



## I Have Many People

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Saul of Tarsus was a strict Jew, after the sect of the Pharisees. So devoted was he to preserving the traditions of the elders that he began an official inquisition and persecution of Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah (the Christ of God), hauling them to prison, and having some put to death—simply because they chose to trust and follow Jesus.

Then one midday, on his way to the city of Damascus in Syria to disrupt the church there (see Acts 9), Saul was confronted by a blinding light which caused him to fall from his horse and blinded his eyes. He, and those with him, heard a voice from the sky, saying, *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”*

*“Who are You, Lord?”* Saul asked.

*“I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.”*

Saul was never the same again. He was healed of his blindness and filled with the Holy Spirit, radically transformed into a follower of Jesus—the very One he had given himself to destroy. He became Christ’s apostle and missionary, planting churches and training pastors throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and Europe. He was so committed to reaching Gentiles (non-Jews) for Christ, that he began to call himself by his Roman surname, Paul.

When Paul first went to Corinth, in the south of Greece, *“he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.”* (Acts 18:4). But the Jews resisted and blasphemed to the point that Paul, out of exasperation said, *“Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”* (Acts 18:6).

This was a watershed moment in his ministry, shifting his focus *beyond* his Jewish brethren to the larger Gentile world around them.

*“And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.’”* (Acts 18:9-10).