

Paul: The Unlikely Author of Colossians

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[0:00] Acts 21, 37. Paul is in Jerusalem where he's been arrested. And as the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, May I say something to you?

Do you speak Greek? He replied. Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led 4,000 terrorists out into the desert some time ago? Paul answered, I am a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city.

Please let me speak to the people. Having received the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps in motion to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic, Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.

When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said, I am a Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia, But brought up in this city under Gamaliel, I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.

I persecuted the followers of this way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as also the high priest and all the council can testify.

[1:26] I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

About noon, as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, Saul, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?

Who are you, Lord? I asked. I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting, he replied. My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

What shall I do, Lord? I asked. Get up, the Lord said, and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.

My companions led me by the hand into Damascus because the brilliance of the light had blinded me. A man named Ananias came to see me.

[2:31] He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. He stood beside me and said, Brother Saul, receive your sight.

And at that very moment, I was able to see him. Then he said, The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the righteous one and to hear words from his mouth.

You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now, what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

Well, tonight we are going to begin a series on the book of Colossians. So I would invite you to turn there in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 1. And in many ways, Colossae is like Bremen.

It was an out-of-the-way little place. Paul's method was to keep to the big cities, and Colossae didn't qualify.

[3:44] Paul had never been to Colossae, as far as we know. And Paul's never been to Bremen, as far as I know. Just like us, Paul didn't found the church in Colossae.

A man named Epaphras did. And so what would Paul write to a church like ours?

What would he write to a people like us? A people that he had never met personally? A people that he, a church that he had not founded personally?

What would Paul say to us? Well, the answer, as you read the book of Colossae, it could be summed up with one word, and it's Christ.

What would Paul want a church like ours? What would Paul want Grace Fellowship Church to think about? Well, the answer is Jesus Christ. Why?

[4:43] Why would that be the theme of this letter? Well, it was because something remarkable and amazing had happened to the Apostle Paul.

The letter of Colossae comes out of something that had happened to him. He had been born again. He had become a new man. And he had become radically Christ-centered.

His life was changed by this meeting that he had with the risen Christ. And that's what happens when you are saved.

Are you unsure if you are saved or not? Well, has this happened to you? 2 Corinthians 5.15 says, And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.

That is what happens in conversion. You no longer live for yourself. You now live for him who died for you. So Jesus Christ, that is who Paul is about.

[5 : 50] And that's what Paul wants, that's who Paul wants us to be about. And so if you have never been converted, you have never been born again, Paul wants you to experience Jesus Christ in a whole new way.

He wants you to find life in Christ. And if that has happened to you, then he wants you to grow up, to be built up in him.

And so that's why the theme of the letters of the Colossians is Jesus Christ. And so we are going to begin with this first verse in Colossians chapter 1.

And it says this, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy, our brother. Now, in the Bible, there are no useless words.

There are no superfluous words that just are unnecessary and unneeded. Each word has been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Every word is God-breathed, out from God to us.

[7 : 02] And so this very first word, Paul, is God-breathed. So who wrote this book? Paul. Paul.

And that's amazing. That is remarkable if you stop to think about it, that Paul, that Saul of Tarsus ever wrote this book.

Why is that so remarkable? Because if you think about who Paul is, everything in his makeup, everything in his past, it seems to be precisely calculated for Paul never to put his trust in Jesus Christ.

It seems that his background, his gifts, his talents, his personality were uniquely designed for him to think that I don't need Jesus.

So think about who Paul was. Think about how the deck was stacked against him. It's stacked against all of us, isn't it?

[8 : 04] But think about these five things. First, he was born to a well-to-do family. He was born to a well-to-do family. Somewhere along the line, his family could afford to buy citizenship in the Roman Empire.

He could afford, somewhere along the line in his family, he could afford to buy, the family could buy citizenship. Now, that wasn't cheap. The going rate in Paul's day was 500 drachma, which is about \$60,000.

Now, that's not exorbitant, but not very many of us could just come down and write a check for \$60,000 just for citizenship.

Paul's family could. Not only that, Paul could be sent away to go to school. That wasn't typical. Paul was from an affluent background.

We don't know very much about his family, but that much can be deduced. And Jesus was not kidding. He was not exaggerating when he said, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to be saved.

