



From Persecutor to Preacher: Paul's Transformation and Ours **Craig Rees & Alicia Bruxvoort**

Main Auditorium & Chapel | 14 January 2024

Big Idea: Receiving the message is just the starting point; transformation requires internalization.

Scriptures: Ephesians 3; Galatians 1 and 2; Acts 9

1) Introduction and Context:

- a. What challenges were the churches in Asia Minor facing? How did Paul address these challenges in his letter to the Ephesians in chapter 2?
- b. Discuss the structure of Ephesians 3. Why does Paul begin with a purpose clause and then digress into his personal story before returning to the purpose clause (v14)?
- c. How does Paul's personal story connect with the message he preaches? What insights can be drawn from this connection?

2) Radical Receiving vs. Radical Change.

- a. Summarize the key point regarding radical receiving and radical change. Do you agree that a dramatic encounter with Christ does not guarantee deepening maturity?

3) Processing the Gospel.

- a. How did Paul process the implications of the mystery of Christ, and what was the result in his life? Consider the idea that transformation requires internalization.
- b. Share personal experiences or reflections when encountering a message but struggling with internalizing its implications.

4) Impatience and Unrealistic Expectations.

- a. How does the concept of processing the message challenge our impatience for immediate change? In answering this, consider the societal pressure for instant gratification and its impact on spiritual growth.

- b. Share instances where impatience hindered your spiritual progress or understanding.

5) Challenges During Spiritual Stalls.

- a. What are the major reasons for spiritual stalls? Discuss personal experiences of spiritual struggle and how you navigated through them.

6) Cultivating Cross-Cultural Relationships.

- a. What practical steps have you discovered that break spiritual complacency?

7) Staying Motivated During Delays.

- a. Reflect on the challenge of staying motivated and connected during delays in spiritual progress. Share strategies or personal stories of overcoming such challenges.
- b. How can your group support each other in maintaining motivation and perseverance during spiritual journeys that seem delayed or stagnant?

8) Application to the Church.

- a. How can the lessons from Paul's journey be applied to the church today? Discuss the importance of balancing urgency with patience and avoiding early promotion for unseasoned leadership.
- b. We write these questions to help us process the message's implications over time. What else could be done to help that process?

9) Closing Reflection on Ephesians 3:14-21.

- a. Reflect on Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. How does this prayer tie back to the purpose with which Paul started the chapter?
- b. How can the church today actively proclaim the uniting of a hybrid people and make known the wisdom of God, as described in Ephesians 3:10-11?