

Living Word Fellowship Church
“The Two Names Within: Choosing Paul in the New Year”
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Text: Acts 13:9 (The shift in naming): “But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said...”

Background of the Text: This verse marks the pivotal moment in Acts when the narrator (Luke) officially shifts from using Saul's Hebrew name to his Roman name, Paul. This occurs as he is about to embark on his first major missionary journey to the Gentile world. The dual naming established here confirms he possessed both names from birth.

Theme: New Year, New Purpose: The transformation from the old self (Saul) to the new self (Paul) is not a name change, but a radical choice to let God's grace redefine your identity, humility, and mission.

Tension: The struggle in the New Year is not becoming a *new* person, but choosing which of your *existing* selves—the self-exalted "Saul" (the Old Creature) or the surrendered "Paul" (the New Creation)—will lead your life.

Relevant Question: Which name—which identity—are you allowing to define your purpose in the year ahead?

Thesis

Component	Description/Context	Scripture/Word Study
Thesis Statement	The transformation required is not a name change, but an internal choice. The choice is to put the <i>old creature</i> to death and embrace the <i>new creation</i> .	2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”

Context	“Saul, who was also called Paul.”	Word Study (Greek): <i>Saulos</i> (Hebrew name, "desired," Kingly) vs. <i>Paulos</i> (Latin name, "small," Humbled).
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I. The Saul Identity: The Old Creature's Kingly Life (The Life to Forsake)

Component	Exegesis/Narrative Development (Saul)	Contemporary Application/Question
A. The Kingly Name	Saul (Hebrew name) represented Kingly living: self-exaltation and isolation. He was defined by 'faultless' adherence to the Law, not by grace.	<i>Question:</i> Where is your life still clinging to Kingly Saul living?
B. Justification of Sin	His persecution was not hatred, but theological conviction. He was defending the Law against the 'cursed' Christ (Deuteronomy 21:23), convinced he was right (Acts 26:9).	<i>Application:</i> relying on career title, social media validation, or own wisdom as your sight, proving that pride justifies itself.
C. The Cost of Pride	His purpose was always: <i>My will be done</i> . He counted his credentials as 'gain', but Christ made him count them as 'garbage' (loss).	<i>Question:</i> What must be counted as 'garbage' (Philippians 3:8) so that the <i>old creature</i> might truly pass away?

II. The Three Days of Darkness (The Process of Transformation)

Component	Exegesis/Narrative Development (The Transition)	Contemporary Application/Question
A. Execution of Saul	<p>The light executed the Kingly identity. 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' (Acts 9:4). The Kingly one was immediately rendered helpless and blind.</p>	<p>God often allows a "blinding light" moment—a failure, a closed door, or a sudden change—to show us that our self-made throne is actually a prison. The execution of the Kingly identity is the beginning of true freedom.</p>
B. Purpose of the Silence	<p>The three days of blindness (Acts 9:9) were a forced period of "death of self-reliance" and preparation: 1. Forced Humility (dependence on others, Acts 9:8); 2. Waiting for Re-Education (silencing the prideful mind); 3. Symbol of Death and Resurrection.</p>	<p><i>Application:</i> The exhaustion of resolutions is the fruit of Saul's striving. Transformation requires listening to God, not <i>doing</i> for God.</p>
C. The Role of Community	<p>God sent Ananias—a member of the church—to complete the healing and baptism (Acts 9:17). God required community to end Saul's isolation and bring the New Covenant into effect.</p>	<p><i>Question:</i> Are you living the 'isolated Kingly Saul' life, refusing to ask for help? Or the 'fearful Ananias' life, afraid to step out in obedience to serve?</p>

III. The Paul Identity: Embracing the New Creation and Purpose (The Life to Choose)

Component	Exegesis/Narrative Development (Paul)	Contemporary Application/Question
A. The Scales Falling	'Immediately, something like scales fell from my eyes...' (Acts 9:18). This was the simultaneous dropping of physical blindness and the spiritual pride/legalism that had blinded him.	When the scales fall, you stop looking at others as competitors to beat and start seeing them as brothers and sisters to serve. You trade the "sight" of comparison for the "vision" of community.
B. The Humble Name	Paul ('little') was consciously embraced. He traded the kingly name for the humble one to define his mission. The Spirit chose the surrendered identity.	Acts 13:9: The Spirit-filled moment where the Paul identity led the man.
C. The Chosen Instrument	Paul realized he was chosen, not for his zeal, but by grace: 'This man is my chosen instrument...' (Acts 9:15). The audience is also God's chosen instrument! Your past Saul years prepare you for the Paul purpose.	<i>Application:</i> Your failures do not disqualify you; they prepare you.
D. Final Choice	The choice between the Old Creature (Saul, self-exaltation) and the New Creation (Paul, mission/service).	<i>Question:</i> What intentional step will you take this week to choose 'Humbled Living,' allowing the surrendered servant—the Paul—to lead your New Year?

IV. Conclusion (Call to Action)

Thesis: The New Year requires you to choose which identity—Saul (the old creature) or Paul (the new creation)—will define your purpose.

Final Challenge: Die to the zealous, self-willed Saul, and let the surrendered, commissioned Paul, the new creature, define your life.