

# Paul - The Possibilities in a New Normal

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Randy Hageman

**It was probably around the age of thirteen that \_\_\_\_ came to Jerusalem to study under one of the greatest rabbis of the 1st Century, Gamaliel.**

*Paul: 'And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.'*

—Galatians 1:14 (ESV)

*For some say, 'His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.'*

—2 Corinthians 10:10 (NIV)

*Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at [Stephen] and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

—Acts 7:57-58 (NLT)

*Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen. A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria.... But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.*

—Acts 8:1,3 (NLT)

**Everything in Saul's life has been pointing him to this extreme \_\_\_\_ to be a Pharisaical Jew who is zealous for his faith and will do anything to defend it.**

*Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.*

—Acts 9:1-2 (NLT)

*As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?' 'Who are you, lord?' Saul asked. And the voice replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.' The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.*

—Acts 9:3-9 (NLT)

**Saul's life plan seemed set, but with a flash of light in a few seconds the whole trajectory of his life \_\_\_\_.**

**If our thinking is inherently biased against change, we're setting ourselves up for lots of disappointments, because change is a \_\_\_\_ in this world of ours.**

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

—Hebrews 13:8 (NLT)

**The more we keep our faith focused on God, as revealed in**

**Jesus Christ, the more comfortable we can be with change, because we know He \_\_\_\_ going to change.**

*Jesus: 'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.'*

—Matthew 7:24-27 (ESV)

**Sooner or later we're all going to face a \_\_\_\_, a change, an event that changes a lot of things in our lives.**

**Many times, the storms bring real trials and losses, but many times, the changes turn out to be something new and \_\_\_\_ than we imagined.**

*Paul: '...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.'*

—Philippians 4:11-13 (NIV)

**These times may be tough, but they can also be an opportunity to discover that when Jesus Christ is our source and strength and foundation, we can find \_\_\_\_ and peace in any situation.**

**God's goal for us isn't to protect us but to \_\_\_\_ us increasingly into the image and likeness of His Son Jesus Christ.**

**Maybe God is giving many of us an opportunity to establish a new normal that includes \_\_\_\_ in new and profound ways.**

**We won't all have Saul's sudden, earth-shattering experience because we're all in \_\_\_\_ places, but no matter where we are, God is willing to start right now helping us get to where He wants us, if we'll take some time and listen.**

*Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, 'Ananias!' 'Yes, Lord!' he replied. The Lord said, 'Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again.' 'But Lord,' exclaimed Ananias, 'I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name.' But the Lord said, 'Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake.'*

*—Acts 9:10-16 (NLT)*

**God led Ananias to be an \_\_\_\_ to open the door for Saul to begin ministering in Jesus Christ's name.**

**We're not all called to become an Apostle Paul, but every one of us who calls on the Name of Jesus as Savior and Lord has a \_\_\_\_ in God's Kingdom, and if we're listening and obedient, we'll be used by Him, as Ananias was.**

*So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength. Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in*

*the synagogues, saying, 'He is indeed the Son of God!' All who heard him were amazed. 'Isn't this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus' followers in Jerusalem?' they asked. 'And didn't he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?'*

*—Acts 9:17-21 (NLT)*

*Then Saul, who was also called Paul,...*

*—Acts 13:9 (NIV)*

*Paul: 'To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.'*

*—1 Corinthians 9:22-23 (ESV)*

**The name change was probably more of a decision by Paul to bring people to \_\_\_\_ than anything else.**

**We may be surprised, but God isn't, and He promises that He has a plan for our lives, a plan that has already incorporated the \_\_\_\_ we face as we head into new normals.**

*'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'*

*—Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)*

**God's ultimate plan is salvation through Jesus Christ for \_\_\_\_ person, so that no matter what happens in this life, you'll have eternity with Him.**

**Is God giving you the opportunity right now to rethink your priorities in life?**

**God has a plan for you and your life, and a \_\_\_\_ can't stop God from accomplishing His Will, if you're willing to trust Him in the midst of all this.**