

Paul: Whose Voice Do You Hear Satan's or God's?

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I. Introduction

The apostle Paul was not always a Christian. Before becoming Christian, Paul was a very devout man who actually thought he was living in God's Kingdom. There was just one problem: he was killing Christians. Where do Christians live their lives; how do they see things like politics?

II. Can We Really Hear God's Voice, If so How?

The apostle Paul in Satan's kingdom, the apostle Paul did not start out as a Christian. Before he became a Christian he was known as a rabid Pharisee named Saul (Acts 13:9) whose goal it was to eradicate every last Christian. If we ask the question, "Which Kingdom was Paul living in before Christianity?" the answer is obvious. If you're killing Christians, you're obviously living in Satan's kingdom. What's interesting is that Paul thought he was living in God's Kingdom: Acts 7:51-8:3, Stephen closes his testimony with a great rebuke of the Sanhedrin (Israel's leaders). They get furious and charge at Stephen. They run him out of town and stone him to death. Guess who's looking after the personal belongings of those killing Stephen? A young man named Saul (Paul).

Acts 9:1-2, Paul's murderous rage is just getting started so he asks for orders from the high priest to arrest more Christians in Damascus. Acts 22:3-5, 19-20, from the start of his Christianity, Paul was so effective in converting Jews to Christianity that many wanted him dead. Such was the case in Acts 22. A mob rips him out of the temple and begins beating him. The Romans step in and arrest Paul. As he pleads his case before his Jewish brethren he recounts his life before Christianity: he was taught by one of the most famous Pharisees, Gamaliel. He was "zealous toward God" and persecuted Christians wherever he found them, including Stephen. Acts 26:4-5, 9-11, when he pleads his case before king Agrippa Paul again points out how he lived according to the strictest sect as a Pharisee and in a furious rage persecuted Christians even into foreign cities. Galatians 1:13-14, Paul was more zealous for God than many of his contemporaries in Judaism, which to him meant trying to destroy the church of God. Philippians 3:4-6, when Paul gives his resume he describes how zealously perfect he kept the Law, which to him included persecuting the Lord's Church.....at every turn, Saul, who later became the apostle Paul, actually thought that killing Christians was doing God's will. He actually believed that he was living in God's Kingdom!!

The apostle Paul in Christ's Kingdom, Paul thought that he was born to be the greatest Pharisee that ever lived. But God had other plans: Galatians 1:15-16, Paul was not meant to persecute Christians, he was born to produce Christians, especially from among the Gentiles. Acts 9:3-22, his journey as a Christian began when he was on his way to Damascus to arrest more Christians. Jesus Himself stopped him in his tracks and converted him. In this encounter Jesus gave him his true identity: Acts 9:15-16; 22:10, 17-21; 26:15-18, the Lord had appointed Paul to deliver both Jews and Gentiles from Satan's power and darkness. And along the way Jesus showed him all the tribulations he would face.....but the Lord delivered Paul from them all.

Acts 23:11, it was the Lord's will for Paul to be a witness for Him in Rome. This odyssey began when the Lord started warning him of what was coming: Acts 20:23, on his way to Jerusalem Paul calls for the elders of Ephesus. He tells them that the Holy Spirit keeps warning him in every city of the tribulations and imprisonment that awaits him; he knows his life is short (Acts 20:25).

Acts 21:4, the disciples don't want him to go to Jerusalem. Acts 21:10-14, God warns Paul through the prophet Agabus that when he goes to Jerusalem he'll be put in chains and be delivered to the Gentiles. Again they plead with Paul not to go, but Paul tells them that he's ready to die for Jesus.

Paul eventually makes it to Jerusalem, is arrested and faces many trials before he's put on a ship to Rome. Acts 27:9-20, after many rough days at sea, Paul warns Julius, the Roman centurion, not to continue the voyage otherwise the cargo and every life on the ship will be lost. The ship's owner and crew persuade Julius to sail. The sea is so terrible they begin tossing cargo overboard. After many stormy days without sun or stars, they lose all hope of survival. Acts 27:21-32, they go without food many days, but Paul tells them not to lose hope because God told him that everyone on the ship will survive. As they get closer and closer to the island of Malta, the sailors fear they will die in the crash so they plot to escape. But Paul warns Julius that unless they stay with the ship, they will not survive. Julius believes Paul and stops the sailors from leaving.

Acts 27:33-44, it's been 14 days without food, so Paul encourages the 276 people on board to eat and to not be afraid because not a single hair of their heads will be harmed. They're encouraged, eat, and begin throwing the wheat overboard. When day breaks, they see the island of Malta. The ship runs aground and is being torn up by the waves. This time the soldiers panic; they fear that the prisoners will escape (which would mean their death, Acts 12:19; 16:27-31), so they plan to kill them. But Julius won't allow Paul to die, so he stops them and commands everyone to leave the ship and they all reach land safely. Acts 28:1-16, the natives of Malta show them unusual kindness and build a fire for them. As Paul is gathering sticks, a viper bites him. The natives think he's a murderer whose karma has run out. But after observing that nothing happens to Paul, they think he's a god. A wealthy Maltan named Publius takes them in for three days. His father is severely ill with fever and dysentery but Paul heals him. All the sick in Malta then come to Paul and he heals them too. When they leave the island three months later, the Maltans provide everything they need for their voyage. They finally make it to Rome and Julius delivers the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but he lets Paul stay in his own rented house with the soldier who guards him.

Acts 28:17-31, how does Paul do prison? He keeps living in the Kingdom! In fact, he calls a meeting with those who could threaten his life; he calls for the Jewish leaders. Paul explains why he's in Rome. The Jewish leaders say they've received no word from Judea about Paul, but they want to hear more since they've heard terrible things about Christianity. At their next meeting, Paul uses the Law and the Prophets to persuade his Jewish brethren concerning Jesus. Some believe but others don't and there's a disagreement among them. Paul closes with a severe rebuke from Isaiah and from God: "You don't want My salvation, I'll have Paul take it to the Gentiles and they will hear it!" Paul is fearless, in fact, Acts closes with the statement that Paul kept preaching the Kingdom of God and the things concerning Jesus with all confidence, and no one stopped him!

In which Kingdom do conservative Christians do Politics? This presidential race has many Christians full of fear and anger. They fear that the country will be ruined for generations to come unless the Democrats are defeated. This fear and frustration is driving them to support candidates who would not meet the basic qualifications of elder (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). But they don't care about the candidate's character or what they say as long as they promise to fix it...this is how Satan works; it's how he got Jonah to sin against God, through fear and anger.

III. Conclusion

Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

Satan's Kingdom

Jesus' Kingdom

Paul



"Saul"

Acts

7:57-8:3

9:1-2

22:3-5, 19-20

26:4-5, 9-11

Galatians

1:13-14

Philippians

3:4-6

Paul



"Saul"

Acts

9:3-30

20:22-25

21:10-14

22:10, 17-21

23:11

26:15-18

27-28