[9 : 11] Rich men find it very easy to trust in themselves, and that's Paul's background. So that's the first thing. Now, the second thing is, he was a Roman citizen. That shows up in several times in the book of Acts.

Paul wasn't part of the down and outs. He wasn't part of the disenfranchised. It wasn't like he was powerless. You know, that argument about religion is just the opiate of the masses.

Paul wasn't one of those down and out people that needed religion to be his crutch. He was a citizen of the most powerful city in the world, and he was an affluent citizen in that city.

Third, he had the best possible education. He grew up, or he was born, and probably he spent a few years at least, several years, in the city of Tarsus.

It's very doubtful that he was five or six when he was sent off to Jerusalem. And so he grew up for his younger years in Tarsus.

[10:16] And to us, that doesn't mean anything, but Paul was able to say, I'm a citizen of no ordinary city, no mean city, no average city. Tarsus was a cosmopolitan city.

It wasn't some backwoods place. It was a place that loved culture. It was a place where educated people came. Listen to what F.F. Bruce said about the city of Tarsus.

The people there, they were avid in the pursuit of culture. They applied themselves to the study of philosophy, the liberal arts, and the whole encyclopedia, so much so that Tarsus, in this respect, at least surpassed even Athens and Alexandria.

Tarsus, in short, was what we might call a university city. Tarsus was like Cambridge or Oxford. It was a place where the intellectual came.

It was a place where the cultural people came, the educated, the refined. That was the air that Paul was born into, and that was the air that he never left.

[11:22] He could quote poets. He could quote philosophers, and he didn't have to look them up. They were all up there. He could quote them off-cuff. Besides all that, we read, he sat at the feet of Gamaliel.

Again, that probably doesn't mean very much to us, but that meant something to the people that Paul was talking to. One of the, Gamaliel was one of the greatest Jewish rabbis in history.

So, in the ancient Jewish literature, it says this. This is from a group of literature called the Talmud. Since Rabban Gamaliel, the elder, died, there has been no more reverence for the law, and purity and piety died out at the same time.

Now, that's like me saying, ever since Michael Jordan retired from basketball, no one really plays basketball anymore. Do you understand? Gamaliel was a cut above the rest.

He led the way. He set the pace. Other people followed in his footsteps. And so, Paul was one of his greatest students.

[12:40] Paul could say, I surpassed even the young men of my age. So, if there was a gifted and talented class that sat at Gamaliel's feet, Paul was the head of that class.

He was the first in line. So, he's very educated. Fourth, he was very talented. That goes without saying. He's able to speak Greek, Aramaic, Latin.

That was just in that little bit of passage that we had read. So, he was very talented. He was very educated. How many commentaries have been written on his books? Go to any Christian bookstore.

Go online. How many books are written about Paul? What he's written? Explaining him. Trying to get to his ideas. Understand his ideas. They're going into them.

Going deeper into them. Arguing with each other about what he meant. More ink has been spilt explaining and trying to understand the Apostle Paul than anyone else in history except for the Son of God himself.

[13:41] Every sentence, as you read the New Testament, every sentence is pregnant with meaning. with depth, with thought. He could out-argue anyone.

He could take on the Judaizers and he does because he understood their arguments better than they themselves did. And he could go to Athens and he could quote pagan authors and pagan poets and pagan philosophers because he knew them better than anyone else did.

that was the air he breathed, that was the milk he drank from his youngest age. Now, fifth, why above all else is it surprising that Paul, Saul of Tarsus, of all people, would give himself wholeheartedly to Jesus Christ?

Well, he was religious and nothing will keep a man off of Jesus Christ like religion will. He was a Pharisee.

That means that Paul's life was religion. It wasn't a thing he did once or twice a week. It wasn't 40 hours of his week.

[14:56] It was his whole life. And he didn't just believe these things in part. Paul never did anything by halves.

And this was no different. And so in Christianity, this cult burst forth in his backyard, what was his response? Well, he became the worst kind of fundamentalist, the worst kind of jihadist, the worst kind of terrorist.

Later on, he became a peaceful man, a gentle man, a kind man, willing to be hurt rather than offending people. evil. But that was later.

Before his conversion, he breathed out threats. And more than that, this is what Acts 8.3 says, but Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

So children, think about that. Think if you grew up in a Christian family, and there are Saul of Tarsus out there, you would be so frightened of this man.

