

# Paul: A New Identity and Mission

Paul's story is one of radical transformation. Once a fierce persecutor of the church, he became one of the greatest apostles of Jesus Christ. His journey demonstrates that no one is beyond God's reach and that in Christ, we are given a new identity and purpose.

## Introduction

Throughout our *New Beginnings* series, we have explored how God restores, redeems, and calls His people into something greater. We saw how Moses overcame failure, David experienced forgiveness, Ruth walked in faithfulness, and Peter was transformed through redemption and boldness. Today, we close this series with the powerful story of Paul, a man whose life was completely transformed by an encounter with Jesus.

Paul's journey reminds us that no past is too broken for God to redeem, and no person is too far gone for God to call into His service. His story challenges us to embrace our new identity in Christ and boldly walk in the mission God has given us.

Today, we will explore three aspects of Paul's transformation: his past as a persecutor, his encounter with Jesus, and his new mission in Christ.

## Paul's Past: Persecutor of the Church

Paul, originally known as Saul, was a devout Pharisee who aggressively persecuted Christians, believing he was serving God. His actions are recorded in Acts 8:1-3 which says:

### Acts 8:1-3

(1) And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. (2) Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. (3) But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

Saul was highly educated and zealous in his Jewish faith. He believed that Christians were a threat to God's law and actively sought to eliminate them. His actions were not merely out of ignorance but out of a misguided sense of righteousness. However, his story demonstrates that no one is beyond the transformative power of God's grace.

There may be areas in our lives where we, like Saul, are convinced we are right, yet we are resisting God's true purpose.

Are there beliefs or attitudes in your life that might be misaligned with God's truth?

Have you ever judged or opposed something, only to later realize you were wrong?

Pray for humility and ask God to reveal areas where He wants to reshape your heart.



Consider Lee Strobel, author of *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, who once rejected Christianity, thinking it was foolishness, only to later encounter Jesus and experience life transformation. Stories of former atheists or skeptics becoming strong believers remind us of Paul's radical shift.

But everything changed when Saul had a personal encounter with Jesus that redefined his entire life's purpose.

### Paul's Encounter with Jesus and New Identity

Saul's transformation began when he had a direct encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Acts 9:3-6

(3) As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. (4) He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (5) "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. (6) "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

This moment completely changed Saul's life. He was blinded for three days, symbolizing the spiritual blindness that had kept him from seeing the truth. But God sent Ananias to restore his sight, and through that, Saul, now Paul, was baptized and received a new identity in Christ.

Though many believe Jesus changed Saul's name to Paul, he actually began using his Roman name as he ministered to the Gentiles, reflecting his new mission.

Like Paul, we are all called into a new identity when we encounter Jesus.

Have you fully embraced your identity in Christ, or are you still holding onto your past?

What "old ways" do you need to leave behind to walk fully in God's calling?

Take a moment today to pray and ask God: "How do You see me?" Write down what He reveals and commit to embracing His truth about your identity.

Think of Millard and Linda Fuller who were millionaires and one day recommitted their lives to Jesus and donated houses and millions of dollars to start Habitat for Humanity. Over the next decades, the Fullers embraced a simple lifestyle and a modest salary as they led Habitat to build homes for people who could not afford one.

### Paul's Mission and Boldness in Christ

After Paul's conversion, he became one of the most influential apostles, preaching the Gospel fearlessly. His life mission was completely redirected, and he declared in Galatians 2:20:

Galatians 2:20

(20) I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Paul's transformation was evident in his unwavering commitment to spreading the Gospel. He endured beatings, imprisonment, shipwrecks, and rejection, yet he never wavered. His boldness was not based on personal strength but on the power of Christ working within him.



Despite his new mission, Paul faced extreme hardships, beatings, imprisonment, and shipwrecks. Yet, he pressed on, showing that God's calling is greater than any trial.

We all have a mission in Christ. It may not be preaching in distant lands, but it could be sharing your faith with a neighbor, serving in your community, or mentoring others in their walk with Christ.

What mission has God placed on your heart?

How can you take a step forward in boldness to fulfill it?

Write down one way you can serve God this week and ask for His strength to do it.

Take time this week to reflect on your own transformation in Christ.

How has Jesus changed your life?

Where is He calling you to step out in boldness?

This week, take one bold step in your faith—share your testimony, pray for someone, or serve in a new way. Like Paul, let Christ transform your mission!

### Conclusion

As we conclude our *New Beginnings* series, let us remember that each of these stories—Moses, David, Ruth, Peter, and Paul—reflects God's unchanging love and His desire to redeem and use His people for His glory. No matter where you are in your journey, God is always calling you into something greater.

Your past does not define you, God's grace does. Your failures do not disqualify you, His redemption restores you. Your future is not uncertain, His mission for you is secure.

This may be the conclusion of our series, but it is only the beginning of what God has planned for you. Step forward in faith, embrace your new identity, and boldly walk in the mission He has given you. Stay tuned for what is next as we continue being the hands and feet of Jesus in our homes, communities, and the world!

