

Does the Apostle Paul Contradict Himself? (Part I) Contradictions Series

1 Corinthians 10:33: (NASB) just as I also please all men in all things...

Galatians 1:10: (NASB) ...If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.



The Apostle Paul is a Christian icon. He essentially wrote half of the New Testament as he carried the gospel far and wide. He suffered dramatically for his faith, was challenged regularly by those in authority and even stood up to the Apostle Peter when it was needed. When you read his words, you cannot help but see his love for God and his undying devotion to Jesus. With all the good he did, there are many who sit here now, two thousand years later, and claim he was a self-absorbed, self-contradictory man. They make lists

of the things he said and wrote and seem to relish his apparent instability. Did the Apostle Paul contradict himself? Did he say different things to different people just to gain their favor?

Joining us for our CQ Contradictions Series is our CQ team member, Julie.



Our research team wanted to present some tough contradictions, because we know you are not afraid to tackle any sincere question. I am used to seeing atheists attacking the Bible, but I was shocked to see there is an entire group of Christians attacking the Apostle Paul, calling him a "false apostle" and protesting his extensive writings in the New Testament. Some are extremely sincere and are very pained by the results of their studies. This topic is SO BIG that we are going to spend the next four podcasts on Paul. The first two will be about Paul himself. The next two will address the allegations of how Paul's teachings supposedly contradict those of Jesus. For listeners who are new to studying the Bible, we added a brief summary of who Paul is. He was originally named Saul and then referred to himself as Paul once he started speaking to a primarily Greek audience.





- Originally called Saul of Tarsus
- Probably born about AD 1 AD 4
- His father was from the tribe of Benjamin
- Later took the name Paul, meaning "little"
- Jesus' choice to replace Judas
- Born as a Roman citizen in Tarsus, Turkey
- · Educated by Gamaliel, a leading authority of the Sanhedrin
- · Knew Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic
- Was a Pharisee
- Was a tentmaker by trade
- First mentioned in Acts 7:58
- Tried to eliminate Christianity by persecuting believers in Jesus as the Messiah
- Consented to Stephen's death
- Received a vision from Jesus on the road to Damascus that changed the direction of his life
- Became a missionary and preached for Christ throughout the Roman empire
- · Experienced great physical hardships including beatings, imprisonment and shipwrecks
- · Wrote much of the New Testament, including letters to various churches
- Called the Apostle to the Gentiles

Did the Apostle Paul contradict himself? The only way to find out is to examine the accusations one at a time.



Four basic rules for examining Scriptures that LOOK like they contradict each other.

- 1. A copyist error: Occasionally ancient scribes missed or misread letters, resulting in a skewed meaning. Generally, you can find consensus among Bible scholars because these are well-documented within the various translations of the Bible.
- 2. Different Scriptures often reveal different parts of a story.
 Always gather all accounts to compare. We see this a lot in the New Testament when different eyewitnesses give their accounts.
 Everyone tells their story a little differently.
- 3. Clarity of context and an understanding of words within that context help find true meaning. Trivia time! What is Rick's favorite word? CONTEXT. It is surprising how many times the enemies of the Bible pull out words or phrases and say, "Aha!" without reading the context or understanding the time and culture being described.
- 4. The Bible is to be understood in the context of ages and dispensations. God's dealings with humanity do change as He shows us the step-by-step pathway back to Him.

Remember: All Scriptures do not apply to all people at all times. Properly categorizing who, when, where and why, sets the biblical record into an organized time plan, which opens the Bible up to new levels.

)) Introduction, Why did Paul Lie, IRCR Media

• Another reason, this is the most likely obvious reason why I think that Saul of Tarsus is a liar. Most people consider him an apostle because of his conversion on the road to Damascus where he was confronted supposedly by Yeshua, which would technically make him an apostle if he was standing in the presence of the Messiah. But there's some inconsistencies in the Scripture of his supposed conversion on the road to Damascus.

We will be discussing these supposed inconsistencies throughout the podcast. Also, just because someone is in front of Jesus does not make them an apostle. Jesus had many followers who were not apostles.



Acts 9:3-7, Acts 22:6-9 and Acts 26:13-16



In two accounts it says only Paul fell to the ground:

Acts 9:4: (NASB) and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Acts 22:7: (NASB) and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?



Acts 26:14: (NASB) And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.

Who is on the ground? Did just Paul fall OR did everyone in the group fall? At the beginning of <u>Acts 9:7</u> it says: *The men who traveled with him STOOD speechless...* But it says in <u>Acts 26:14</u> they ALL fell on the ground. This might seem like an inconsequential detail, but critics say Paul is a "false apostle" because he was not originally appointed by Jesus. They point to inconsistencies in the story of the conversion of Saul as evidence that it did not happen, so he was therefore illegitimate. That is a big accusation.

