

**Text: Acts 7:58-8:3**

**Title: HEROES: Ordinary People Living Extraordinary Lives  
Part Three: The Apostle Paul**

**Introduction:**

Paul first walked on stage in the biblical record in the midst of a very intense and hostile scene. Stephen, one of the seven men who had been chosen and appointed to care for the Grecian widows in the dynamic and growing church in Jerusalem, had just been dragged bodily to the outskirts of the city. It was a gruesome scene. Various members of the Jewish Sanhedrin – a body of seventy-one key leaders in Israel – picked up stones and pelted Stephen until he died. Ironically, they believed they were doing the will of God. While they were carrying out this horrible atrocity, they “laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.” He had just approved of Stephen’s murder. This means that the high priest in Israel and other members of the Sanhedrin had given him authority to oversee this vicious attack. Consequently, Saul carried out this awful task as if he’d been given direct orders from God Himself. He was merciless.

But then something changed...this dealer of death and minister of murder had now become Christ’s messenger. Now he would serve Christians instead of sentencing them, he would preach Christ instead of persecuting the church.

What a great transformation – from Saul to Paul, from murderer to messenger!

Let’s take a look into the life of one of the greatest messengers of all time, our hero: The Apostle Paul

## 1. His Conversion

### a. Supernatural Intervention – Acts 9:1-9

- The term **intervention** has become a popular way to describe the process of confronting people we love – family members or friends who are heading in the wrong direction and who are on the verge of literally destroying their lives and desperately hurting those close to them.
- **Illustrate** – addiction, behavior, habits
- This intervention was not human in any way – this was a supernatural intervention from the holy trinity and Jesus was the spokesman for the group.
- This intervention stopped a malicious madman on a rampage – going from house to house and hauling off to prison those who had put their faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. But Jesus stepped in, and there was a great...

### b. Spiritual Transformation – Acts 9:19-21

- There on the road to Damascus, Saul gets a visit from heaven. He sees a bright light, stunned, he falls to the ground, and Christ speaks directly to Saul – “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Saul responds, “Who are you Lord?” Jesus responds, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”
- Saul was always a religious man – very knowledgeable about the OT Law and practices, but all he had was religion, not relationship.
- And on that day everything changed.

## 2. His Calling

### a. Suffer for Christ's sake – Acts 9:15-16

- After Saul's conversion everything about him would change – his focus, his desires, his motive, and even his name – Paul
- He was now recruited to follow Christ and unashamedly Paul would do whatever the task may be – even if it was suffer for Christ's sake
- He would face –
  - Parental Rejection
  - Religious Persecution
  - Beatings
  - Imprisonment
  - Shipwrecked
  - ...all for the cause of Christ

### b. Specific Duties – 2 Timothy 2:11-12

- Preacher
    - The Greek meaning for preacher is “herald” or “to proclaim.” It means one who makes a public announcement as ordered by another.
    - **Application:** We all have that opportunity to be a herald for Jesus and to proclaim the gospel to a lost and dying world.
  - Apostle
    - Paul's call to be an apostle points to the authority as a messenger. Everywhere that Paul went he truly spoke with God given authority.
    - **Application:** We too need to speak with God given authority. It is not because of our knowledge and our words, but because we have the Holy Spirit using us as vessels for Him.
- Acts 1:8, “But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”
- Teacher.
    - As a teacher he had to go among the Gentiles. Paul was used by God to teach other men and women about Christ. He took Timothy under his wings and helped guide him as an example of Christ.
    - **Application:** Can you think of someone who did this with you? Think of someone who dedicated part of their life to be a teacher and an example to you. Now it is your turn. Upperclassmen do you understand the great responsibility as the underclassmen look up to you? Be the leader you should be and direct them the right way.

### 3. His Confidence

#### a. Spirit Led – Acts 20:22-23

- In addition to his own premonitions about the difficulties he might face in Jerusalem, Paul received very specific and repeated warnings directly from the Holy Spirit about the way he would be treated when he arrived. He shared this information with the Ephesian elders when he met with them in Miletus. First he told them he was “compelled by the Spirit,” to go “to Jerusalem.” However, the same Holy Spirit warned him in city after city that he would face “prison and hardships.”
- The mixed message is obvious. He was definitely in God’s perfect will in making this decision. But the Holy Spirit also stated unequivocally that he would face serious persecution. Though the message was mixed, it was not contradictory. The only people who were confused were other Christians – not Paul himself. He knew what he had to do, even if he lost his life.

#### b. Stood firm in his beliefs – Romans 1:16

- Paul told Timothy that he was confident in whom he had put his beliefs in. The verse says, “for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able...” this portrays an intimate relationship between himself and God. Do you portray a relationship with God?

→ **Faithful to devotions**

*Psalm 119:9-11, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

*With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.*

*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

*Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.”*

→ **Faithful to prayer**

*Psalm 55:17, “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.”*

*I Timothy 2:8, “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”*

→ **Faithful to Church**

\*\* Paul wrote in Romans 8:38 - 39 that nothing can “separate us from the love of God.” Don’t let money, possessions, family, girlfriends, boyfriends, and friends – don’t let anything get in between you and God. Pursue that type of relationship in your life.

- What about you? Are you confident in whom you believe in? Do you trust that God will be there for you?

## Conclusion:

At the end of Paul's life he stated these words:

***“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:”***

What will be said about you? What lasting impression will you make? The apostle Paul had a great change in his life – and then he was obedient to his calling and confident in what he believed in!

Are you?