

What Changed About Paul?

Intro: What changed Paul from a seemingly devout Jew who wanted to defeat Christ and his followers to someone who almost immediately started preaching that he had been wrong and that Jesus of Nazareth was truly who he claimed. Tonight, we observe some evidence.

1. Had he become a “tortured, perfectionist, lawkeeper”?
 - A. Some have drawn this conclusion from Romans 7:7-25. I don’t think so.
 - B. Some say his frustration with his own imperfection caused him to channel his anxiety to activity for God. In his case, trying to destroy Christianity.
 - C. Paul appears to have been like most of his proud countrymen.
 1. Was he describing himself in Romans 2:17-20 before he was Christian?
 2. He said he was quite proud of his life before he knew better. Phil. 3:7
 3. What he says about himself in Acts 23:1 doesn’t describe a self-tortured lawkeeper at any point in his life.
2. Paul made this radical change because he changed his mind about Jesus.
 - A. Nationalism could have been an obstacle.
 - B. Jesus’ death would have made him a loser to someone like Paul.
 - C. Paul went to Damascus to arrest Christians. He ends up spending time with his new brethren. Acts 9:19; 26:19-20
 - D. Paul wasn’t a “frustrated legalist”. His problem: He had been wrong about Jesus.
3. Understanding Christ then changed Paul’s attitude about his past. See 2 Corinthians 3.
 - A. He speak of the Old Covenant in critical terms. 3:7, 9
 - B. But he insists it had glory (3:10). But the glory in Jesus “excels”.
 - C. In Galatians 4, he speaks of the Old Covenant as “bondage” and “slavery”. But notes these ideas in comparison to the liberty he found in Christ.
 - D. Paul wasn’t the first rabbi of his day to have some appreciation for the inability of man to please God without mercy. It was also an OT concept.
 - E. Recognizing the resurrected Jesus opened his eyes to a better understanding of the OT.

Conclusion: Many people, then and still those today, are unwilling to accept that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah seen throughout Old Testament scripture. When Saul met Christ on that road to Damascus, he realized he was the one who was wrong, not the followers of Jesus. That’s what changed him.