Let's look at another supposed contradiction.

In one account it clearly says
Paul's traveling companions heard the voice from heaven:

Acts 9:7: (NASB) The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

In another account it says they did NOT hear the voice:

Acts 22:9: (KJV) And they that were with me saw indeed the light and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

What is the real story?

Who was standing or falling? Who did or did not hear the voice?

Somebody once said that the devil is in the details. Is there darkness in these details? Should we be worried?



While these details seem small, they are significant. How do we find the real truth?

Any time we hear several accounts of a single event, there will inevitably be details that seem to conflict. When we have a dramatic experience, we tell others about it. The details of the telling vary with the audience and the circumstances. Why should the Apostle Paul be different?



• And if you look in Acts 9:7, and then you look in Acts 22:9, he's telling the same story but his story changes. And that's what happens when liars tell their story. One time he says that those that were with him could see but could not hear this angel and then in the other version 12 chapters later, he said that they could hear but couldn't see. So, first they saw but they couldn't hear it - this angel, him, but then they heard but didn't see. Well, which is it? I mean if you visually think about it, close your eyes and see him on this road with people following him, and this angel appears, or do they see it, or do they hear it? Which is it, Saul?

She does not sound as if she really wants to know the answer and misrepresents the way the accounts are worded. She is comparing Acts 9 to Acts 22. Acts 9 was written by Luke. Acts 22 was written by Paul himself. It is not even a contradiction in Paul telling his own story.



We need to understand the context and the words, and then we can find the answer:

Before we get too far into the details, we need to remember that Paul called himself the "Pharisee of the Pharisees." He was trained from boyhood in the Jewish traditions and customs of the time, but in order to defend and protect that way of life, he persecuted, even to death, all men and women who followed after Jesus. But he was willing to leave his home, suffer personal hardship and travel around the country pursuing with great energy and determination what he thought was right. Jesus knew that after being converted and shown the true way, he would be just as energetic in following the right course. This is like your worst enemy suddenly fighting to the death to protect you. This was a shocking conversion.

As we look at his story, remember two different people are telling the story - Luke and Paul, each talking to a different audience. In <u>Acts 9</u>, Paul's companion, Luke, is telling what happened. As a physician by trade, Luke was trained to be logical and methodical. His focus was on the fact that Saul of Tarsus was being called to Christ. He gives minimal details, focusing on giving a factual account of the spiritual experience.



Acts 9:3-7: (NASB) ³...and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; ⁴and he fell to the ground and heard <191> a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? ⁵And he said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, ⁶but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do. ⁷The men who traveled with him stood <2476> speechless, hearing <191> the voice but seeing no one.





First, let's deal with the standing and falling issue.

Luke tells us - The men who traveled with him stood speechless.

Paul tells us in Acts 26 - we had all fallen to the ground.

Stood: Strongs #2476 *histemi*; to stand (transitively or intransitively), used in various applications (literally or figuratively)

(Source: John Gill's Exposition of the Bible) Stood speechless: astonished and amazed, they had not the power to speak one word, nor to rise from the ground, and move one step forward; they were as if they were thunderstruck, and fastened to the earth; for this standing is not opposed to their being fallen to the earth, but to their going forward, and only expresses the surprise and stupidity that had seized them.

We can look at this figuratively, as in the following Scripture:

Acts 8:38: (KJV) And he commanded the chariot to <u>stand</u> <u>still</u> <2476>: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

When he commanded the chariot to stand still, did he tell it to stop walking? It is a figure of speech meaning halt. Chariots do not have legs, yet a chariot can stand still. We understand the figurative meaning of standing still. Words in the Scriptures can be figurative and literal.

Paul's companions fell to the ground and were speechless, awestruck and could not move.



Next, let's look at the **hearing** versus **not hearing** of those who were with Saul.

In <u>Acts 9:3-7</u> Luke uses the most common word for *hear* in the New Testament. In <u>Acts 22</u> and <u>Acts 26</u>, the same word is used for those with him who *heard* and for those who *heard not*. How can this NOT be a contradiction?

Paul is in Jerusalem addressing the hostile crowd which had just been beating him. They were accusing him of defiling the Temple and telling people to disobey Jewish Laws. Some even mistook him for a wanted criminal who had been causing trouble in the area. He is now in protective custody



causing trouble in the area. He is now in protective custody with the Roman commander, the crowd is yelling, "KILL HIM!" and he asks if he can talk to the Jewish people in his own defense. He starts to tell his story, focusing on his personal spiritual experience that led him to Jesus.

Acts 22:6-9: (KJV) 6...as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. ⁷And I fell unto the ground, and heard <191> a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ⁸And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. ⁹And they that were with me saw indeed the light and were afraid; but they heard not <191> the voice of him that spake to me.

