

DO NOT PROVE DISOBEDIENT

Obedience vs. Disobedient

God does everything for a reason.

God met Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus for a purpose (Acts 9:1-9)

Saul had planned to persecute Christians, but his encounter with Christ changed him forever. God did more in that encounter than just save Paul from his sin. God began to reveal his will for Paul's life.

God's assignment for Paul was clear: (Acts 9:15-16)

"He is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

God's plan for Paul, revealed through a vision, involved both testifying before kings and suffering persecution. Paul was to enjoy the thrill of performing miracles, preaching to large crowds, and starting churches. But Paul was also to be stoned, shipwrecked, whipped, mocked, conspired against, and imprisoned! (2 Corinthians 11:23-28) Would we accept this part of his assignment as readily as the first part? We never read or hear of Paul complaining about his Commission from God. He never asked that he be given a role like Peter's, or James's, or John's. (Galatians 2:8-10)

It was enough for Paul that he be given any task in the Kingdom of God.

Read from Notes

As he neared the end of his ministry, Paul in (Acts 26:19) boldly state to king Agrippa "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

Oh, to have Paul's tenacity and devotion to the Father's will! What joy there is not only to begin well in our Christian faith and walk, but also to end faithfully!

I dare to say, and believe, that it is God's desire that each of us could say at the end of our lives, "I was not disobedient."

NOTES

How, When, and Why was Saul's name changed to Paul?

One of the "name changes" in the Bible is that of Saul to Paul.

The change is commonly linked to Saul's conversion while on the road to Damascus, when he encountered the Lord Jesus who then commissioned him to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:1-19). But, at the time of Saul's conversion, Jesus still addressed him as "Saul."

Later, Jesus instructs Ananias to find "Saul" in Damascus and restore his sight.

Acts 9, goes on to describe “Saul” as increasing in spiritual strength and understanding of Jesus as the Messiah.

So, it was not Jesus who changed his name on the road to Damascus. So, If it wasn't Jesus' doing, how did the change from Saul to Paul happen, and when?

The answer is that Saul's name was also Paul. The custom of dual names was common in those days. Acts 13:9 describes the apostle as “Saul, who was also called Paul.”

From that verse on, Saul is always referred to in Scripture as “Paul.”

Paul was a Jew, born in the Roman city of Tarsus.

He was proud of his Jewish heritage, which he lavishly describes in Philippians 3:5 (NLT):

“I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law.”

He was so zealous and devoted that persecuting Christians was the natural way for him to show his devotion.

He chose to use his Hebrew name, Saul, until sometime after he began to believe in and preach Christ.

After that time, as “the apostle to the Gentiles” (stated in Romans 11:13 NKJV), he used his Roman name, Paul.

It would make sense for him to use his Roman name as he traveled farther and farther into the Gentile world because using his Roman name would allow Paul to approach the Gentiles, and speak to them in their own language, becoming as one of them and putting them at ease.

It's also possible that Paul gave up the use of his Hebrew name, Saul, because of its regal connotation, (Saul was the name of the first king of Israel) and he chose to use his Roman name, Paul, meaning “little” or “small” or “humble” because he desired to become “smaller,” or “less” in order to present Christ as greater (see John 3:30).

Unlike the changing of Simon's name to Peter (Matthew 16:18–19), which Jesus did for a specific purpose, there is no reference in the Bible to Jesus' changing Saul's name to Paul.

Who was the Apostle Paul?

- He was born Saul in Tarsus, Asia Minor, and was trained as a rabbi.
- He was a devoted Pharisee who persecuted Christians until he was converted by a vision of Jesus.
- Paul became a missionary and theologian who helped establish Christianity as a separate religion.
- The Apostle Paul was a tentmaker by trade.
- He partnered with Aquila and Priscilla in tentmaking. (Acts 18)
- He used his leatherworking skills to earn money to support his ministry, by combining his preaching with working with his hands.

Who were Festus and Agrippa?

Festus is Roman and has only held the position of governor for a few weeks. He knows little about Jewish religion and culture but wants to have a good relationship with local leaders. Those leaders, however, want Paul charged, convicted, and executed for crimes against the Roman law (Acts 25:1–2, 24).

To assure there is no confusion, it is important to note that Governor Festus is in authority over the king. Most westerners understand king's to have absolute authority, but in the Roman Empire this was not the case. King Agrippa was king over Israel, but fell under Roman authority.