

Remnant Life Church  
Sunday, January 5, 2025  
**Change that is Life-Altering**  
Acts 9:1-19

People welcome the new year in different ways, and it is often based on the year prior.

- For some, there is disappointment that a very good year has ended
- For others, it is a welcomed change, ready to leave the difficulties and challenges behind, hoping for things to be better

Before we talk about what we should be doing as the new year gets underway, as a public service, I would like to offer some assistance if you are still considering how to change the year to come

- These are not resolutions
- They are helps for you to think about

How should a Christian look toward a new year?

- What model can we embrace?
- Is it better to maintain where I am or desire for there to be more?
- What would that process look like

1. One of the most dramatic life-altering accounts is that of Paul
  - a. Known as Saul prior to his encounter with God
    - i. From the tribe of Benjamin (**Rom. 11:1**)
    - ii. It was common to name children for an important person from your family or tribe
    - iii. King Saul was also from that same tribe and that is possibly the origin of his name
  - b. A very unusual man
    - i. Born a Jew
      1. Approx. 5-10 years after Jesus' birth
      2. Into a prominent, educated, wealthy family
        - a. Tarsus was a Greek-speaking city of great cultural influence in the central southern coastal region of Turkey
        - b. Paul designates himself as Hebrew to separate himself from the Hellenist in practice and language (**Phil. 3:5**)
        - c. His family also spoke Aramaic, the language of their synagogue (**Acts 22** – used when addressing the Sanhedrin)
      - ii. A Roman citizen (3 ways)
        1. At the time of his birth, Tarsus was under Roman rule – (**Acts 22:28**)
        2. Appointment – likely his father or grandfather
        3. Purchase – (**Acts 22:28**) – the commander of the Roman troops in Jerusalem
      - iii. Highly intelligent and educated
        1. Studied under Gamaliel, the head Pharisee

- a. This was the same man who helped spare the Apostles in **Acts 5**
    - b. Perhaps remembering his former pupil
  - 2. Paul was raised and lived in Jerusalem during his formative years
  - 3. Certainly, he knew of Jesus and the movement started by His teachings
- c. He was a zealot
  - i. **Acts 26:9-11**
  - ii. He would even leave the safety of Jerusalem to pursue them
  - iii. Let's read of the event that changed his life so dramatically

**READ – Acts 9:1-19**

- d. Damascus
    - i. Claims of being the longest continually inhabited city in the world (mentioned in **Gen. 14, 15**)
    - ii. It was an old city in Paul's day – 2000+ years
    - iii. Approx. 140 miles from Jerusalem – about a 1 week long journey by foot
    - iv. It lies east of Mount Hermon in the plains of Syria
      - 1. The heat of the desert region combines with cool air from the mountain
      - 2. Powerful thunderstorms arise very quickly with massive lightning strikes
      - 3. This is what would have been expected but God intervened in an even more impressive way
    - v. It was on this journey that Saul's life was forever changed
2. What did that change look like, and what did it do to Saul?
- a. First, he was stopped from doing what his mind and flesh alone told him to do
    - i. We must have the Spirit of truth and love as an everyday, guiding part of our lives (**John 4**)
    - ii. Without that, we have nothing to govern our actions
    - iii. *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. (**John 14:16-17**)*
  - b. Second, all of his pride in knowledge was swept away by an encounter with the almighty God
    - i. Paul himself says that he was the brightest and best student (**Gal.1:14**)
    - ii. But his immersion in the law prevented him from understanding the love of God
    - iii. This is what Saul and all the members of the Sanhedrin were so concerned about – losing the power and influence that the law alone gave them
      - 1. But Saul's greatest desire was changed by his encounter with Jesus
      - 2. *For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (**Gal. 5:14**)*

- iv. A person committed to loving those around him cannot also live a life filled with pride
- v. **I Corinthians 13:4-7** - *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*
- c. Paul's very nature was changed
  - Everything...
    1. His name
    2. His purpose
    3. His focus
    4. His will
    5. His goals
    6. His thinking

All of these questions require a full surrender to God

- As we said last week
  - It requires humility
  - Trusting fully in God
  - Honestly assessing your life
  - Embracing God's love, forgiveness, and provision
  - Living without fear