

# A Change In Status: From Persecutor To Proclaimer

Acts 26:1-23

## 1. Intro

1. Last week we looked at the change of status in Peter where he went from having a head knowledge about Jesus to having a heart of understanding about Jesus.
  1. He was a different man by the time of Acts 2.
2. Today we look at the Apostle Paul as he changes from persecutor to proclaimer.

## 2. Paul

1. Raised a Pharisee
  1. Separated into communities
    1. To be part of this community you had to meet their standards.
  2. Their focus was to make better the common person through the law and tradition.
  3. For the most part they were known for their covetousness, self-righteousness and hypocrisy. (Matt 23:1-7)
    1. "There was probably no town or village inhabited by Jews which had not its Pharisees, although they would, of course, gather in preference about Jerusalem with its Temple, and what, perhaps would have been even dearer to the heart of a genuine Pharisee--its four hundred and eighty synagogues, its Sanhedrims (great and small), and its schools of study. There could be no difficulty in recognising such an one. Walking behind him, the chances were, he would soon halt to say his prescribed prayers. If the fixed time for them had come, he would stop short in the middle of the road, perhaps say one section of them, move on, again say another part, and so on, till, whatever else might be doubted, there could be no question of the conspicuousness of his devotions in market-place or corners of streets. There he would stand, as taught by the traditional law, would draw his feet well together, compose his body and clothes, and bend so low "that every vertebra in his back would stand out separate," or, at least, till "the skin over his heart would fall into folds" (Ber. 28 b). The workman would drop his tools, the burden-bearer his load; if a man had already one foot in the stirrup, he would withdraw it. The hour had come, and nothing could be suffered to interrupt or disturb him. The very salutation of a king, it was said, must remain unreturned; nay, the twisting of a serpent around one's heel must remain unheeded. Nor was it merely the prescribed daily seasons of prayer which so claimed his devotions. On entering a village, and again on leaving it, he must say one or two benedictions; the same in passing through a fortress, in encountering any danger, in meeting with anything new, strange, beautiful, or unexpected. And the longer he prayed the better. In the view of the Rabbis this had a twofold advantage; for "much prayer is sure to be heard," and "prolix prayer prolongeth life." At the same time, as each prayer expressed, and closed with a benediction of the Divine Name, there would be special religious merit attaching to mere number, and a hundred "benedictions" said in one day was a kind of measure of great piety." – Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889)
    2. This put into context Luke 18:9-14
2. Zealous in his actions. (Phil 3:1-11)
  1. He was a defender of the faith

1. Defending the Jewish way of belief. (9)
  1. Many of the Jews rejected the ideas of a suffering Messiah, His resurrection from the dead, and direct ministry to Gentiles
  2. He was doing God a favour - persecuting people of The Way(Acts 9:2). (10-11)
  3. Kick against the pricks (goad) (KJV-14)
    1. "Why are you beating your head against the wall" (14)
      1. The persecution of the saints was a direct persecution of Jesus.
3. He became a Defender of The Faith
  1. Paul had gone to Damascus as the apostle (i.e., sent one) of the Sanhedrin (court).
  2. He returned as the apostle of Jesus Christ.
  3. Jesus used a disciple named Ananias to help complete Paul's conversion (Acts 9:10-19).

### 3. Application

1. Sometimes we can let ideals get in their way of a change of status
  1. Defender of our traditions
  2. Promoter of our preferences
  3. These issues may have the effect of persecuting Jesus.
2. There is a need for us to understand the will of God in our lives.
  1. His will is the understanding of the boundaries set out in His Word.
    1. There is a sinful nature (Gal 5:19-21)
    2. There is the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)
  2. Within those boundaries we have freedom.
3. Once we understand our relationship to Jesus, we need to let others know.

### 4. Conclusion

1. Change of status
  1. Transference from the earthly to the heavenly
    1. Paul's change was from personal vendetta to the need of everyone to know Jesus.
      1. Only in Christ is there new life.
2. We need to change, but in relationship to Christ