

“What Jesus did in Paul”

Welcome and Opening Scripture	Ps 34:1,3
Hymn:	MP 33 And can it be
Reading:	Ps 36
Prayer of adoration and praise.	
Children’s talk	Butterfly
Open time to share and pray	MP 389 Jesus you are changing me choose
Notices	Dave /Flow tests, Three going to London and pray
Main reading:	Acts 9:1-22 (page 1102), Ez:25-28 (p.831)
Hymn:	We praise thee O God for the Son of thy love (Revival song)
Sermon	What Jesus did in Paul
Hymn	There is power in the blood
Close	-----

Listen to today’s sermon by clicking on the link at www.knbc.org.

The audio file is [21_08_29.mp3](#).

Welcome and pray

- At home I have some ‘before and after’ pictures. They are of a charity that does gardening work. They take an overgrown, messy garden that has been neglected - and transform it into something, ordered and tidy. With new plants > beautiful. You can see a lot of work has gone into it.
- Again on TV there are those house restoration programmes. The house is a wreck, a complete shamble, broken down, damp, dirty, stinking rubbish, water coming in etc. you get the picture - then come the post renovation pictures. It is barely recognisable. It has had a complete reworking, the huge effort and expense expended is obvious - and the

outcome it really impressive. What they didn’t do it just redecorate, (as we are doing a bit at WHR). Ever tried, ever been foolish enough to paint over a damp wall? How long did it last? No time at all, it is back to where it was. No - a fundamental reworking is necessary.

■ A change as profound as the caterpillar which becomes the butterfly! So it was with Paul. We are continuing in our series of people Jesus met. Today it is the Apostle Paul. Here he is, squeezed into two sermons: this week it is *What Jesus did in Paul*. Next week *What Paul did for Jesus*. x2 Acts 9 is our main passage. Up to this moment it has mainly been about Peter and then Stephen and Philip, other disciples – Now the rest is about Paul. A significant time is given to this so it is important.

This telling of his conversion can be split up into three distinct sections:

How Paul was before, what happened, and then how he was afterwards x2

Acts 9:1-2, 3-19a, 19b-22

Here with this conversion - we have the essence of every true conversion.

So firstly Paul before verses 1-2,

What was he like before? **1 Saul was 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.**

Paul was hostile. Paul was hostile to anyone who followed ‘The Way’. The ‘Way’ was the early name for followers of Jesus. A good name to use today as it indicates that true Christians as those who actively follow Jesus’s Way.

There are six other places where Paul speaks of his conversion in the Holy Scriptures – so it is that important. Let us take note and learn. In Gal 1:13 he says: **you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.**

Again in Phil 3 he says he **persecuted the church**; in 1Co 15:9 he says he deserved nothing **because I persecuted the church of God**. In a more personal statement to Timothy he says: **I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man**, 1Ti 1:13 and goes on to describe himself as **the worst of sinners**

That’s a pretty terrible self –admission. How do you see yourself? - the more Paul knew himself - the worse he saw himself to be!

He threatened God’s people with death, Paul was a murderer, an instrument of the enemy as he tries to terrify and break the spirit of God’s people. He is

trying to destroy the name and work of Christ by persecuting His people. In Acts 22:4,5 he says: **I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison,**

✚ **He was an inveterate enemy to Christianity, he did his utmost to root it out, by persecuting everyone who embraced it. – Afghanistan no.2 WWL**

Acts 26: **"I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. ... In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.** Acts 26:9-11

Yes there are many godless people around, those who openly malign God and all he stands for. They are what The Bible describes as **'God haters'**.

They hate God – and hate God's people. This has always been the case, all through time, all around the world there are individuals and governments who attack, arrest, imprison, torture and persecute anyone who professes to follow Jesus Christ. Often there is a strong atheist regime behind them such as in the ex-Soviet block, or China, Albania, or North Korea. Like Paul they hound Christians to death. In the West it is a strong coalition of atheistic secular humanism who promote intolerance to anyone who stands for Godliness and go to great lengths to reinforce this through legislation.

Often persecution is in the name of one of the world's many religions; look at Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim countries. **The religious are often the worst.**

Yes, this is also true of those who profess to worship the God of the Bible. The most widespread European persecution has been at the behest of the Roman Catholics with their many inquisitions, read about the French persecution of the Huguenots and you will be horrified.