Heard: Strongs #191 akouo; to hear (in various senses)

The King James Version translates this word as: give (in the) audience (of), come (to the ears), ([shall]) hear (-er, -ken), be noised, be reported, understand

Joseph Henry Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: To comprehend, to understand, to perceive the sense of what is being said



The companions heard SOMETHING, but they did not hear a comprehendible voice because the message was to Saul alone.

This word for *heard* literally means TO HEAR IN VARIOUS SENSES, and it also has a sense of COMPREHENDING as well.

(Source: Matthew Poole's Commentary) This may be added to what was formerly said, that the men who traveled with Paul may be said not to have heard the voice of him that spake, because they did not understand it, or obey it; they were not converted, as Paul was, by it; the Hebrew language putting hearing for obeying, as in many Scriptures; and both Saint Paul, who here spake, and Luke, who penned this history, understood exactly the proprieties of that tongue.



I can ask my husband to do something, and I know he hears me, but he did not hear me.

Luke was entirely correct.

The others AUDIBLY HEARD the voice. A simple factual statement.



Paul was entirely correct.



The others (his companions)
DID NOT UNDERSTAND
the voice that spoke to him.
Their minds were not changed.

Two authors were telling the SAME STORY from DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES!

A similar case is recorded in <u>John 12:28,29</u>, where it states our Lord Jesus heard a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. But the people that stood by and heard the voice understood not the words but said that it thundered. SAUL AND ALL OF HIS COMPANY IN ONE SENSE OF THE WORD HEARD THE SOUND OR VOICE, BUT IN ANOTHER SENSE OF THE WORD HE ALONE HEARD THE VOICE. We use this same form of expression in our daily conversation today. If someone speaks to us in a low or indistinct voice, we say we did not hear - we mean that although we heard the voice, we did not understand or comprehend it.



My wife suffers from a severe hearing loss. She may say, "I didn't hear you," but yet, she heard that I was speaking, although she did not understand the words. Comprehension is different than hearing the sound or voice.

The third account of Paul's conversion: Paul is before King Agrippa. His purpose is to broadly paint a picture of the drama while being factual.

Paul was in Jerusalem, but he was accused of starting a riot in the Temple. There was a plot to kill him, but as a Roman citizen, Paul appealed to a Roman officer for protection and is eventually given asylum at Caesarea, a seat of the Roman government. There he formally makes an appeal to Caesar. Hearings were held before the Roman official, Festus, and the visiting King Agrippa



where Paul was able to speak in his own defense. Here in this third and final account of Paul's conversion, Paul is before King Agrippa telling his own story from his early life as a Pharisee and then his conversion. It is so dramatic that the king actually says, In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian!

This account includes the others (Paul's companions) in its focus:

Acts 26:13-16: (NASB) ¹³at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. ¹⁴And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard <191> a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads. ¹⁵And I said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you.

Paul, in wrapping up his witness to King Agrippa, used the same word again. He was giving the story in much more detail because he was in a friendly environment speaking one-on-one. We tend to tell our stories in greater detail when someone is listening and paying attention.

Acts 26:28-29: (NASB) ²⁸Agrippa replied to Paul, In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian. ²⁹And Paul said, I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear <191> (understand) me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.

Paul was saying, all who UNDERSTAND, who PERCEIVE what I am saying this day...



ONCLUSION

INTENT, AUTHORSHIP AND LANGUAGE cannot be laid aside when we are attempting to truly understand biblical meaning.

Those with Paul DID fall to the ground, as he did, and they DID hear a voice, though they did NOT understand it.



Subtlety and detail. Without an understanding of both, we simply cannot expect to comprehend the Bible.

With Paul's conversion straightened out, our next question is:

Was Paul a master of doublespeak?

The Apostle Paul said, did and wrote more in his life than most of us could ever dream of. Naturally when you are in the public eye and under heavy scrutiny, your words and reasoning come under attack. Interestingly, the Apostle Paul is still under attack two thousand years after his ministry was completed.

If someone is going to call someone else a liar publicly, they need to be very sure of themselves. Listen carefully to the argument presented in the following audio clip.



CQRewind (1)) Deuteronomy 30:14 changed in Romans 10:8, Ep. 4. The Apostle Paul Was a Liar - Here's Proof, The Inquisitor

> Many of the early Christians, such as the Ebionites, believed it was necessary to continue complying with the Jewish Law. Paul disagreed, but he faced the problem that Deuteronomy supported what the Ebionites believed, rather than what Paul was teaching. To circumvent this inconvenience, Paul chose to misquote Deuteronomy in order to support his revised doctrine. Specifically, in Romans 10:8, Paul cites Deuteronomy 30:14, but Paul removes the words about compliance with the Law, "that thou mayest do it," and replaces them with his own words emphasizing faith, "that is, the word of faith, which we preach." Through this alteration, Paul completely changed the meaning of Deuteronomy 30:14, in order to advance his own doctrine that salvation is obtained through faith in Jesus, rather than through compliance with the Jewish Law.

