

The Integrity of Paul

What is integrity?

- 1) What you do
- 2) What you think
- 3) What you believe
- 4) Being morally upright

The conversion of Paul

Acts 9:1-19

What did Paul do?

He was persecuting Christians for their faith. He would throw them in prison and in some cases even stone them.

What did Paul think?

Pharisees were a people group who were teachers of the law and started studying the bible at a very young age. Pharisees were respected by society as they held great authority and status. Paul thought he was defending his identity as a Pharisee by hurting those who oppose his authority.

What did Paul believe?

Paul believed Jesus was a scam and all those who proclaim him are blaspheming. Paul believed Jesus was not the messiah who would come and save the world but rather he was just a threat to his authority and status.

From this point we can see what Paul did, think, and believe were all consistent. Let us look at the last element of integrity: being morally upright.

Was Paul morally upright?

Paul was not morally upright by far. He murdered Christians and spread fear to all those who proclaim their faith. This is the reason Jesus asks Paul why Paul is persecuting Him. By persecuting the church Paul was actually hurting Jesus as the church belongs to Jesus.

Did Paul have integrity by this definition?

Not quite. We know the first three elements were consistent but Paul's intentions were evil and God turned it around. During a journey to Damascus, Paul encountered Jesus as a light from

heaven struck him in the eyes. Paul was blinded and heard the voice of Jesus. God uses Ananias to heal him from the blindness and changes Paul's heart. Paul then gives His life to Jesus and goes around to preach the gospel.

What is the gospel?

It is the good news. Why is it so good? We Christians believe God created us to worship Him but Adam and Eve chose to disobey him and sinned. Sin is when anything replaces God in our hearts be it money, status, lust, hatred, etc. God has set a certain standard for us but we fall short of it because something else takes over God's place in our hearts (Romans 3:23). God is just and righteous and cannot tolerate sinners like us therefore we all deserve to be in hell. But here is the most beautiful thing, God gave His Son Jesus to die the death we deserve and take on the wrath of God. He did this so that dirty sinners like us can be made clean by believing in Him. If we put our faith in Him, our sins will be forgiven and we can enjoy eternal life with Him. You hear the word grace a lot but what does that mean? Grace is receiving a gift we don't deserve (Ephesians 2:8-10). It is easy for anyone to say they believe in God but does their life really show it? Verse 10 implies our lives will produce works because we have faith.

How does the gospel apply to Paul?

Paul was a sinner and killed many Christians formerly. Jesus changes His heart (verse 18) and Paul is baptized. He is not baptized by water but by the Holy Spirit, which is what Christians receive when they accept Christ. As a result of Paul's faith, he becomes a missionary and goes from place to place proclaiming Jesus.

My former life

What I did: Pleased people and boasted in my achievements.

What I thought: I can continue pleasing everyone and bring glory to myself.

What I believed: I live for myself and I deserve praise for everything I did.

Morally upright: I was selfish and arrogant and did not love or care for others.

Now

What I do: I try to be salt and light wherever I go and live for Christ.

What I think: My life belongs to Christ and not myself.

What I believe: In the gospel.

Morally upright: No, I'm not perfect. But before God I am made righteous by the blood of Christ. (Galatians 2:20)

Challenge for the Christians:

Matthew 7:24-27

Are you like Saul who put his trust into logic and the teachings of the Pharisees? Do you have a solid foundation? Logic and intelligence can only get you so far almost like a superstructure which can build itself but with a poor foundation it is next to useless. If you call yourself a Christian you have to believe Christ is this solid foundation which keeps you from faltering.

Paul's attitude:

Romans 1:16

Philipians 1:21

Reflection questions:

What is your view on how you should live life and for whom do you live for?

What is your view on death? What happens after death?

If you call yourself a Christian, are you ashamed of the gospel or do you glory in it?