[Meet Paul the religious man](#)

I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. Gal 1:14

He lays out his impressive religious CV in Phil **If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, (by that he means his own goodness) 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 legalistic righteousness, faultless.** Phil 3:3-6

His zeal to search for and stamp out heresy, was as he saw it, confirmation that he was serving God. Jesus said it would happen **They will put you out of**

the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. Joh 16:2

✚ **Why is it that those who profess to worship the God of the Bible - attack those who profess to worship the same God of the Bible?**

It is because they don't really worship Him - for that needs a heart change and they do not have that heart change. As we had last week from Rom 8 The sinful heart, **the sinful mind is hostile to God.** Despite words, deep down God is hated. **It does not submit to God's law, it will not, nor can it do so.** Ro 8:7
There are those who profess to follow Christ, try to conform to what they think is required, do their best, or at least do their bit, and yet because they do not have the Spirit of Christ in them - are still lead by they own nature, a nature that does not love God so will not submit to Him.

Are you one of those who, for all your public alignment with all things Christian, deep down refuse Jesus to be Lord of your life? Are you still hostile to Christ? That life is a pretence. Christ can see it. And after a while all will see that there is no love for God, no desire to honour Him, no desire to speak of Him or urgently pursue the things of Christ and his Kingdom. This lack of love for Christ will be seen in a lack of love for your fellow man. It will be seen as you have no desire to give yourself to the Lord's work – nor His gospel work. You go about your own business. And why?

Those who live according to the sinful nature (the flesh) have their minds set on what that nature desires; Ro 8:5 **Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.** Ro 8:8 For many it is a secret hostility.

For Paul it is all out in the open, this is his expression of his religious life. Then God intervenes - and stops him in his tracks – literally. Bang!

So what happened? x2 verses 3 - 19a,

There are four elements we can see here by which Christ changes someone?

[Firstly - There is a voice - the voice.](#)

Paul said in Ac 22 he **saw the Righteous One and heard words from his mouth.** He said **I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?'** "'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. "'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' Acts 22:7,8 and here Acts 9:3-5. Please note to persecute Christ's people, his church, is to persecute him - for it is His body. He heard the voice – that voice was Christ's voice - The way God changes things, the way he acts is through His Word, through speaking, and this is by His Son Jesus who is the Word, the Word of God. This is true today.

v7 says the others with him only hear sounds, as he recalls in Acts 22 **My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.** Acts 22:9 **This voice is specific to him.**

See how God works? You are sitting next to someone, and they hear something from a sermon that you don't, it is *particular* to them. One person is in a crowded room, maybe a large auditorium and everyone hears the same words – and yet that voice is for that one man, that one woman, that one boy, that one girl, *you are not too young, listen out for it...*

✚ **The voice he heard was the voice of Christ. No voice but his can reach the heart. Seeing and hearing are our two learning senses; Christ here, by both these doors, entered into Saul's heart.**

So secondly there is light

As Paul neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And He fell to the ground It was a light from Heaven, the fountain of light, from the God of heaven, the Father of lights.

It is such a dramatic event it is ever fresh in his mind: **About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me.** Ac 22:6

Before Kings Agrippa Paul says **“O King, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me** Acts 26:13 for it was visible at mid-day, and outshone the sun in his meridian strength and lustre.

Acts 22:11 He says **the brilliance of the light had blinded me.** The light caused him to fall back blinded, he could only grope around and his **companions led me by the hand.** He helplessly stumbles, he's blind, he's lost, he's overwhelmed with the force of Christ's Glory. Broken he's hiding from him who sees everything.

✚ **Paul is here being shown his true spiritual state.**

Paul saw himself as enlightened, in all his knowledge and learning he thinks he can see clearly, **Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."** Joh 9:41.

It is the work of Christ's Spirit to convict of sin. The Holy Spirit brings the bright light of Christ Holiness to show up my darkness, my sinfulness.

Before Saul was made a saint, he was made to see himself a sinner, a great sinner, a sinner against Christ. Now he was made to see that evil in himself which he never saw before and he died to it. Please note: **A humbling conviction of sin must be the first step towards a saving conversion from sin.**

No short cuts - Opening hole in Chrysalis to help the butterfly squeeze out.

The HS of God at work in a man or woman first *convict before He comforts.*

Thirdly - There is human agency

Meet Ananias, God prompts Ananias to go to him "Ananias was a **devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there.** Acts 9:12

✚ **God doesn't have to use people to save people - but he chooses to.**

Ananias is fearful because of Paul's violent history - but he is obedient to the call of God. We must not fear man but fear God. Ananias is ready to listen and ready to obey. Ananias is available for what Christ wants of him.

If you are too busy with other things, unwilling, not listening, unresponsive to Christ's leading - then he will use someone else. The Joy will be theirs not yours. God chooses to use people, willing people. Ananias is called and he is obedient to that call.