[16 : 13] So think about that. You're all in bed. It's all quiet in your house. And then someone's at the door and you put your clothes on and then he's there and he's there with his cronies and he's grabbing your mom, he's grabbing your dad and he's dragging them off and he's leaving you there all by yourself, alone.

Well, who did that to you? It was this man. It was Saul of Tarsus. His heart was full of murder and hatred.

He was a man obsessed. That's what he says in Acts 26. In my obsession against them, I pursued them to other cities. He's a man obsessed.

Persecuting Christians wasn't just something that he did some of the time. It wasn't just something that he thought about some of the time. It was something that he was all about. His mind revolved around it.

He was obsessed. The word means to rage against. So have you ever seen someone totally lose it? Just totally lose it. Go off the deep end.

[17 : 25] Go wild. Go crazy. That was Paul. Anger, hatred, had mastered him. It's what he thought about.

It's what he planned for. It's what he lived on. He lived and breathed on this roiling anger against Christians, against Jesus Christ. He lived for hating Christ, and he hated him with every fiber of his being.

And so he's the last person that you would think would throw himself on Jesus Christ for salvation. His righteousness, his self-confidence, his abilities, his talent, his background, everything, humanly speaking, secured him against needing Christ.

Everything was a blindfold over his eyes, layer upon layer of ability, layer after layer of my heritage is all in line.

I've got the right people in my family tree, and I do the right things. Layer upon layer of self-produced righteousness. And so I say it's amazing that this man of all men would write a letter and say, let me tell you about Jesus Christ.

[18 : 46] Let me tell you about him. So what happened? What happened? That's who Paul was. So what happened? Well, Paul says it was about noon.

About noon. I was on the road to Damascus, and I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun blazing around me. Now that's important. Think about what it would be like.

It's noon. The sun is as high and as bright and as brilliant as it could be. You're out in the desert. It's hot. The thing that you're going to notice above everything else is the sun.

So I'm going on the road to Damascus, and the sun was at its height. And then I saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun.

Now, so Jesus appeared to him, and in Jesus' glory, in Jesus' splendor, he made the sun seem not so bright.

[19 : 45] The sun dimmed. The sun, for once, wasn't the prettiest girl at the ball, for once the sun wasn't the shiniest, the brightest thing in the sky.

And we all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Who are you, Lord? I am Jesus. And then it happened.

Something so powerful, powerful enough to grip him, to bring him to his knees, to bring him right out of all of his old way of thinking and his old way of doing, his old life, to tear him away from himself.

And it was a risen Savior that did that. And it wasn't the light, it wasn't the sound, it was Jesus himself. Jesus showed himself to Paul, not just to his eyes, but to his heart.

And this is important. It wasn't something that so much physical that happened to Paul. It was something that spiritually happened to him. And Paul knew that at that moment when Jesus said, it is I, Jesus, that Paul had it all wrong.

[21 : 05] He had it all wrong. He was completely wrong. And that's what happened when you're born again.

You don't see, oh, I have a problem here, and I have a problem there. You see, it's all wrong. It's not just this or that. I don't have this or that problem.

It's not just this or that sin. I am the problem. I am the problem. It's not just the things that I do, it's who I am that is the problem.

And he saw himself, he saw the truth of that, he saw Jesus Christ, he understood that, and he repented, and he turned away from all that self-righteousness, he turned away from, it was nothing to him now.

It turned to dust in his hands, and even worse than that, later he'll call it dung, filth, garbage. And I saw it for what it was, and he threw it away, and that's what repentance is.

[22 : 11] It's throwing it all away, throwing everything away except Jesus Christ, throwing away all of our righteousness, throwing away all of our sin, throwing away all of our high thoughts about ourselves, it's throwing it all away and saying Jesus Christ is the only one who can save me, he's all that I need, repentance is turning away from everything except Christ.

And so that's what happens in conversion, a new power takes over a man, and it's such a power that it makes him turn his life inside out. It's not just me turning over a new leaf, it's not putting on some good habits, the old is gone, the new is come.

And that's why Paul later could say circumcision, uncircumcision, they don't mean anything. What counts, what really counts, is a new creation.

That's what really matters. And he didn't say that just because. He lived for those kind of distinctions before.

He killed for those kind of distinctions before. But when Christ came, a new power, a new life, a new creation came.

