

## PAUL AND HIS EXTRAORDINARY MINISTRY THE LIFE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE: PART TWO THE BOOK OF ACTS SERIES

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**TEXT: 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.”

**INTRO:** I have divided Paul’s ministry into seven parts, like a seven-act play. I want to cover: 1) Paul’s early ministry, 2) Paul and Barnabas, 3) Paul’s first missionary journey, 4) Paul’s second missionary journey, 5) Paul’s third missionary journey, 6) Paul’s arrival and arrest in Jerusalem, 7) Paul’s journey to Rome.

### I. PAUL’S EARLY MINISTRY

#### A. PAUL BEGINS TO PREACH RIGHT AFTER HIS CONVERSION

1. **Acts 9:19** Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, 20 and immediately he *began* to proclaim Jesus in the *synagogues*, saying, “He is the Son of God.”... 22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.
2. **Acts 9:23** 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. (Paul repeats this testimony in 2 Corinthians 11:33.)

#### B. PAUL GOES INTO ARABIA (A.D. 33-36)

1. **Galatians 1:15** 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, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to *Arabia*, and returned once more to Damascus. 18 *Then three years later* I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days.

2. Paul's letters give us a few tantalizing glimpses of his life, and this is one of them. Why did he go to Arabia for three years? Paul says that he was "extremely zealous for his ancestral traditions." What is Arabia known for? That is where Mt. Sinai or Mt. Horeb is, where God revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 3 and where God gave Moses the revelation of the Torah. It was also where Elijah went after he was put on the hit list by Jezebel, and Elijah received a fresh commissioning of ordaining Jehu as the new King of Israel and anointing Elisha as his successor (1 Kings 19:8-21).
3. It is N.T. Wright's opinion that Paul, after escaping for his life in Damascus, went on a spiritual pilgrimage to Mt. Sinai in Arabia. He received partial revelation, enough to preach the gospel right after his conversion, but a fuller theology was developed while he was in Arabia.
4. My professor of leadership at Fuller, Bobby Clinton, teaches that every leader goes through a wilderness period of preparation. I went through that period of 10 years from 1984-1994; it was a time of dying to self, study for eight years at Fuller Seminary, and obscurity. But it is all part of the making of a man or woman of God.
5. **Galatians 1:11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.**
6. And just like Elijah received a fresh commissioning to ordain Hazael king over Aram, Jehu as King of Israel, and Elisha as his successor, Paul received a fresh commissioning to proclaim Jesus as the King of kings and to ordain not only prophets but also apostles and elders. He was also called to impact kings. It is interesting that Elijah commissioned two kings and one prophet. God wants us to influence kings.

## II. PAUL AND BARNABAS (A.D. 36)

### A. ACTS 11:25 – BARNABAS BRINGS PAUL FROM TARSUS TO ANTIOCH, SYRIA

1. Right after escaping death in Damascus, Paul goes to Jerusalem and then goes home to Tarsus.
2. Revival breaks out in Antioch, and Barnabas brings Paul to the church in Antioch, and they begin to minister together. **Acts 11:25 And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.**

3. **A FIFTEEN-DAY VISIT TO JERUSALEM (A.D. 36)** – The church in Antioch sends Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to bring a financial offering to the church in Jerusalem due to a famine that hit Jerusalem at that time. **Acts 11:27** Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. **28** One of them named Agabus stood up and *began* to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the *reign* of Claudius. **29** ...each of them determined to send *a contribution* for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. **30** And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders [in Jerusalem]. There is no indication or evidence that Paul met with the Apostles when he brought the relief money. It was at that time, he spent 15 days with Peter.)
4. **Galatians 1:18** Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him *fifteen days*. **19** But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.

### III. ACTS 13: PAUL’S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (A.D. 46)

- A. **Acts 13:1** Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers... **2** While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” **3** Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
1. **CYPRUS:** One convert that I want to highlight on Paul’s first missionary trip is the proconsul, **Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence (Acts 13:7).** **Acts 13:12** Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord. What he saw was Paul cursing Elymas the magician, who was struck with temporary blindness. A whole new meaning of binding and loosing (Matthew 16:19)!
- B. **ACTS 14: LYSTRA – SOUTH GALATIAN AREA**
1. A man lame from his mother’s womb is healed (Acts 14:8-10).
  2. Barnabas and Paul are called apostles for the first time in Lystra. **Acts 14:14** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd.
  3. Paul is stoned to death or has a miraculous healing from a near-death situation. **Acts 14:19** But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. **20** But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. (E.g., Being robbed in Soweto.)

4. Acts 14:22 “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” (See also John 16:33)

#### C. ACTS 15: PAUL AND BARNABAS AT THE COUNCIL OF

**JERUSALEM (A.D. 47-48) – Galatians 2:1** Then after an interval of *fourteen years* I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. Paul is talking about 14 years after his conversion, and he went to Jerusalem with Barnabas to meet with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem called the Jerusalem Council. He may have brought Titus as an example of Gentiles getting saved and coming into leadership in the Gentile church.

1. **Galatians 2:2** It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.* It was at the Jerusalem Council that he submitted his gospel to make sure it was from Jesus. He gets the confirmation from Peter, James, and John.
2. **Galatians 2:7** But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised... 9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.* 10 *They only asked us to remember the poor — the very thing I also was eager to do.*
3. James makes an apostolic decree that the Gentile believers do not have to be circumcised to be followers of Jesus. **Acts 15:19** “Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.”

#### IV. ACTS 16: PAUL’S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (A.D. 49-50)

A. Paul has a sharp disagreement with Barnabas, and they go separate ways. **Acts 15:39** And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. 40 But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

1. Thank God for Barnabas in Paul’s life. Even though Paul and Barnabas went separate ways, God used Barnabas to mentor Paul. We need a Barnabas in our lives. Larry Tomczak, Peter Wagner, and Jack Hayford were three Barnabas’ in my life.

