



Sermon Discussion Guide for Cumberland Fellowship Church Sermon Series: “The Life of Paul: From Persecutor to Proclaimer – Week 1”, June 28, 2026

OPENING PRAYER

Begin your time by inviting God’s presence and asking Him to open your heart and mind to what He wants to reveal through Paul’s story.

OPENING REFLECTION

Have you ever been absolutely convinced you were right about something, only to discover you were completely wrong? How did that realization feel?

SERMON OVERVIEW

This week we began a new series exploring the life of the Apostle Paul—arguably the greatest influencer of the gospel message in history. We examined Paul’s background as Saul of Tarsus: a brilliant student of the law, trained under the prestigious Rabbi Gamaliel, and a zealous Pharisee who violently opposed the early church. His dramatic encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus transformed him from Christianity’s greatest enemy into its most passionate advocate. Paul’s life demonstrates that no past is too dark for God’s redemptive power.

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

- **Acts 22:3** – Paul’s background and training
- **Galatians 1:13-14** – Paul’s persecution of the church
- **Acts 8:1-3** – Saul’s approval of Stephen’s death and destruction of the church
- **Acts 9:1-9** - The Damascus Road encounter
- **Acts 26:12-18** – Paul’s testimony of his conversion and calling

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

UNDERSTANDING PAUL’S BACKGROUND

1. **Paul was educated in the most prestigious religious school of his day and was “faultless” in keeping the law.** How did his religious knowledge and zeal actually blind him to recognizing Jesus as the Messiah? What does this teach us about the difference between religious knowledge and true relationship with God?
2. **Paul was “extremely zealous for the traditions of [his] fathers” (Galatians 1:14).** Can you think of examples today where people are so devoted to traditions, rituals, or religious systems that they miss the heart of Jesus? How can we guard against this in our own lives?
3. **Paul genuinely believed he was serving God by persecuting Christians.** What does this reveal about the danger of sincerity without truth? How can we ensure our passion for God is aligned with His actual will?

THE DAMASCUS ROAD ENCOUNTER

1. **Jesus asked Saul, “Why do you persecute me?”—not “Why do you persecute my followers?”** What does this reveal about Jesus’ relationship with His church? How should this truth impact the way we treat other believers?
2. **Saul was literally blinded by his encounter with Jesus and couldn’t see for three days.** What might God have been teaching him through this physical blindness? How does this mirror his previous spiritual blindness?
3. **Imagine the thoughts running through Saul’s mind during those three days of blindness—no food, no water, just processing everything.** What do you think he was wrestling with? Have you ever had a moment where God completely disrupted your plans and perspective?

GOD’S CALLING AND PURPOSE

1. **Jesus told Saul, “I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness” (Acts 26:16).** God called Paul immediately after his conversion, before he had proven himself or earned credibility. What does this teach us about how God calls and uses people?
2. **Paul went from being Christianity’s greatest threat to its greatest advocate.** What does Paul’s transformation tell us about the power of a genuine encounter with Jesus? How has your encounter with Christ changed the direction of your life?
3. **The sermon emphasized that “your past doesn’t define you.”** Why is this such a powerful truth? How does the enemy use our past to disqualify us from God’s purposes? How do we combat this lie?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. **Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”** Who in your life models what it means to follow Christ wholeheartedly? How can you be that example for someone else?
2. **Pastor Jordan connected this series to previous messages about legacy, your moment, being kingdom-prepared, and fulfilling the Great Commission.** How does Paul’s life inspire you to live with greater purpose and intentionality? What specific area is God challenging you in?
3. **Paul traveled 150 miles to Damascus, driven by passion to destroy the church.** After his conversion, that same intensity was redirected toward building the church. How can God redirect your passions, strengths, and even past mistakes for His kingdom purposes?
4. **Paul was willing to face persecution, imprisonment, and death to share the gospel.** What holds you back from sharing your faith more boldly? What would it look like to have Paul’s level of commitment in your everyday life?

GOING DEEPER

1. **Paul’s transformation wasn’t just about stopping bad behavior—it was about a complete change of identity and purpose.** How is true conversion different from simply behavior modification? What areas of your life need transformation, not just improvement?
2. **God chose to use Paul—someone with blood on his hands—to write most of the New Testament and reach the Gentile world.** What does this reveal about God’s grace, His sense of irony, and His ability to redeem any story? How does this give you hope?

THIS WEEK’S CHALLENGE

Reflect and Respond:

- Spend time this week reading Acts 9 and meditating on Paul’s conversion story.
- Ask God: “What ‘traditions’ or beliefs am I holding onto that might be keeping me from fully following You?”
- Identify one area where your past is holding you back from God’s calling. Confess it to God and receive His truth that you are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- Share your testimony with at least one person this week—how Jesus changed your life, just as He changed Paul’s.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank God for His transforming power that can change any heart, no matter how hard.
- Pray for boldness to share the gospel like Paul did, regardless of opposition or fear.
- Ask God to reveal any blind spots in your spiritual life—areas where you might be sincerely wrong.
- Lift up anyone you know who feels disqualified by their past, asking God to speak truth over their identity.
- Pray for this sermon series—that God would use Paul’s example to inspire world-changers in your church and community.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Paul’s life proves that no one is beyond God’s reach and no past is too broken for His purposes. The same Jesus who met Saul on the Damascus Road wants to meet you right where you are—not to condemn you, but to call you, transform you, and use you for His glory. Your greatest failures can become your most powerful testimony. Will you let Him redirect your passion and write your story of redemption?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Read Philippians 3:4-14 to see Paul’s reflection on his past versus knowing Christ
- Study Acts 22 and Acts 26 for Paul’s personal testimonies of his conversion
- Explore 1 Timothy 1:12-17 where Paul calls himself the worst of sinners, yet shown mercy
- Consider memorizing 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

May the example of Paul inspire you to follow Christ with radical devotion, knowing that your past does not define you—His grace does.