[23 : 38] The risen, resurrected, new creation Christ began pushing powerfully into Paul's life, and it made him new. And light flooded his eyes, light flooded his heart, and everything snapped into focus.

And he realized, this whole time, I've been walking around blindly, stumbling like a fool. Everything was clear now. It wasn't about Paul. It wasn't about Paul doing this. It wasn't about Paul doing that. It wasn't about Paul's heritage or his background or his education. It wasn't about any of that. It wasn't about how smart, talented, righteous, privileged, educated Paul was.

And the darkness flew away, and Christ came in. And Paul saw what he had missed. Christ wasn't a deceiver. Christ was the truth.

He was more real than the sun in the sky. If anything is true, it was that Jesus Christ is true. When our brother Dennis Hoskins was converted, after years of going his own way, he came out of the church in Guam, and he said, now I see Jesus is God.

[24 : 55] That's what Paul said. This Jesus is God. that changes everything. I'm not the same.

You're not the same. Prayer isn't the same. Sin isn't the same. My Bible isn't the same. The church isn't the same. Everything changes when Jesus Christ snaps into focus.

has that happened to you? It can. It can. Jesus Christ is still seated on the throne.

He's still the risen, resurrected Savior that was sitting on the throne and came and interrupted Saul of Tarsus' life. He's still showing himself to sinners.

So has that happened to you? It can. it can. So cry out and Jesus will show himself to you. Cry out with all of your heart.

[25 : 59] Seek him with all that you are and he will show himself to you. He will answer you. Ask and you shall receive. Seek and you will find when you seek him with all of your heart.

That is a prayer that he wants to answer. Jesus Christ is interested in you appreciating and living in the glory of who he is. And so if you pray, Lord Jesus, I want to see your glory.

I don't want to go my own way anymore. I want to live for you. I want to see and I want to understand you. He'll answer those prayers. Well, that's what happened.

So we've seen who he was. We saw what happened now. And now what did he become? What did he become? Well, this Paul became a new man.

A new man. And he became a man who lived in Christ. He became a man whose primary identity now was in Christ.

[26 : 58] And that's why again and again and again in his letters, he's always writing about being in Christ. Because when Paul thought about himself, when he thought about his experience, when he thought about what it really means to be a Christian, he thought about himself as being in Christ.

And so he's a man who lived in Christ. He became a man who lived for Christ. He became a man who lived on Christ. And so now he was obsessed, controlled, mastered by Jesus. He became only about Jesus Christ. He was on a ship that was going down and he threw everything out except for Jesus Christ. And so now he's just holding on to this one piece. He's holding on to Jesus Christ. And he's all Paul cared about. He didn't care about his righteousness anymore. He didn't care about his background or his heritage. Whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. And are you sad, Paul, about that?

[28:08] Are you the loser for that, Paul? Are you upset about that? I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ. When you have Jesus Christ and you have to throw other stuff away, you don't count it a loss.

You're glad to get rid of it, that I might gain Christ. So heritage, background, religiosity, zeal, legalistic righteousness, rubbish that I may gain Christ.

So what consumed Paul now? What was his confidence now? What did he get up and say, this is what I'm living for, this is what I'm living on? It was all on Christ, only on Christ.

So now he can write, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. He could write, he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again. No longer about themselves, but about him. So Paul, why do you live? My life is a sacrifice for Jesus Christ. My life is for him, for his glory, for his honor, for his pleasure, for his joy.

[29:21] There's no room left for me, there's no room for my self-righteousness, there's no room for my agenda, and for feeding my selfish ego, it's all gone, my selfish living, there's no more room.

He died, and he took full possession of me. There's simply no more room for me in my life. Now you might say, well, didn't Paul care about other things?

He wrote about other things, didn't he care about other things, didn't he care about people, didn't he care about the church, didn't he want to live for them? And the answer is, yes, he did, but he did those things for Christ's sake.

Listen to what he wrote to the church in Philippi in the book of Philippians. He says, the question is, he's debating, I want to go, I want to go and be with Christ, which is better by far, but I think it's more needful for me to stay, and so I'm torn between those things.

And so he says, I'm convinced that God will keep me alive, he'll keep me here. Why? I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again, your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

[30:46] So Paul, who are you living for? Well, I want to stay alive for the sake of the Philippians. Well, why do you want to stay alive for them? What are you hoping to accomplish? Well, I want their joy in Christ Jesus to overflow.