This man states Paul *chose* to misquote <u>Deuteronomy 30:14</u>. He gave a complete misrepresentation of what Paul did. Paul DID NOT misquote Deuteronomy 30:14! He simply stopped at a point in Romans 10:8 after the sentence, But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. Paul then added an editorial comment.

Paul's Editorial Comment

that is, the word of faith, which we preach.

This man in the audio clip obviously did not understand how the pharisaical rules worked with quoting the Old Testament. His accusation does not prove Paul was a liar.

Deuteronomy 30:14: (KJV) But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

Romans 10:8: (KJV) But what saith it? The word is night hee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;



Galatians 1:10: (NASB) ...If I were still trying to please <700> men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:33: (NASB) ... just as I also please <700> all men in all things... so that they may be saved.

> **Please:** Strongs #700 aresko; (through the idea of exciting emotion); to be agreeable (or by implication, to seek to be so)



Paul says he tries to please men

so they might be saved:

<u>1 Corinthians 10:33</u>: (NASB) just as I also please all men in all things...so that they may be saved.



Paul says he would not be a servant of Christ if he tried to please men:

Galatians 1:10: (NASB) For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.



We need to understand the context and the words, and then we can find the answer:

Briefly, the Galatians were being confused by zealous Jewish Christians who were going around teaching that the Jewish laws and customs, like circumcision and dietary restrictions, still were required for new Christian converts. Paul taught that salvation for Jews and Gentiles was now through faith in Jesus - not in rituals and traditions. He was adamant about not misrepresenting the gospel message.

This Galatians passage is a clear representation of what the Apostle Paul stood for:

Galatians 1:8-10: (NASB) ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! ⁹As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! ¹⁰For am I now seeking the **favor** <700> of men, or of God? Or am I striving to **please** <700> men? If I were still trying to **please** <700> men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

To Paul, it is ALL about the gospel of Christ, pleasing God and nothing less. What about people-pleasing?

Paul's reasoning for *pleasing all men* in 1 Corinthians 10 begins in chapter nine:

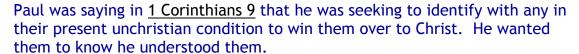
<u>1 Corinthians 9:19-20</u>: (NASB) ¹⁹For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law (He relates to the people as he is witnessing);

Acts 17:16 says when Paul went to Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. He related to the people by saying he could see they were religious by pointing out an idol - THE UNKNOWN GOD - and he used this to proclaim the truth.

<u>1 Corinthians 9:21-22</u>: (NASB) 21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.







Paul was an amazing communicator and a very unique character who was perfectly chosen for the immense job of communicating the gospel message to as many people as possible in a short amount of time. If you were to look at his resume, he checks all the boxes. He studied Judaism with the famous Gamaliel, the main leader of the Sanhedrin, considered to be one of the greatest teachers in all of Judaism. That gives him credibility. Paul describes himself as a *Pharisee of Pharisees*. He knew the Jewish Law backwards and forwards. Even though he was not trained in the Greek schools of speechmaking, he was fearless and never missed an opportunity to talk about Christ. He was Jewish, but he was also a Roman citizen, having been born in Tarsus, Turkey. This pedigree allowed him to minister to both Jewish and Roman audiences.



Let me give you a practical example. I was trying to study a specific part of Bible chronology that no matter what, I was not going to get on my own. I went to a brother in Christ named Harry who I knew had a handle on it. We sat down and he said something profound to me. He asked me to tell him everything I knew on the issue so far. He said, "Let's start exactly where you are and build on that." Instead of explaining something complicated I would not understand, he came down to my level and built up. This is what I envision Paul to be like - he could relate to the various backgrounds and in our vernacular, "knew where they were coming from." He was a prolific speaker and must have had quite the dynamic personality because people from all over wanted to follow him or kill him. He was controversial in his day.

I have become all things to all men is expressed in 1 Corinthians 9.

1 Corinthians 10 begins with Paul using Israel as an example of what not to do because of their idolatry and giving in to temptation. He then speaks of the liberty we have from the bondage of the Jewish Law. In 1 Corinthians 10:23 he says, (paraphrased)



"I have the right to anything, you say, but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything, but not everything is constructive." Just because we CAN does not mean we SHOULD, and that is a terrific lesson for us today. He applied this to being respectful of the consciences of others. What might be offensive to them we could avoid by sacrificing our own personal liberty. He used the example of not eating meat sacrificed to idols, even though it is still just meat.

Now comes his people-pleasing statement:

<u>1 Corinthians 10:31-33</u>: (NASB) 31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; 33 just as I also **please** <**700**> all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.

