

LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

LESSON 2: THE CALL & HIS DOCTRINE

Romans 1:16 (NKJV)

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of life and ministry of the Apostle Paul! He is credited with writing 14 books of the New Testament and providing the theological foundation for all Christianity. One of his biggest achievements is clearly the spread of Christianity to the Gentile world. Through the revelations, writing and missionary work of the Apostle Paul Christianity was fundamentally changed and literally fulfilled the mandate of Christ to preach the Gospel to all the world.

How did he become an apostle? What was different about his ministry in comparison to other Apostles? Why was his message so important to the future of the church?

THE CALL OF GOD:

Acts 9:15–16 (NKJV)

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

1. Saul was to preach the name of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, to stand before kings and to teach the nation of Israel.

- a. Paul's relationship with Israel:

Acts 13:16–23 (NKJV)

16 Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

17 The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it.

18 Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness.

19 And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment.

20 "After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

22 And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'

23 From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—

Paul never completely gives up on reaching the nation of Israel. He carries a burden for the Jews for most of his ministry.

Romans 9:1–5 (NKJV)

1 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,
2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.
3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,
4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;
5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

- b. Paul before kings: Paul stood before Herod Agrippa and eventually before the throne of Caesar. (Acts 26:1-2 & Acts 25:10-12)

Acts 26:1–2 (NKJV)

1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself:
2 "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews,

Acts 25:10–12 (NKJV)

10 So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know.
11 For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar."
12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"

- c. Paul to the Gentiles:

Acts 13:46–47 (NKJV)

46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.
47 For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' "

Galatians 2:7–9 (NKJV)

7 But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter
8 (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),

9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

- i. Although God may have used Peter to open the door to the Gentiles (Acts 10), God chose to use Saul (Paul) as the principle catalyst for evangelism among the Gentiles.
- ii. Paul receives a clear revelation of God's plan for there to be one church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:11–15 (NIV)

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—

12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,

2. Saul was also called to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ:

2 Timothy 1:11–12 (NKJV)

11 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

2 Corinthians 11:23–28 (NKJV)

23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—

28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

2 Corinthians 4:7–12 (NKJV)

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—

10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.

PAUL'S JOURNEY INTO MINISTRY:

Damascus to Arabia - Arabia to Damascus - Damascus to Jerusalem - Jerusalem to Tarsus - Tarsus to Antioch - Antioch to Jerusalem

1. Saul is rejected by the Jews in Damascus:

Acts 9:20–25 (NKJV)

20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?"

22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

23 Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him.

24 But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.

Saul discovers that Christian ministry will be very different than his religious commitments of the past:

- a. Christian ministry flows from humility not capability. It is the product of grace not merit and skill. (I am what I am by the grace of God)
- b. Christian ministry is a work of the Spirit (Came not with the enticing words...)
- c. Christian ministry requires timing and patience. (Some plant, some water, God gives the increase)

2. Saul goes into obscurity in Arabia:

Galatians 1:15–18 (KJV 1900)

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

- a. God will often prepare those he calls with solitude.
- b. Saul needed to learn the voice of God and to walk in the Spirit. Ministry without proper preparation can be a stumbling block.
- c. Saul spent three years allowing the Lord to develop his character and open his understanding of the Scriptures.

3. Saul struggled to live down his past failures:

- a. When arriving in Jerusalem, he found it difficult to gain acceptance among Christians:

Acts 9:26 (KJV 1900)

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

- b. The memory of his sin against the church would haunt and impact Saul the rest of his life:

"Not worthy to be called an apostle..." - 1 Corinthians 15:9

"Chief of sinners" - 1 Timothy 1:15

"O wretched man that I am..." - Romans 7:24

- c. Paul's hope is in finished work of Jesus Christ:

Romans 8:1-4 (NKJV)

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Paul lived in the humility of his past failure, but not in the shame.

4. Saul found a friend in Barnabas:

Acts 9:27-30 (NKJV)

27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.

29 And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.

30 When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.

Barnabas = "Son of Encouragement"

5. Barnabas brings Paul to Antioch:

Acts 13:1–3 (NKJV)

1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

- a. Antioch is known as the cradle of Christianity.
- b. They were first called Christians at Antioch.
- c. Antioch becomes the hub of missionary work to the Gentile world.
- d. Paul submits to the authority of church leaders at Antioch and is released.

PAUL'S DOCTRINE OF THE LAW & FAITH

1. We are justified by faith and by the works of the Law:

Romans 3:19–20 (NKJV)

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 3:28–29 (NKJV)

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

29 Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,

Galatians 3:11 (NKJV)

11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

2. What was the purpose of the law?

- a. To restrain the sinful passions of God's people:

Galatians 3:19 (NKJV)

19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

b. To reveal the sinful condition of mankind:

Hebrews 10:1–3 (NKJV)

1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.

c. To be a schoolmaster and to bring us to Christ:

Galatians 3:23–25 (NKJV)

23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

d. To serve as a shadow of things to come:

Colossians 2:16–17 (NKJV)

16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,

17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Paul taught against those trying to establish their righteousness through adherence to the Old Testament Law. However, Paul did not teach against salvation by faith accompanied with works.

PAUL PASSIONS:

1. Salvation by grace through faith, rather than strict observance of the Law that he excelled at as a Pharisee.
2. Proclaiming Jesus no matter what the threats, beatings, jailings, and stonings.
3. Being crucified with Christ -- totally surrendered -- not hanging on to his own life.
4. Knowing Jesus intimately -- in sufferings, in death, in resurrection -- knowing him in a way that surpasses everything!