Yes, I live for you, but I live for you that your joy in Christ Jesus might overflow, that you might progress, that you might grow in him.

So Paul lived for others to be happy in Jesus. He lived for others to be happy in Jesus.

Jesus. What about you? Can you say that about yourself? Do you go about saying to yourself, I'm alive to make others happy in Jesus?

Now, that might be evangelism, and that might be encouragement, it might be a lot of things, but Paul went into situations thinking, how can I serve them in such a way that when I'm done serving them, they're left with a higher view of Jesus Christ.

[32:03] It doesn't matter so much what they think about me, but when I leave that city, when I walk out of that situation, will they be thinking, wow, Jesus Christ is great, Jesus Christ is wonderful, I know him better now, I experience him more, he's more precious to me.

Paul wasn't worried about what they thought of him, but he was worried about what they thought about Jesus. So he lived for Christ, and he would gladly die for Christ.

So at one point, he got the elders of the church in Ephesus together, and he wanted to give them some last words, and as he spoke to them, he said, everywhere I go, the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

This happens right before what we read in Acts 22. So Paul, are you scared about that? Do you want to turn back?

The Holy Spirit's saying, if you keep going, Paul, this is what's ahead. This is what's ahead. However, this is what he says to those elders, however, I consider my life worth nothing to me. [33:17] nothing to me. If only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me, the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

I'm glad to live for him, and I'm glad to die for him. I'm not afraid to suffer for him. God's God's love for Paul, in his conversion, became a radically Christ-centered man.

Jesus loomed large all the time in Paul's life. He is who he woke up for. He is who he went about his day for.

Jesus affected his calendar. Jesus affected his to-do list. Jesus affected how I'm going to go into this situation and serve these people.

Jesus governed, what am I going to say to these people? Jesus governed, what are you going to be afraid of, Paul? What are you not going to be afraid of? So, Jesus loomed large at all times.

[34:33] And then you can see it especially as you look at the book of Colossians itself. Christ is this great magnet that keeps attracting everything to himself.

Paul can't write five sentences without talking about Jesus. So, he's the image of the invisible God. he's the king of the kingdom.

In him we have redemption. Through his body we are made holy. Paul's sufferings, this will be interesting, Paul's sufferings, he says, are Christ's sufferings.

Christ is the mystery of God revealed. He says to preach Christ is to preach the fullness of the word of God. When Paul looked at the Old Testament, he saw, you know what, where all this is going? It's Jesus. To preach Christ is to preach the fullness of the word of God. Christ in you is the hope of glory. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[35:35] He's who we are to continue to live in. He's the divine philosophy that puts to shame human philosophy. In Christ is the fullness of the deity in bodily form.

In him we have received fullness. In him we were buried. Christ is the head of the church. Christ is the end of all the law.

Christ is the reality. That's what it means. The reality of the Old Testament. What the Old Testament was pointing to. The Old Testament is the shadow. Christ is the fulfillment. He says later, Christ is all in all.

So there's all sorts of different kinds of people in the church. church. But Christ is the important factor in who goes into making the church. So Colossians is a man possessed, obsessed, controlled, and mastered by Jesus Christ.

And he's wildly in love with him. And he wants the people in Colossae to be wildly in love with Jesus as well. And so in one way, it's amazing that Paul ever wrote the book of Colossians.

[36:54] That he would walk away from everything that was so important to him, everything that he held dear, everything that was precious, everything that was so important that he said, this is to my prophet, I'm getting into heaven because of this and this and this, this is all my achievements.

He walks away from all of that. But in another way, Colossians is what Colossians is because what happened to Paul? He wrote out of his heart.

Christ overcame Paul on the road to Damascus and now everything is about Jesus all of the time with him. And so when he writes to the church he's never been to, he naturally writes about the person that is most important to him.

Now, that's the author of Colossians. Now, very briefly, we can learn three lessons from this. And the first, lesson number one is this, Paul shows us why we were converted.

He shows us why we were converted. Why did God the Father choose you, Christian? Why did he put his electing love on you?

[38:12] why did the Spirit of God in time come into your life and regenerate you and make you new? Why did Christ die for you?

And the answer is found in what Paul became to become a Christ-exalting, enthusiastic, Christ-lover. That's why God saves people, to make people who appreciate and love and treasure and rejoice in who Jesus is.