**Is Christ using you? Is he - through your weakness - revealing His Glory?
– Is he using the foolish message of the cross from your willing lips?**

Fourthly - The Spirit comes to Paul

Ananias ... placing his hands on Saul, said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Now broken, he is forgiven, his sin is not counted against him, he receives that grace from the cross made possible through the blood of Christ

Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. Ac 9:17-18 [Personal testimony of brokenness and awakening](#)

✚ **When Christ speaks and calls - it is effected in me by His Spirit.**

His eyes are opened and he is healed, so now he **got up and was baptised.**

There is something extra - Paul is an apostle

"Paul **saw the Righteous One** Ac 22:14, **Jesus appeared** to him on the road, v17 Jesus says to Paul in Acts 26:16 **'I have appeared to you** and later when Paul went up to the temple **"When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord speaking.** Acts 22:17,18

Paul saw Jesus - To see Jesus is not true for any other believer today. For Paul there is this extra element, he sees Jesus –why? because Paul is to be an apostle and the sign of the apostle is that they have seen Jesus. Paul said: **last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.** 1 Cor 15:8

This is not our experience now. I have had so many people over the years say they have seen Jesus – ask a few questions and it is immediately clear this is not the case. *Satan is the expert in deceiving manifestations!*

Finally - The new Paul *verses 19b – 22 and on*

We often hear that Saul becomes Paul, well Saul is the Jewish name as in King Saul. Paul however, is the Roman name and oft used as Paul and the narrator Luke are increasing moving in and writing to the Roman World.

Many do change their name - a change of name, to show a change of heart. Saul has publically declared and displayed his he is now to Christ in his baptism. Saul as a disciple of Jesus Christ not only ceases to oppose him, but now conspicuously devotes himself entirely to his service and honour. **That is what true conversion is.**

- Mark when he is baptised will speak of how he has been changed and who it is who has done it.

Paul **at once** x2 began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. Immediately, the change was sudden, to show that it was miraculous.

■ Like a man on his deathbed, there is life and vitality - he's up and well!
All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who caused 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 Christ. Acts 9:20-22

He speaks out – not against Christ - but for Christ. Wow, what a turn-around! This is the modern miracle. Has Jesus worked this miracle in you?

Paul is a new and different man, he has a changed nature. Just like his namesake Saul in the OT we read: **The Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power, and he was changed into a different person.** x2 1Sa 10:6

- Imagine a person so hostile to Jesus say Richard Dawkins - now speaking out for Christ,

God can do it. There are those here in the chapel who have been coming for a while but we don't hear the praises of God from their lips –

You hear them speak of other things but not Christ - can you image them suddenly coming up to the front and speaking about what Christ has done!

Christ changes people, the hard heart is softened, that heart of stone becomes a new heart of flesh. He can drain away bitterness and put in love. Christ has the power ... Jesus can change anyone, whoever you are, whatever you have done.

- Butterfly leaflet - The sign of this beautiful new life is seen in that a person does not continue in or habitually sin, but believes in Christ,

practices righteous living, loves other Christians, overcomes the world and all its enticements and keeps himself pure. Here says Bishop J.C.Ryle are the tests of true conversion and the sure signs of being Born Again.

Gospel challenge

You might be thinking “I have not had a Damascus road experience” So the phrase goes, but to enter the Kingdom of God you must have met the One who is the Light. It is the Lord who shines his light into our dark hearts, and turns them around. A fire is lit, that you to may be light-bearers.

✚ **Knowing about God - is not the same as knowing God – there is Life!**

Paul sums it up by saying: **I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, (dung) that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.**”^{Php 3:8-9}

God works in the heart to open it, humble it to change it. It is the profoundest of miracles. That man or women is never the same again, God makes us into a new and different person.

Yes it is from God, all from him – Will you cry out for him, and receive!

✚ **To find Christ –or for him to find you is the most profound experience,**

- It is not a quick make-over, it is not papering over the cracks but a real reworking that is started and continues on until perfection comes.
- A renewed heart is like a patch of ground once cleared continuing with more and more planting of flowers as you become more and more adorned with the beauty of Christ

To be a Christian means you have a story to tell. There will be how you were before, - what happened - and what the Lord has made you.

Paul mentions his conversion six times, it is the defining moment for him – as so for everyone. As our birth - so our rebirth.

Caterpillar, chrysalis, Butterfly - We've seen Paul's 'before & after' pictures So Christ wants to transform your life into one of beauty, an inner change, an inner beauty that shines out. The title is “What Jesus did for Paul”

Can you say what “Jesus has done for me?” – does it show in what you now do and say for Him? next week we will see “what Paul did for God”

END