Paul denied himself for the good of others and disregarded his own advantage. He sought to do everything in advancement of the gospel and for the good of



others and the blessing of the people. He was a God-honoring servant who communicated well with others. Paul was not a people-pleaser.

Also, he did not please all men - he was stoned, beaten and put to death for teaching the gospel.





The FULL CONTEXT
of a phrase is critical to seeing its true meaning.
Paul is clearly only focused on serving Christ
and is willing TO IDENTIFY WITH (to "please")
those outside of the gospel to bring them to Christ.
He never hints at violating any Christian principles in this process.

This is huge! We CAN identify with unbelievers to help them see Christ - we just cannot violate Christian principles.

Some Scriptures say we do commit sin, and others say we do not. Where does the Apostle Paul weigh in?

Whenever we talk about sin, we are talking about a problem, and this goaround is no exception. The Apostle Paul weighs in hard and fast on this issue, and as is his style, he comes across as unequivocal. It begins to sound like a broken record, but we need to know the CONTEXT before we know the answer.

I have been blessed to study the Bible for many years and one of the biggest lessons I have learned is - WHAT IS THE CONTEXT? - because that helps us understand the truth.



• To take one final example, let's consider the book of Hebrews which many Christians have traditionally attributed to Paul. In the book of Jeremiah, the Jews are said to be God's chosen people and their relationship with God is compared to that of a wife and her husband. This verse was unacceptable to Paul because he wanted people to believe the Jews were no longer God's chosen people. So, the author of Hebrews got around this problem by misquoting Jeremiah 31:32, in order to make it appear that God no longer had any regard for the Jews. As you can see by comparing these two verses, the words are exactly the same, except that Jeremiah described God as being a husband to the Jews, whereas the author of Hebrews altered the wording to convey the exact opposite message that God no longer had any regard for the Jews. Again, my point here is not that Paul didn't have the rights to offer a different teaching. My point is that he did so dishonestly because he quoted Jeremiah but changed a few key words in order to change their meaning entirely.





This is maddening. He is saying the verse was unacceptable to the Apostle Paul, so he altered the wording. Neither one of those accusations is true and he should have done his homework before he made the statement that Paul is a liar. He is making a conclusion based on what he <u>thinks</u> he knows.

The Apostle Paul was quoting from a Greek version of the Old Testament called the Septuagint. This is commonly understood by many of the Bible commentaries. The Septuagint was the most available translation of the Old Testament in those days and was frequently quoted by Paul. Please see the Bonus Material for more on the Septuagint.

<u>Jeremiah 31:32</u>: (KJV) Not according to the covenant that I made ... although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

<u>Hebrews 8:9</u>: (KJV) Not according to the covenant that I made...and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. (Septuagint!)

The Apostle Paul is our brother and we cannot sit by and let him be accused falsely.



Trish: I don't understand why someone would need to discredit Paul. What does he teach that is contrary to Jesus?

Coming up on our February 17 and 24, 2020, podcasts we will be focusing on Trish's question in our Contradictions Series. We will be looking at how the Apostle Paul's teachings and Jesus' teachings supposedly clash.



February 17, 2020, Ep. 1113: Did the Apostle Paul Contradict Jesus? (Part I).

February 24, 2020, Ep. 1114: Did the Apostle Paul Contradict Jesus? (Part II).

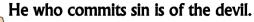




Paul says he is the

foremost of sinners:

1 Timothy 1:15: (NASB) ...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.



Children of God do not sin:

1 John 3:8-10: (NASB) ⁸he one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. ⁹No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.



The "contradiction" is not Paul speaking against himself; it is between him and John.

<u>1 Timothy 1:15</u>: (NASB) ...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

1 John 3:9: (NASB) No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin...



How can these two Scriptures harmonize?

We need to understand the context and the words, and then we can find the answer:

These statements are completely opposite. Is Paul the worst of sinners, or because he was begotten of the Holy Spirit, he cannot sin? Does that mean you and I do not sin? Here is another example of where context gives us the answer. Paul was not afraid to admit to anyone who would listen that he committed horrible sins in his past.

Paul is recounting his deeply sinful background. This is why he saw himself as chief of all sinners:

<u>1 Timothy 1:12-16</u>: (NASB) ¹²I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he considered me faithful, putting me into service, ¹³even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. ¹⁶Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate his perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in him for eternal life.

Paul's point: "I have been forgiven for my blasphemous past." What an example of hope and encouragement for others. When he says he is chief/worst/foremost, he is saying he had been an open opposer of the truth. He was transformed from an enemy of Christ and his church to a friend and zealous servant. Paul was showing humility.



For more on regrets, please search our archives for Episodes 912 and 914: Will My Regrets Ever Leave Me Alone? (Part I and II).

In these prior episodes, we used Paul as the primary example of how he could have let his sinful past make him feel so bad that he would not be able to move forward for the Lord. Paul never tried to cover up all the things he did. He confronted them and used them as steppingstones and teachable moments.

Okay, so Paul is the worst of the sinners. How does he get to the part where he says followers of God have no sin?

The reasoning behind this sinless existence begins in <u>1 John 1</u> and carries through chapter two:

<u>1 John 1:7-10</u>: (NASB) ⁷but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins; He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

John is emphatic - we all are sinners! He continues this theme in <u>1 John 2</u> and is working up to the context of <u>1 John 3:9</u>:

1 John 2:1-2: (NASB) ¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²and he himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

Our sins are so apparent that we have been given Jesus as our advocate.

Jesus' role for the believer is an advocate.



An advocate is someone who sits with you on your side and pleads your case before a judge.

The idea of being sinless begins to form at the end of this chapter:

1 John 2:25-27: (NASB) ²⁵This is the promise which he himself made to us: eternal life. ²⁶These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷As for you, the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in him.

What is this *anointing*? It is the justification of Jesus' blood being applied by granting us the begetting of the Holy Spirit (God's power and influence):

<u>2 Corinthians 5:17</u>: (NASB) Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

For more on the subject of being begotten (born) of God, please search our archives for Ep. 1110: Are Christians Really Born Again?



Having been reconciled to God, He can now see us as children:

<u>1 John 3:2-3,8-10</u>: (NASB) ²Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when he appears, we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is. ³And everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself, just as he is pure. ⁸The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. (He is speaking to us on the standpoint of being anointed, even though we still sin. Our new creature has an incredible privilege.) ⁹No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

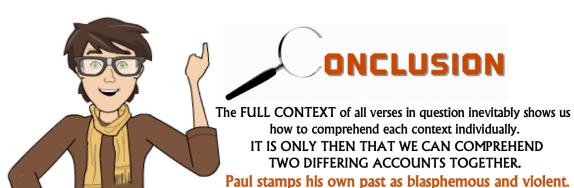
This *new creature* is what John is calling sinless. We, still being fleshly beings, daily battle our imperfect, sinful human nature.

Paul is saying that his old creature sins, but his new creature does not.

How does this *new creature* work? The Holy Spirit (God's power and influence) is sinless and inside of us. It is how we use it that matters. It is like having a toolbox with the perfect tools. We need to open the "toolbox" and use the right tools (the Holy Spirit.)

John clearly says we are all sinners and the *new* creature is not. If we follow God's will, we are not sinning because we open the toolbox and apply the Holy Spirit. The toolbox is perfect, but we may not always use it perfectly.





once begotten of God's spirit, we have within us new and pure life.

JOHN SHOWS US WHAT PAUL ALREADY KNEW -

Keeping God's word in context actually brings us great confidence. It is sensible, harmonious and powerful.

Some say the Apostle Paul was arrogant and deceitful. Is there any basis for these accusations?

We who live at this time in history should especially know how easy it is to mischaracterize someone we are not fond of. The interesting thing is that such labeling and character assassination was happening in a big way, even in Paul's own time. It will be fascinating to see how he dealt with it.





Paul says he DOES

use trickery (deceit).

<u>2 Corinthians 12:16</u>: (NASB) ...nevertheless, <u>crafty</u> fellow that I am, I took you in by <u>deceit</u>. Paul says he
DOES NOT
use trickery (deceit).

<u>1 Thessalonians 2:3</u>: (NASB) For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit.

<u>2 Corinthians 12:16</u>: (NASB) ...nevertheless, *crafty* <3835> fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit <1388>.

<u>1 Thessalonians 2:3</u>: (NASB) For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of **deceit <1388**>.

Deceit: Strongs #3835 panougos; all working, i.e. adroit (clever or skillful) (shrewd)

Deceit: Strongs #1388 *dolos*; from an obsolete primary verb, *dello* (probably meant to decoy); a trick (bait), i.e. (figuratively) wile (tricks or ploy)

Understand the context and the words and we find the answer:

Back in <u>2 Corinthians 2:17</u>, Paul acknowledges there were false teachers who were getting rich off of preaching the word of God, even carrying false letters of authenticity to show their authority. Paul did not preach the gospel for money. Here in chapter 11, he is going to use sarcasm to make the point that he is different from those teachers and to defend himself against his critics.





He had a lot of opposition from inside and outside the church at Corinth who made many charges against him, including:

- They opposed some of his teachings, such as circumcision was unnecessary to the Gentiles.
- They denied he was an apostle. Unlike the twelve, he had never known Christ personally. His witness was second-hand and not direct like that of the others. They said he had falsely assumed to be one of the ambassadors of Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:5, 12:11
- They claimed his teachings were not fixed and consistent. 2 Corinthians 1:17
- They accused him of bragging. 2 Corinthians 3:1, 5:12, 10:8
- They said he assumed unauthorized authority. 2 Corinthians 10:1
- They charged he was unpatriotic and had fallen away from the faith. 2 Corinthians 11:22
- They said he was not Christ's servant at all. 2 Corinthians 10:7, 11:23
- They criticized him for having worked at his trade of tentmaking and receiving gifts from Macedonia, claiming he should have told the Corinthians he needed money. (Even though he was at Corinth for a year and no one offered to help financially.) 2 Corinthians 11:2-10
- They insinuated that the collections taken for the poor at Jerusalem were probably in part, at least, for himself. 2 Corinthians 12:16
- They even asked if it was certain he was a Hebrew at all of pure blood maybe he was whole or part Gentile. 2 Corinthians 11:22

Ironically, many of these are similar charges by those who oppose Paul today.

After all he did for the church at Corinth, he is going to use a teaching tool MIMICKING HIS CRITICS to show how foolish it is to accuse him of doing this for money. It is like he is saying: "Oh yeah, I'm soooo sneaky. I come in here, ask for no money, support myself for over a year, you offer me nothing, I do everything I can to teach you everything I know, everyone hates me, but yeah, I am just tricking you into somehow stealing everything. That is what I am doing, all right."

Paul is about to use sarcasm to make his point:

<u>2 Corinthians 11:1</u>: (NASB) I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed, you are bearing with me.

He will continue the sarcasm while calling out those who deceitfully use the name of Christ:

2 Corinthians 11:12-13: (NASB) ¹²But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. ¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.





Paul's sarcasm is now going into full bloom:

<u>2 Corinthians 11:19-21</u>: (NASB) ¹⁹For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly. ²⁰For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face. ²¹To my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison. But in whatever respect anyone else is bold - I speak in foolishness I am just as bold myself.

Moving into the 12th chapter, we will now see where this sarcasm led:

2 Corinthians 12:14-16: (NASB) ¹⁴Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. ¹⁵I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? ¹⁶But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit.

Let's read parts of those same verses from a different translation:

2 Corinthians 12:14-16: (The New Living Translation) ¹⁴...I don't want what you have, I want you...¹⁵I will gladly spend myself and all I have for your spiritual good, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me. ¹⁶Some of you admit I was not a burden to you. But they still think I was sneaky and took advantage of you by trickery.

Continuing...:

<u>2 Corinthians 12:17-19</u>: (NASB) ¹⁷Certainly I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I? ¹⁸I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps? ¹⁹All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved.

(Source: John Gill Commentary) <u>Verse 16</u>: These words are not spoken by the apostle in his own person of himself, but in the person of his adversaries...they insinuated to the Corinthians, and objected to the apostle, that though he did not receive anything from them with his own hands, yet he craftily and cunningly made use of others to drain their purses, and receive it for him; and which is suggested in the next clause: Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile; so say the false apostles of me; ...charging him with a wicked and criminal craftiness, by making use of other persons in a sly underhanded way, to get this church's money, when he pretended to preach the gospel freely.

Paul would have remembered Jesus' advice:

<u>Matthew 10:16</u>: (NASB) Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

Our comparison verse in 1 Thessalonians alludes to some of the other abuses Paul endured in different locations.

Here he talks to the church at Thessalonica in a sober and sincere way, since no one is aggressively challenging him.

<u>1 Thessalonians 2:1-7</u>: (NASB) ¹For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, ²but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. ³For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of **deceit** <1388>; ⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. ⁵For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness ⁶nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. ⁷But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.

18



He had to assert authority as an apostle, as this was his responsibility. He was also caring for them as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her children. He was only trying to lovingly and caringly nourish them. This is a clear representation of humble, truthful and spiritual apostleship.



ONCLUSION

The FULL CONTEXT of any Scripture will reveal the intention and attitude of the words spoken or written.

Understanding is simple with context!

The Apostle Paul was NOT crafty or deceitful in his ministry. Like any good speaker, he did not shy away.

in his ministry. Like any good speaker, he did not shy away from drama or even sarcasm to make his points.

The Apostle Paul was a brilliant, well-educated man. More importantly, he was called of God through Christ and given God's Holy Spirit (God's power and influence). Christ showed him the gospel. Paul unceasingly brought it to others.

So, does the Apostle Paul contradict himself?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!



Join us next week for our podcast on February 10, 2020 Ep. 1112: Does the Apostle Paul Contradict Himself? (Part II)







Bonus Material

The people heard it, and approved the doctrine, and immediately practiced the contrary.