So there's a lot of aspects to the Christian life. There's holy living, there's community life, church life, there's worship, but everything finds its center in this person, Jesus.

And so the Christian life is this Christ-filled life. And so have you lost track? Examine yourself.

Have you wandered away? Well, Paul, in the book of Colossians, is a call to come back. Come back to Christ, get realigned, get refocused, make him everything, and when you do, everything else will fall into place.

[39:32] That's lesson one. Lesson two is this, God can save the worst of sinners. He can save the worst of sinners. Why was Paul saved?

It's for the simple reason that God was showing that I can save anyone. It doesn't matter how bad you are. It doesn't matter how much you have rejected Jesus Christ.

I can save you. Because God was showing that he can save anyone. So have you stumbled severely? And you're wondering, I don't know if God could ever really save me.

Are you wondering if God could forgive you? Where you look at your past life or what you have done recently and you just say, I don't know if he could do that.

If you're wondering, is there any chance for my son? Is there any chance for my daughter? It seems beyond hope. Read Colossians.

[40:45] Look who is writing this book. It was a violent, he was a violent blasphemer. He was a Christ hater.

For this very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience.

That Paul of all people wrote this book, this Christ overflowing enthusiastic love letter about how wonderful Christ is, it gives us hope not only for ourselves, but for those we love.

God and his grace is so much bigger than we could imagine. That's lesson two. Lesson three.

Christian, your past does not define you.

There's a saying that goes, the child is the father of the man. The child is the father of the man. Now that's a way of saying that what you are as a child, what you do in your younger years determines what kind of man you'll be in your later years.

[42:05] The child is the father of the man. And, you know, to some extent that is exactly true, isn't it, in this life. The decisions, the choices, the things that we do in the past have invariable effects on the future.

future. But that's not altogether true in the Christian life. Praise God. Your past no longer defines you, Christian, for one very simple reason, that when you came to Christ, the old you died.

The old you died. So what was your past? What was your childhood? What's in the last ten years, in your pre-Christian days, what sins did you do?

What sins did you endure? What mistakes did you make? How did people sin against you? Learn this lesson from Paul. Paul didn't get bogged down in his past.

He didn't get bogged down in it. Three times in the book of Acts, you hear this testimony of how Paul was saved. And the reason that Paul goes into it is to say this is what I was, but this is what Jesus did.

[43:23] And now what was true of me is no longer true of me. What I was is not what I am now. So Paul didn't get bogged down in his past.

It was what it was. In the providence of God, it was what it was, but Christ changed him, and Christ gave him a new start. And he lived in that. He lived in what Christ made him.

And so, dear Christian, does your past trouble you? The sins of your pre-Christian days, or even the sins of your early Christian days, and you say, I just can't believe I was doing those things.

do you feel like you could never be useful? Look at what God did with Paul. Look at what he did with Paul. So when you came to Christ, you died.

The old you died. So leave him in the grave. Don't resurrect him in your mind. Quit trying to resurrect him.

[44:31] Quit living like that's you. Christ in you, you in Christ, that is the new you. That is the new reality. And so take heart, be strong, grow up in Christ, the future is ahead, and Christ is your future.

Let's pray. God, we see how far short we fall, and yet we thank you for your grace.

And we would just ask that you would pour out your grace in our lives, that Jesus Christ might fill us up more and more. I probably could speak for everyone here and say that there are parts of my life that Christ doesn't seem to be a part of, and he needs to be a part of those places.

He needs to take over and have dominion there. So Lord Jesus, I pray that what is true in reality, that you are the king, that we are new in you.

We might live up to that reality. We might live up to that truth. I pray that you would pour out your grace in our lives, and so that our hearts and our minds would be like Paul's, who was such an enthusiastic and excited and steadfast lover of Jesus Christ.

[46:15] we want to be like that. Thank you that it wasn't just something special in Paul, but the same spirit lives in us. Give us that confidence then.

Give us faith to trust in Jesus, to become more like him. I pray for the lost here, who, like Paul, their eyes are blinded, and they don't see any beauty in him, that they should love him.

That's where we all were. Pray, come and work powerfully in their lives like you did on the road to Damascus. We ask all these things so that Jesus Christ might be glorified, might be treasured.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen.