated. But when it comes to Paul, we know where and which tribe he came from, which is the tribe of Benjamin. Paul is very specific regarding his background, and because he is the apostle to the Gentiles, the more we know about him, the better it is for us because we can relate to him, being someone who's born outside the land of Israel, in Tarsus. Sicilia, which is on the eastern region of Turkey, Paul, in a sense, can also relate to us as with our Gentile mindset. Let's bow down and let's give thanks to the Lord for our gathering around His Word, and then we will go into today's study. Heavenly Father, we give You thanks that we are able to attend here.

Speaker 1
At the Chapel of the Open Book, and on Zoom, to be able to switch off our minds

and hearts to the outside world and just purely focused upon your Word. May our minds and hearts be ready to receive the great truths which are contained within your Word. May our focus and our attention be drawn to your Word, and may we learn once again as to why you chose Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles, and how his apostleship is of great relevance to us as Gentiles. We pray, Heavenly Father, that you will continue to guide us, to lead us, and to direct us with the Spirit of Truth. May He continue to guide us into all truth. Be with us, be in our midst, and may we continue to enjoy this sweet time of fellowship around Your Word this afternoon.

Speaker 1
We give you thanks in Jesus' name, our Lord, Savior, and Head. Amen. Turning to the Gospel of John, chapter fifteen, verse seventeen, through to chapter sixteen, verse four. The Gospel of John, in this section, chapter thirteen, verse one, through to chapter seventeen, verse one. Hear the Lord is giving his private ministry to his disciples prior to his betrayal by Judas Iscariot, prior to his arrest in the garden by the Roman soldiers and the chief priests, and prior to his various trials, which leads to him being lifted up upon the cross. Here he gives comfort to his disciples, giving this repeated reference that he is.

Speaker 1
Returning back to the Father, that he is returning back to heaven, that he will ascend back to the position which he was before in heaven. The Gospel of John has many key relevant words. At the moment, on a Wednesday and Sunday, we're going through the Ascension of Christ within the Gospel of John, looking at anabaino, which is to ascend upwards; katabaino, which means to descend downwards. We've been going through this. In our studies, and we will continue this on Sunday, the 2nd of August, and Wednesday, the 5th of August. But here, the Lord is giving them; He's given them words of comfort, words of support. He gave; He gives them this commandment, a new commandment, that they should love one another, love each other.

Speaker 1
In the same manner that he has loved them, but in chapter 15, verse 17 onwards, he gives serious warnings to his disciples. The key words here, as we read this together, are hate, hatred, opposition, persecution, and death. This is what the Lord is warning His disciples about: the coming hatred they will face; the coming opposition they will have to endure; the persecution they will experience, and also the possibility of martyrdom, death as well. Chapter 15, verse 17, page 116 and 117 in the Chapel Bible, if you have one there, before you.

Speaker 1
These things I command you, that ye love one another. So first, there is the Lord gives the command regarding that they should love one another, and then comes the warning after this, and it's a serious warning. Chapter 15, verse 18: If the world

hated you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world will love you, his own. But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember, the word that I said unto you: the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do.

Speaker 1
Unto you, for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. Verse twenty-two. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin. But now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin, but now have they both seen and hated both me and my father. But this cometh to pass that the word might be fulfilled that it is written in their law. They hated me without a cause. And that's a direct quote from Psalm 64 verse 4, 69 verse 4. So that's from Psalm 69 verse 4. In case you are wondering as to what this reference is.

Speaker 1
Then he goes and moves on to the Holy Spirit, verse 26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye shall be, you shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. Chapter sixteen, verse one to four, which is really a continuation of what the Lord had said from verse twenty seven. These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended, or that ye should not stumble, that ye should not fall as a result of what's coming upon you, which is the hatred, the opposition, the persecution. He's given them advance warning of what's coming for, which may fall upon them, which will come to them.

Speaker 1
As they witness Christ's name in the preaching of the gospel, chapter sixteen, verse two. They shall put you out of the synagogues. Yea, the time cometh that whoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service or is doing the service of God. Verse three. These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me. But these things I have told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. So the Lord is really highlighting to them that as He Himself.

Speaker 1
Face opposition and hatred, and resistance. They, as well, when they are out there witnessing and proclaiming the gospel, defending Christ's name, will face the same hatred and the same opposition and the same persecution and ultimately death as well, martyrdom. In a way, what he's saying is don't be surprised when this starts to happen to you. I'm giving you advance warning. Once you're out there, it's not

going to be easy, and it's not going to be pretty. You will face hardship, and you will face a lot of false accusations, and imprisonment, and that by wanting to defend my name.

Speaker 1
That there will be those who will try and put a stop to it, and in chapter 16 verse 2, it mentions that the Lord highlights that they will be expelled from the Jewish synagogues, and that the time will come that whoever kills them will think that they are rendering service to God. Anyone springs to mind in chapter 16 verse 2? Regarding this, one person springs to mind, and that's Saul of Tarsus. Saul of Tarsus. He was the main apostle, persecutor of the early Jewish Church. He pursued them in their homes, and in synagogues, arrested them. He arrested the followers of Christ in their homes, in synagogues. Many were sent to prison, and some also were put.

Speaker 1
To death, but Paul, in his ignorance, believed that he was doing the right thing. He believed he was serving God. He believed that this had to be done. What we have here is that they are commanded to love one another, work as a team, support one another, and that hard times would come upon them.

Speaker 1
As a result of their witness and their preaching work. Now we can turn to the Book of Acts, chapter eight, verse one to four. Before we turn to chapter eight, let's read the last few verses in chapter seven. So Acts chapter seven.

Speaker 1
Verse 52 to 60. These are the final words of Stephen as he's speaking before the Pharisees, the religious sect. In Jerusalem, there were two main groups, two religious factions. You had the Pharisees, which was the group that Saul of Tarsus belonged to. And then you had the Sadducees, and then you had the Jerusalem Council of the Sanhedrin or Saddhedrin. But Stephen, as he finishes his summary regarding how God had raised up certain individuals like Joseph and Moses, who were types of Christ, how they, as a people, as a race

Speaker 1
Kept persecuting the prophets, and in chapter seven, verse fifty-two, it reads as follows: 'Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted, and they have slain them with, which showed before, of the stoning of the just one, of whom ye have been now, the betrayers, and murderers.' In fact, the law says something very similar. To the Pharisees of how Israel has had a history of putting to death God's true spokesman, the true worshippers of God, from Abel down to Zachariah, verse 53, who have received the law by the disposition of angels and have not kept it. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed.

Speaker 1
On him with their teeth. So now that they're reacting with furious anger, displaying their teeth like an angry predator. Verse 55. But he that me that referring to Stephen, 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. Now Stephen, prior to his martyrdom, has this vision: heaven open, the glory of God, and Jesus standing. Notice, standing, not sitting. When the Lord returned, when He ascended and returned back to heaven, He did not immediately sit down. He was standing and waiting for Israel to repent and to acknowledge Him as their Messiah.

Speaker 1
As their Lord and Savior and King. The Lord was standing, but not yet sitting, and this is repeated in verse in chapter seven, verse fifty six. He said, "Behold, I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." And as you know, the title "the Son of Man" is part of the title which connects Christ to the mystery of Christ, the secrets of the Son, the Al Muthlaben of Psalm 8, verse 1 to 9. So he sees this vision: heaven open, the glory of God, and the Lord standing, but not sitting, but standing at the right hand of God. He would eventually sit towards the end of the Acts dispensation, as the seated priest.

Speaker 1
Seated as the head of the church of the mystery, as mentioned in the present epistles of Paul. So at the moment, the Lord is standing, waiting, because it was possible during the lifetime of the apostles for Christ to have returned within the lifetime of both the apostle Paul and of the apostles. That possibility was there, but the door was closing. For the nation of Israel, the more they resisted, the more they rejected, the more they did not acknowledge Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God, that He was Lord and Savior and King, the King of Israel, the King of the Jews. That possibility was now going to be postponed, and it has been postponed for now for two thousand years. There is a delay.

Speaker 1
Regarding the Lord's return, due to Israel's spiritual blindness, which took place at the end of Acts twenty-eight, verse twenty-three to twenty-eight. Stephen's words were like stones being thrown at the Pharisees. It hit hard to the heart. Notice verse 54. They were cut to the heart. His words had a huge impact upon them, but in a negative way. Instead of realizing what they have done in the past and repenting, they continue to do what he points to them.

Speaker 1
That they are guilty of this of putting to death God's prophets, and Stephen will be another one added to the list. Stephen will be the first martyr in the New Testament. He was speaking the truth, and sometimes when we're out there and we speak the truth regarding God's word out there in the world, we will have opposition. The world will react harshly towards us. They will not take our words

kindly regarding the scriptures, the gospel of Christ. To continue on, verse 57 to 58, we have the first reference in the pages of Scripture of Saul of Tarsus.

Speaker 1
Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears. In other words, they put their hands over their ears. We don't want to hear no more. That's it. They can no longer tolerate his words, especially now he has related them this vision that he has seen. Jesus, or he has seen Christ standing at the right hand of God, and then in one accord.

Speaker 1
Meaning, in unity, they drag him out of the city and stone him. Verse 58: They cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes or robes at the young man's feet, whose name was Saul. There he is. He was a young man when this happened. An observer. But when the Pharisees took their robes off to pick up these, not like the stones which we have here, these would have been chunky stones with some weight behind them that they aimed at Stephen, and look at Stephen's reaction in verse fifty nine to sixty.

Speaker 1
And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' which is similar to what the Lord says upon the cross. His last words in Luke 23, verse 46, are, 'Father, I commit my spirit into your hands.' Very similar to the Lord's final words upon the cross in Luke 23, verse 46. And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep. That in itself says a lot regarding Stephen. That, again, is reminiscent of the Lord's cry upon the cross. Again, in Luke twenty-three, verse thirty-four, where the Lord prays to His Father.

Speaker 1
The Father should not hold this sin against them, for putting Christ upon the cross. Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do. Again, we find this forgiving heart from Stephen. But amongst all this, Saul is there. Saul is an eyewitness to this, and it would seem that this speech that Stephen has given.

Speaker 1
And it's a long chapter; it's 60 verses, which highlights Stephen's address to the Pharisees. It had some impact upon Saul, which then leads to his conversion in Acts chapter nine, verse one to nine. But he is still there in chapter eight, verse one to four, in 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. For Saul, as for Saul, he made havoc of the church, and entering into every house.

Speaker 1
And hailing men and women, committed them to prison. Therefore, they were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the word. Paul, Solatossus is there as the main antagonist. He's the main opposer, persecutor. And if you notice chapter eight verse one, it's not just a persecution; it's a great persecution. And as a result, many of the followers of Christ were scattered to different regions in Judea and Samaria. And as a result, the word of God, the gospel, was now spreading outside Jerusalem. So it had some positive effect, some positive impact. Chapter nine, verse one to nine.

Speaker 1
These nine verses tell us of Saul's conversion. This now, for the apostle Paul, known as Saul of Tarsus, here we have a turning point for Saul of Tarsus. Something happens here on his travels, on his pursuit to capture the followers of Christ who have now been scattered to the regions of Damascus, from Jerusalem to Damascus, and he meets the risen, ascended, glorified Christ. So this is all leading up to his conversion. Let's see what these nine verses tell us: the events and the words spoken. And Saul gets breathing out.

Speaker 1
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. 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, why persecutest thou me?" And he said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom thy, who thou, persecutest." What we have here is, in chapter nine, verse one, regarding Paul.

Speaker 1
Is that before he set out on his travels to travel northwards from Jerusalem to Damascus? Is that he wanted authorized letters from the high priest? We must bear in mind that Saul's activities, his actions, were not a result of a direct office he held, but born out of his own convictions and initiative. He believed that these, that this sect, who are followers of this Jesus of Nazareth, that they had to be silenced, that they had to be erased, that they had to be removed, they had to be eliminated. By arresting them, capturing them, arresting them, putting them in prison, or putting some to death, he would stamp out the name.

Speaker 1
Of Jesus, the name of Christ. By eliminating the followers, you eliminate that name. That was his driven motive. He believed that this sect, which was growing in number, would eventually consume the whole land of Israel. He knew that its origins were in Jerusalem. And by spreading out further afield, the danger was that more numbers would be added to these followers of Christ. So he was there to

stamp out the name of Christ, and the best way to do it is to gather all the followers, arrest them, and cause fear to fall upon others who would dare to become a follower of Christ.

Speaker 1
So in chapter nine, verse one, he approaches the high priest, who gives Saul the authority to say, 'Yes, you can do this.' But he was not given the authority to do this by the chief priests. But he was in effect doing them a favour. Because the chief priests, the Pharisees, felt the same way towards this sect known as the Way. The followers of Christ were also known as the Way. Hence, verse two, and decide of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this Way, this is how they were known: the early followers of Christ, the early believers, that were known as the Way.

Speaker 1
Because they point the way of salvation through Christ, they don't ask the way, which also coincides with Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life, the true and living way, which is found in John chapter 14, verse 6. Whether they were men or women, he didn't discriminate regarding gender. If you were a man or woman, a follower of Christ, proclaiming Christ, defending his name, proclaiming his name, you would be arrested, found guilty, brought back to Jerusalem, put on trial, and eventually put in prison. Verse three, as he journeyed, he came near Damascus. Almost approaching Damascus, suddenly, this is when the Lord intervenes. A bright, shining light surrounds him.

Speaker 1
Which knocks him to the ground, and from that light, he heard a voice calling his name twice: "Saul, why persecuteth thou me?" So, what we have here in Acts nine verse four is Saul of Tarsus, his conflict with Christ. Saul, why are you persecuting me? That is the question. The risen, ascended, glorified Christ is now inquiring of Saul, "Why are you persecuting me? Because by persecuting my followers, you are in fact persecuting me. So whatever you're doing to them, you're doing to me." So that's the question which is asked. And then in chapter nine, verse five.

Speaker 1
Sol of Tarsus turns around with a question of his own inquiry: 'Who art thou, Lord?' Sol's inquiry: 'Who are you, Lord?' The answer is within the question. 'Who are you, Lord?' Lord is kurios in the Greek. 'Who are you, Lord?' The answer's there with that last title. In other words, who are you? What's your name? Identify yourself. This is what Saul of Tarsus is now inquiring. Who are you, Lord? Identify yourself. So the Lord's reply is given. Verse five: I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. When you read the account that Paul gives in Jerusalem,

Speaker 1
Acts 22, verse 1 to 20, where he's standing before the Jewish crowd in the temple

area, and he speaks to them in the Hebrew language. The Lord actually is more specific. In Acts 22, verse 8, he says, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' So that's missing in that detail here in Acts chapter 9, verse 5, that added detail. You find in Acts twenty-two verse eight, 'I am not just Jesus, but Jesus of Nazareth.' We have a location connected to the name. And in verse six, obviously, with seeing this, the Lord's glory being knocked to the ground, he is trembling, he is astonished, and notice how he addresses.

Speaker 1
The Lord, by His title, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Saul's second question: First, his, he asked the name, identify yourself. He's asking regarding what you want me to do. What am I expected to do? This shows Saul's Saul of Tarsus' readiness to serve. What do you want me to do? Saul or Paul was a man of action who never stood still and was always on the move, as his missionary work proves throughout the book of Acts, both in his first mission missionary service, out on the field in Cyprus, and then into Asia Minor. Then we have Paul's second missionary journeys, from Asia Minor into Europe.

Speaker 1
And then we have Paul's third mission, third missionary journeys from Europe back into Asia Minor, then ultimately leading to Rome. So what we have here is a great transformation regarding Saul of Tarsus, from being the destroyer of the Church of God in Jerusalem to becoming its defender as a chosen vessel of Christ. Chapter nine, verse fifteen and sixteen, the Lord reveals to Ananias. The Lord said unto him, that's Ananias, "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." So that aspect there is to do with service, where he will serve the Lord, proclaim his name, defend his name before the Gentiles and

Speaker 1
And their kings, and also to the children of Israel, and it would be to the children of Israel where the message would be given first, and we find this to be the case throughout the book of Acts. Then, from service, from serving, we move on to suffering. Chapter nine, verse sixteen: "For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name'sake." So, not only is he going to be used as a chosen vessel to proclaim the name of Christ, defend the name of Christ, and make known the name of Christ. That He will suffer as well greatly. Notice, great is the word there. Just like He caused the great persecution in chapter eight, verse one, to the early followers of Christ in Jerusalem. He was the antagonist behind the great persecution in Acts eight, verse one and two.

Speaker 1
He himself will suffer on equal measure greatly for the name of Christ, and we find this to be the case because once you read on from verse twenty to twenty-nine, after he has recovered from three days where he was not able to see, he lost. He

was blinded for three days and three nights after meeting the glorified, ascended Christ. That light blinded him for three days and three nights. He wasn't able to eat, just pray, waiting for Ananias to come along, and to play the major role of helping to restore Saul's sight and to help him physically to recover, and to also eventually baptize him. But after his full recovery, in chapter nine, verse twenty, he strode away immediately.

Speaker 1
Saul did not waste time. He preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God. That is an amazing turnaround because his intention was once he reached Damascus was to go to the synagogues and to arrest anyone there who was a follower of Christ. From being the destroyer to being the defender, what a complete turnaround! What was the reaction of the locals in Damascus? Chapter nine, verse twenty-one tells us. But all that heard him were amazed and said, "It's not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem and came hither for that intent that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests." In other words, is this the same Saul whose intentions was to come to Jerusalem?

Speaker 1
Apprehend and arrest, and take them back to Jerusalem. Could this really be the same person? And yet here we have Saul of Tarsus, from being the destroyer of the name of Christ to the defender of the name of Christ. And note verse 22: But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus. Proving that this is the very Christ, so we already Saul is giving the message that he is a true believer. He knows who this Jesus of Nazareth is. That this Jesus of Nazareth is the very Christ, meaning he is truly the Messiah. There's no buts or ifs.

Speaker 1
For Saul of Tarsus, he is convinced. Verse twenty-three. After that, many days were fulfilled. The Jews took counsel to kill him. This is the first indication of Paul suffering for the name of Christ, which is mentioned in chapter nine, verse sixteen. For I will show him how many great things he must suffer for my name's sake, and already now, Saul of Tarsus. He was the original persecutor of the early Jewish Church. Now has become the persecuted, from the persecutor to the persecuted. So there's now an attempt upon his life. No one could argue with Saul of Tarsus. Scripturally, he could go into the Old Testament scriptures. He could go into the synagogue.

Speaker 1
And he was able to point out why this Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, is the very Christ. The plot or the conspiracy was discovered, and certain disciples, the very disciples he was going to apprehend and arrest, protected him. They took him by night and let him down by the wall in a basket, chapter nine, verse twenty-three. Then the disciples, these are the very ones he wanted to arrest and return to Jerusalem, protected him, took him by night and let him down by the wall in a basket. That's

recorded by Paul in Second Corinthians eleven, verse thirty-two to thirty-three. Already early on.

Speaker 1
Just a matter of days after his conversion, Paul is now considered a threat, a danger. Once he was a danger to others, now he is, in a sense, a danger to himself because now he's proclaiming Christ and defending Christ. Paul didn't hold back. This also tells us regarding his mindset, his motives. He was committed to the right course. Before he was committed to the wrong course, now he's committed to the right course, which was to proclaim Christ, to defend Christ, and to make Christ known to the Gentiles, to the kings, and to the children of Israel. But notice, it's the Jews once again. It's the Jews.

Speaker 1
Who are the unbelieving Jews? Who are the opposition against Saul? As a result, it was suggested that he would travel to Jerusalem, where at least it would be safer for him. Maybe that's what Saul and others might have thought—that by being in Jerusalem, being amongst the other original apostles of Christ, the twelve apostles, at least there he will be in familiar ground, amongst familiar people, names and faces, and that this threat upon his life will not occur again. We find that the very opposite is true, because once he is in Jerusalem, there is a second attempt upon his life.

Speaker 1
From chapter nine, verse twenty-six through to thirty. So we're now changing location from his travels from Jerusalem to Damascus, which is about one hundred and thirty-five miles north, to another one hundred and thirty-five miles south from Damascus down to Jerusalem. Paul now is able to interact with the other apostles. And for the first time, or so I say, for the second time, we are introduced to Barnabas. Chapter nine, verse twenty-six: 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. And that is understandable, humanly, from a human point of view. There was some suspicion as to whether Saul had really become.

Speaker 1
A converted believer in Christ. Remember, he was the one who caused the great persecution. He's the one who dispersed the followers of Christ beyond Jerusalem and beyond the land of Israel. So obviously, they are treading carefully. Is he not? Can we trust him? Can we not trust him? In their minds, it's kind of fifty-fifty. How can we be sure that he is truly one of us? Enter Barnabas, chapter nine, verse twenty-seven. But Barnabas took him; in other words, he took him on board, 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. That is the main emphasis.

Speaker 1
Acts chapter nine. There's always this reference to the name, referring to the name of Christ, or in this case, in the name of Jesus. Chapter nine, verse twenty-seven. So Barnabas said, 'I come back for him because I've heard that in Damascus he was preaching boldly. He was convincing. He was persuasive. No one could say anything against him, and it almost cost him his life.' That's why he's with us today in Jerusalem. In verse 28, he was with them, coming and going out of Jerusalem. He's now interacting with not just Barnabas, who has taken him on board, but he's now interacting with the other apostles, travelling in and out of Jerusalem.

Speaker 1
And even there, we find in chapter nine, verse twenty-nine, and he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Grecians, the Greek-speaking Jews, but they went about to slay him, meaning kill him. Attempted assassination number two.

Speaker 1
When the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus. So there was a second attempt upon Paul's life. It was discovered, and once again he had to escape with it, with his life. Caesarea is a seaport. And from there, he boards a ship and returns to his place of birth, which is Tarsus. In verse 31, for the first time, the churches in the surrounding areas are now experiencing some tranquility, peace, and normality. Then had the churches rest.

Speaker 1
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. So in Acts chapter 23 to 25, Saul of Tarsus escapes death by being lowered from a window inside a basket. Also in Jerusalem, the second attempt upon his life in Acts 9 verse 29 to 30, another attempt upon his life simply for proclaiming and defending the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. So this also shows us.

Speaker 1
Two things when we look at Paul's profile, we show his commitment, his dedication, he's fearless. He has a fearless faith, and to be out there in the big bad world for us and to proclaim the gospel, it's not going to be easy because we know we will receive opposition. Yet Paul was willing to face all that regardless. He was still willing to proclaim the name of Christ. For his motivation was that he did experience, he did see the risen, ascended, glorified Christ in His glory. It blinded him for three days and three nights. He heard the voice of the risen, ascended, glorified Christ, and I'm sure that if any of us had experienced the same ourselves.

Speaker 1
We will be out there as well, but Paul had this personal encounter with Christ that motivated him. That was a life-changing experience, and he was ready to serve. But

Paul, in his epistles, just to mention a few, looks back at this period of his life. He reflects back with regrets. He looks back at this because he did it out of ignorance. So in one Corinthians fifteen, verse nine, Paul says, 'For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.' That's in one Corinthians fifteen.

Speaker 1
Verse nine, in Galatians one verse thirteen to twenty-two, twenty-three, just to give a brief summary of what Paul says there, in Galatians one verse thirteen and twenty-two, twenty-three, for you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it, and in verse twenty-two, he looks back and reflects upon how people reacted to his conversion, and almost unknown by face to the churches of Judea, which were in Christ, but they were hearing only he who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy. That's in Galatians one, verse twenty-three. So there was this astonishment of is this the same?

Speaker 1
Is this the same guy? Is this the same man who whose intentions were to persecute the Church of God, to eliminate them, to erase them, to stamp out the name of Christ? In Philippians three, verse six, where Paul disregards his Jewish heritage, his Jewish roots, his Jewish background, where he considers everything a loss in order to gain a better knowledge and understanding of Christ. He says in Philippians three, verse six, concerning zeal, persecuting the church. He was zealous in his passion because he believed he was doing the right thing. He believed that was his purpose, which was to persecute this sect known as the Way, who were the followers and disciples of Christ. In one Timothy one, verse thirteen, looking back at things.

Speaker 1
Paul would say, 'Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, an insolent man, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.' That's in 1 Timothy 1, verse 13. So Paul, the Apostle Paul, did not shy away regarding his former past, what he had done, what he was. But also, he acknowledges God's grace upon his life, and that God had chosen him for a greater purpose. His purpose was not to destroy the Church of God, but to defend the Church of God and to establish churches, Gentile churches, in Asia and also in Europe.

Speaker 1
As we know, the Apostle Paul had a twofold ministry. Towards the end of the Book of Acts, his two-year imprisonment in Rome, which is recorded in Acts 28, verse 25 to 28, during that two-year period between A.D. 60 and 62, in that time of being alone in isolation, God had revealed a new phase in His plan and purpose. A phase which did not include the nation of Israel, the Jews, the covenants, the promises, the new covenants, or the Abrahamic covenants. God had now something new,

something special, specifically for the Gentiles, with a new calling, a new sphere of blessing, and a new hope, connected with heavenly places.

Speaker 1
With a new dispensation, which has a new character being grace, the dispensation of grace we just mentioned in Ephesians three, verse two, but within that dispensation of grace, it has also a main subject which is the mystery. And that mystery has to do with the fact that God had chosen before the foundation of the world individuals, a new company of people, who will be his heavenly inheritance, and who will be seated with Christ in heavenly places, far above all. This is found within the prison epistles, and that's something which we promote and advocate here as part of the Berean Publishing Trust. Paul's.

Speaker 1
Prison Epistles and the New Dispensation: the Dispensation of the Mystery. That ends today's study. Thank you.