



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Paul Encounters Jesus Risen—His Radical Rethink

Bible Reading: Acts 22:3-16; Phil. 3:5-9, 12; 2 Cor. 4:6

[Watch LIVESTREAM here at 10am](#)

[Join our post-sermon discussion on Zoom at 11am](#)

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“No single event, apart from the Christ-event itself, has proved so determinant for the course of Christian history as the conversion and commissioning of Paul.” —F. F. Bruce

SUMMARY: Paul’s encounter with the risen Jesus on the Damascus road is *the* most crucial event in Christian history, second only to Christ’s death & resurrection. Luke—the ‘great storyteller’—narrates the dramatic story three times in *Acts*. Yet it’s easy to miss the real significance in the outward drama. Notably Paul himself never recounts the outward drama. His autobiographical references trace the inner repercussions of that seismic event. Paul had to rethink his fundamental values, priorities and goals. He didn’t simply add Jesus to his former way of life. Paul declares, “God revealed His Son *in me*” (not simply ‘*to me*’); that God “shined into our hearts” in new creation; that he saw the “supreme value of Christ,” which depreciated everything else. We don’t need the outward drama, yet the same inward transforming experiences can be ours.

Hugh Montefiore (1920-2005) [Compare his conversion account with that of Saul/Paul]

Saul/Paul’s Damascus Road Encounter with the Risen Christ (Acts 22:3-16)

- A. Saul/Paul’s Case—Not a ‘Classic Religious Conversion’
- B. Paul’s conversion in *Acts* is not paradigmatic, or normative

Tensions between Luke's Narrative & Paul's Autobiography

- A. Luke, the great storyteller's, portrait of Paul in *Acts* vs. Paul in his own Letters
- In writing *Acts*, "Luke evidently had a different agenda from...Paul...So we should not be surprised by [divergences] between Luke's portrayal of his great hero [Paul] & the self-portrayal of Paul himself in his letters."—James Dunn
- B. Paul's Person & Autobiography
- C. Paul's Reserve (2 Cor. 12:1ff) vs. Luke's Dramatic Accounts (Acts 9, 22, 26)—the heavenly light, voice, blindness, etc.
- D. Saul/Paul objectively saw the Risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8)
- "...*Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?...*" (1 Cor. 9:1) "Last of all...he [Christ risen]...*appeared to me*" (1 Cor. 15:8)
- E. Paul's experience was subjective, not just external/objective—"God...reveal[ed] his Son *in me*" (Gal. 1:15-16)
- "The revelation...was experienced inwardly as well as outwardly: it was...not merely '*to me*' but '*in me*'." —F. F. Bruce
- F. Paul's Revelation, Apostleship, & Gospel (1 Cor. 9:1; Gal. 1:1, 12, 16)
- "Paul...insist[ed]...in *Galatians*, that he had received his commissioning directly...& his gospel directly 'through a revelation of Jesus Christ' (Gal. 1:1, 12, 16)...referring to his Damascus Road experience." —James Dunn

Dramatic Impact on Saul/Paul—causing a Radically Rethink (Gal. 1:15-16)

- A. 'Saul's encounter with the risen Christ...caused him to...immediately...rethink fundamental theological tenets'—Craig Blomberg
- B. "Paul *did not simply add Jesus to his former way of life.*"—David Capes

Paul's Allusions to the Damascus Road Encounter (2 Cor. 4:6; Phil. 3:5-9)

- A. Influence seen in Many of Paul's Letters
- B. **God 'Shone into our Hearts' for New Creation** (2 Cor. 4:6)
- "⁶...God who said, '*Let light shine out of darkness,*'...*shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.*" (2 Cor. 4:6 CSB)
 - "2 Cor. 3-4 relates to Paul's experience on the Damascus Rd. *There's a personal element to the apostle's*" —Abner Chou
 - "Just as God acted in creation whereby the darkness...was banished by the light, so now God shines 'the light of the gospel' into the hearts of those who receive Jesus as Savior. *This...a 'new creation'* (2 Cor. 5:17)." —G. K. Beale, D. A. Carson
- C. **Paul's Damascus Rd. Encounter reflected in Phil. 3:5-9, 12**
- "3 provides another description of the dramatic change...in Paul's life because of the Damascus road experience." —Frank Matera
 - "Why the reappraisal? '*Because of Christ*' ...& '*the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*' (Phil. 3:7-8). [This is the] equivalent of '*a revelation of Jesus Christ*' & '*to reveal his Son in/to me*' (Gal. 1:12, 16)"—Carey Newman
 - "Paul's conversion [generated] a radical 'change of mind'...with regard to...Jesus...*Phil 3:7-8...indicates a complete transformation of life-center...now focused in an all-absorbing way on Christ.*" —James Dunn

QUESTIONS:

- A. Read Luke's account of Saul/Paul's Damascus road experience in Acts 22:3-16.
1. Having read it together (without re-reading it) what are the main things you recall?
 2. What are the main features, & key facts in this account? Are they outward or inward?
 3. Compare your experience with Paul's depicted in Acts 22; what's similar, what's different?
- B. Now read Paul's own autobiographical account in Phil. 3:5-12 of how he was "apprehended by Christ" (3:12b)

1. What are the main features of this account?
 2. Compare & contrast Paul's own account (Phil 3) with Luke's narrative (Acts 22:3-16)
 3. Compare your experience with Paul's described in Phil. 3:5-12; what's similar, what's different?
- C. Consider the following statement by John Barclay; "*Paul...offers a paradigm...*Paul's biography...model[s] the reorientation effected by an encounter with Christ...God's 'calling in grace' has transformed his identity...He walks to a different drumbeat, on a path...oriented to 'the truth of the [gospel]'" In what ways does Paul '*offer a paradigm,*' (provide a pattern to us) of the change due to encountering Christ? Discuss.
- D. Read the application suggested by David Capes: "Like Paul many of us...talk about our 'personal encounter with Jesus.' But few [none?] of us actually have had an experience like Paul's. Besides, do we see the same results in our lives that Paul saw in his? Can our own changes be described that dramatically? Paul gave up all things for Christ (Phil. 3:8). His perspective on everything changed. He put his resume in the trash bin...How much are our priorities rearranged? For you has '*everything become new*' (2 Cor. 5:17)?" Discuss.