

Paul – A Repurposed Instrument**Text : Acts 7: 54-8: 3 ; 9: 22-31****A. Creative people come up with innovative ways to repurpose common items. S#1. S#2.**

1. Sewing machine become lavatory S#3.
2. Bathtub becomes a sofa S#4.
3. A fishing boat becomes a planter S#5.
4. Wrenches become coat hooks S#6.
5. An old piano becomes a bookshelf or even a water fountain S#7.
6. Even a ladder can be repurposed for shelving. S#8.

B. As man is creative about repurposing things he has made God also repurposes that which He has made ... He repurposes men. S#9.

1. When God rescues someone from slavery to sin, He repurposes them to His use.
2. It is the goal of this lesson to observe how God repurposed Saul of Tarsus into His Apostle for establishing His kingdom among the gentiles.

I. Looking back Saul / Paul could see that God had a plan for him all along. S#10.**A. Gal. 1: 15-16 – But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased **16** to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, S#11.**

1. Notice Saul was “**set apart**” long before he was called by God.
2. God had a plan for Saul, but Saul was not aware of that plan.
3. God has a plan for everyone He weaves in the womb. (**Psa. 139: 13**)

B. Saul grew up with his own plan for his life.

1. Saul grew up living the typical life of a son of a wealthy Jewish merchant.
2. As he grew up among gentile peers, Saul learned that it was essential for him to maintain a close relationship with those who enabled him to preserve his Jewishness.
3. He was raised in the strictest of the Jewish sects; he was a Pharisees.

Acts 26: 4-5 – So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, S#12.
 Which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem;
5 since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify,
 that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.

4. He was trained in the family business.

Acts 18: 3 – He came to them, **3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.**

C. Anticipating he would be a leader among the Jews, Saul was well educated.

1. **Acts 26: 24-25** – While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a **S#13.** loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad." **25** But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth.
2. Compare the reaction to Peter and John.
Acts 4: 13 – Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.
3. Saul received his Jewish education under the most famous Jewish teacher.
a. **Acts 22: 3** – I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, **S#14.** educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.
b. **Acts 5: 34** ... Gamaliel was respected by all the people so being his student ...
4. One of the three universities in the Roman Empire was in Tarsus.
a. Tarsus supplied tutors for the royal family.
b. Undoubtedly Saul also studied there and was tutored by teachers from there.
5. One of the three largest libraries in the empire was located at Tarsus.

II. Saul was advancing ahead of schedule on his chosen carrier path.

S#15.

A. Saul was ambitious to be a leader in the Jewish religion.

S#16.

1. **Gal. 1: 13-14** – For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; **14** and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.
a. Don't know Saul's age, but he was more advanced than was typical.
b. He was advancing because he was extremely zealous for God. (*earned*)
2. Saul viewed destroying the church as a virtue.

B. Saul's zeal to destroy the church was most likely ignited by Stephen.

S#17.

1. Being from Tarsus, Saul was a Hellenistic Jew. (*Spoke Greek as first language*)
2. Stephen was most likely a Hellenistic Jew.
a. He had a Greek name.
b. He was ministering to Hellenistic Jews.

- c. He was a member of a synagogue of Hellenistic Jews.
 - d. This was possibly Saul's synagogue.
Acts 6: 8-10 – And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. **9** But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. **10** But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.
3. Stephen was tried before the council accusing him of blasphemy.
- a. He made his defense from the history of Jewish rejections. (*desert, tabernacle, temple*)
 - b. God repeatedly appeared and Jews eventually rejected each time.
 - c. Stephen accused them of having murdered the promised Messiah. **S#18.**
Acts 7: 51 – You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. **52** Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?
4. Saul was there and gave his vote against Stephen.
- a. **Acts 7: 58**– When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; **S#19** and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. (*Jewish law required witnesses cast the first stone.*)
 - b. **Acts 8: 1** – Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.
 - c. **Acts 26: 10** – also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.

Note :

- 1– In order to have a vote to cast, Saul had to have been a member of the council.
- 2– In order to have been a member of the council Saul had to have been married.
- 3– Several ancient scholars (e.g. Clement) say he was married, but widowed.
- 4– Being a “zealous” Pharisee would also have required him to marry.

III. Saul was the leader of the Jewish persecution against the church.

S#20.

A. Saul felt it his duty to God to wipe out the church.

- 1. **Acts 8: 1-3** – Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. **S#21.**
 And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. **2** Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. **3** But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.
- 2. Saul hated the church so much he traveled widely to destroy it. **S#22.**
Acts 26:11– being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities

B. Paul's persecution of the church was very cruel and involved personal feelings.

1. **Acts 9: 1** – Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, **2** and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
2. Saul felt whatever he could do to destroy the church was a service to God.
Gal. 1: 13 – For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I **S#23.** used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;
3. Saul's motivation for persecuting the church was zeal for God.
Phil. 3: 6 – If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:
5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; **6** as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

C. Paul lived with a clear conscience even while persecuting God's church.

1. **Acts 23: 1** – Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, " Brethren, I have lived **S#24.** my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."
2. After becoming a Christian, Saul / Paul felt remorse for his ignorant actions.
I Cor. 15: 9 – For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.
3. However, he had faith that the grace of God had covered His sin.
I Tim. 1: 12 – I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, **S#25.** because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, **13** even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; **14** and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

S#26.**IV. God set aside Saul's plan for his life and repurposed him to be his servant.****A. God had taken a number of years to prepare Saul to serve.****S#27.**

1. We don't know his exact age, but he was above 30 because he was a leader.
2. Historically, God takes His time to prepare His servants.
 - a. Abraham wandered many years and was 100 before Isaac was born.
 - b. Joseph was a slave for many years and a prisoner for three years.
 - c. Moses spent 40 years herding sheep in the desert.
 - d. David was pursued by King Saul for more than 20 years after being anointed.

* 3. God has spent many years preparing YOU to serve Him.

B. People died without hope while Saul was being prepared to serve.

S#28.

1. Imagine how many people died while Jesus was being prepared.

Gal. 4: 3 – So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. **4** But when the fullness of the, time came God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, **5** so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

2. It is believed that Saul persecuted the church for 3 years.

a. During that time Saul delivered many to their deaths.

b. While Saul was being prepared many died without hearing the gospel.

S#29.

C. Jesus totally changed Saul's plan for his life ... Saul was repurposed as Paul.

1. **Acts 9: 15** – But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; **16** for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

2. Paul gladly accepted God's repurposing of his life.

Phil. 3: 7 – But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. **8** More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

S#31.

D. The providential outfitting of Saul "made him the most dangerous enemy of Christianity, but after his conversion its most useful promoter. The weapons Of destruction were turned into weapons of construction. The engine was reversed and the direction changed, but it remained the same engine and its power was increased under new inspiration." Wm Shaff

Application :

S#32.

A. When God calls an individual, He repurposes that individual to serve Him.

B. All of the same attributes are still there, but they must be used differently.

C. I must ask myself, "If my life has not been repurposed, is it really HIS ?"

D. One must surrender this life, in exchange for the one to come.

Invitation : What is the purpose of your life ? Has it been repurposed ?

S#33.

S#34. ... Communion slide

Lesson Text :**Acts 7: 54 - 8:3**

54 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. **55** But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; **56** and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." **57** But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. **58** When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59** They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" **60** Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.

1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.

And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. **2** Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. **3** But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

Acts 9: 21-31

21 All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" **22** But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

23 When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, **24** but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; **25** but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.

26 When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. **27** But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. **28** And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. **29** And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death. **30** But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.