— Benjamin Franklin

	Acts 9:3-7	Acts 22:6-9	Acts 26:13-16
Who is speaking?	Luke	Saul	Saul
Who is the audience?	Those hearing or reading the book of Acts	A Jewish mob who physically attacked Saul	King Agrippa
Who falls to the ground?	Saul (The companions "stood speechless")	Saul	Saul and his companions
Who hears a voice?	Saul and his companions	Saul	Saul
Who sees a light?	Saul	Saul and his companions	Saul and his companions
Who sees a man?	Not the companions - "they saw no one."	Not stated	Not stated

There are several translations that give an appropriate thought regarding Paul's associates not "hearing" the voice on the road. Here is one:

Acts 22:6-10: (NASB) ⁶But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, ⁷and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? ⁸And I answered, who are you, Lord? And He said to me, I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting. ⁹And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. ¹⁰And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.

Some say the word for *hear* in the Greek language can only mean audibly hear unless accompanied by other qualifying words. Interestingly, this word <191> is used to translate the Hebrew word for *hear* in <u>Deuteronomy 6:4</u> with a meaning of "to hear intelligently."

Mark 12:28-29: (NASB) ²⁸One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the foremost of all? ²⁹Jesus answered, The foremost is, hear <191>, O Israel! The LORD our God is One LORD.

<u>Deuteronomy 6:4-5</u>: (NASB) ⁴Hear <8085>, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Hear: Strongs #8085 *shama*; to hear intelligently (often with implication of attention, obedience, etc.; causatively, to tell, etc.)

(Source: apologeticspress.org)

Alleged Discrepancies: They Heard Him-They Heard Him Not? by Alden Bass

Consider also the words of Greek expert Ray Summers: Some verbs take their object in a case other than the accusative. There is a variety of usage at this point. *Akouo* may take its object in the genitive or the accusative. Usually *akouo* with the genitive means "to hear without understanding." This probably explains the difficulty involved in Acts 9:7 and 22:9.



The incident is the experience of Paul in seeing the light and hearing the voice on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:7 states that Paul's companions heard the voice (*akouo* with the genitive); Acts 22:9 says they did not hear the voice (*akouo* with the accusative). Thus both constructions say the same thing; the companions of Paul did not understand what the voice said to Paul; to them it was unintelligible sound (1950, p. 51).

Finally, on this subject of hearing:

(Source: Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

New Testament #191 akouoo; to hear:

- I. absolutely,
 - a. to be endowed with the faculty of hearing (not deaf): Mark 7:37
 - b. to attend to (use the faculty of hearing), consider what is or has been said
 - c. tropically, to understand, perceive the sense of what is said: Matthew 13:15
- II. with an object
 - a. to hear something
 - i. to perceive by the ear what is announced in one's presence (to hear immediately): Matthew 12:19
 - ii. to get by hearing, learn (from the mouth of the teacher or narrator):
 Acts 15:7
 - iii. a thing comes to one's ears, to find out (by hearsay), learn,
 - iv. to give ear to teaching or teacher
 - v. to comprehend, understand: Mark 4:33
 - b. hear the person or thing with his own ears
 - i. with the genitive of a person
 - ii. to perceive anyone's voice
 - iii. to give ear to one, listen, hearken,
 - iv. to yield to, hear and obey, hear to one,
 - v. to listen to, have regard to, of God answering the prayers of men: John 9:31
 - vi. with the genitive of person and participle: Mark 14:58
 - vii. with the genitive of a thing: Mark 14:64
 - viii. to perceive the distinct words of a voice: John 5:25,28
 - ix. to yield obedience to the voice: John 5:25

A little bit about the Septuagint:

(Source: Wikipedia) The Greek Old Testament, or Septuagint (from the Latin: <code>septuāgintā</code>, lit. 'seventy'; often abbreviated 70; in Roman numerals, LXX), is the earliest extant Koine Greek translation of books from the Hebrew Bible, various biblical apocrypha, and deuterocanonical books. The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch, were translated in the mid-3rd century BCE; they did not survive as original translation texts, however, except as rare fragments. The remaining books of the Greek Old Testament are presumably translations from 200 BCE to 50 CE.

Greek Scriptures were in wide use by the time of Jesus and Paul of Tarsus (early Christianity) because most Christian proselytes, God-fearers, and other gentile sympathizers of Hellenistic Judaism could not read Hebrew. The text of the Greek Old Testament is quoted more often than the original Hebrew Bible text in the Greek New Testament (particularly the Pauline epistles) by the Apostolic Fathers, and later by the Greek Church Fathers. Modern critical editions of the Greek Old Testament are based on the Codices Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus. The fourth- and fifth-century Greek Old Testament manuscripts have different lengths, so there is no single Septuagint canon. The Codex Alexandrinus, for example, contains all four books of the Maccabees; the Codex Sinaiticus contains 1 and 4 Maccabees, and the Codex Vaticanus contains none of the four books.