**B. ACTS 16:6 – With Silas and others to Philippi (A.D. 49-50)**

1. **Acts 16:6** They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; 7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; 8 and passing by Mysia, *they* came down to Troas. 9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” 10 When he had seen the vision, immediately *we* [here Luke joins the apostolic team] **sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.** The Gospel goes west, and it has been moving westward ever since.
2. I love this passage because you see how Paul was led by the Holy Spirit. Here they go into Philippi, “a leading city of Macedonia,” and meet Lydia who gets saved with her whole household (Acts 16:14-16). It is also when Luke joins Paul’s apostolic team because Luke goes from using “they” to “we.”
3. Paul and Silas get arrested for preaching the gospel in Philippi. While in jail, Paul and Silas are worshiping around midnight, and there is an earthquake and all the chains of the prisoners supernaturally come off. The prison guard is ready to take his life, but Paul stops him. **The jailer cries out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you and your family will be saved” (Acts 16:30-31).**

**C. ACTS 17: Paul at Thessalonica (A.D. 50) – Acts 17:1** Now when... they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. **2** And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, *and for three Sabbaths* reasoned with them from the Scriptures, **3** explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.” **4** And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. Paul plants in three weeks an amazing church in Thessalonica; just read 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

**D. ACTS 17:16-34 – Paul at Athens** – Paul preaches on Mars Hill at the Areopagus, which was a court of law in Athens. Paul takes advantage and preaches the gospel. Again, he is preaching to “kings” (Acts 9:15). He makes one statement that is so profound and relevant today, I want us to look at this. **Acts 17:26** “He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, **27** that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him,

though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’”

1. CRT says we must focus on the race of each person, but God’s Word says we came from one parent, Adam, and Eve. God created the nations and determined the boundaries. That is why Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is wrong. You don’t have a nation without boundaries and borders. That is why this administration’s policy of having a borderless country is causing 2 million people to migrate illegally into the U.S., and with that, all the problems of human trafficking, drug trafficking, and organized crime running rampant because there is no policing of the borders today.

**E. ACTS 18: Corinth (A.D. 50-52) – Acts 18:11 And he settled *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.**

1. One highlight to mention is that Paul meets Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth. They had a home in Rome and were expelled by the Roman Emperor Claudius. They were tentmakers like Paul, and Paul stays with them in their home in Corinth. This becomes a significant covenant relationship. When Paul goes to Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila travel with Paul, and in Ephesus, the greatest revival breaks out in Paul’s ministry.
2. **“I believe when marketplace apostles and church apostles are aligned together, they create the synergy for a great revival and reformation of society” - Ché Ahn.** (E.g., A.B. Simpson and R.G. LeTourneau)

**V. PAUL’S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (A.D. 52)**

**A. ACTS 19: IN EPHEBUS (A.D. 52-55)**

1. **Acts 19:8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for *three months*, reasoning and persuading *them* about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 This took place for *two years*, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.**
2. Paul says in Acts 20:31 **“that day and night for a period of *three years* I did not cease to admonish you with tears.”**
3. **Acts 19:11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out.**

**B. ACTS 20: At Macedonia, Illyricum, Troas and back to Philippi (A.D. 55)**



1. Paul is bringing a second love offering that he collected from the churches he planted to help the poor in Jerusalem.
2. **Acts 20:7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. 9 And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the windowsill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell from the third floor and was picked up dead. 10 But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, “Do not be troubled, for his life is in him.” 11 When he had gone *back* up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left. 12 They took away the boy alive and were greatly comforted.**
3. Two things I want to point out while they were in Troas: First is Paul raising Eutychus from the dead. Second, the hunger of the people that Paul would preach all night to the church. It reminds me of the first time I did a five-day pastors’ conference in Hanen, China. I preached from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. each day, and then on the third day I ran out of what to preach. But they wanted me to continue. So I had a healing clinic. I asked for a volunteer who needed healing. A woman pastor stood up and said she was deaf in one ear. She got healed and many others were too. The next day, the village heard about the healing power, and at least 100 people were lined up early in the morning to be prayed for. One man who had a cancerous tumor in his stomach said, “If God heals me, then I will come back tomorrow with my wife and my son, and we will become followers of Jesus.” Jesus healed him in the night, and he came back with his family, and they all gave their lives to Jesus. To God be the glory! We must have a hunger for God’s Word. Ask the Father for this.

#### C. ACTS 20:17ff – PAUL’S FAREWELL MESSAGE TO THE ELDERS IN EPHEBUS

1. **Acts 20:20 “how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, 21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Paul’s 20/20 vision.
2. **Acts 20:25 “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom...”**
3. **Acts 20:27 “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.”**

#### VI. ACTS 21: ARRIVAL AND ARREST IN JERUSALEM (A.D. May 57)

- A. ACTS 22: Paul preaches to the crowd in Jerusalem.
- B. ACTS 23-26: Arrest and Detention in Caesarea (A.D. 57)
  - 1. Paul preaches the gospel to Felix, the governor of Judea; to Festus, the next governor; and then to King Agrippa and his wife, Bernice.

## VII. ACTS 27: VOYAGE TO ROME (A.D. 57-59)

### A. ACTS 27:14 – PAUL IS SHIPWRECKED ON THE ISLAND OF MALTA

- 1. Acts 27:23 “For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, 24 saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.’ 25 Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told. 26 But we must run aground on a certain island.”
- 2. Acts 28:7 Now about that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius [another “king” that Paul was called to reach], who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days. 8 And it happened that the father of Publius was lying *in bed* afflicted with *recurrent* fever and dysentery; and Paul went in *to see* him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him. 9 After this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured.

### B. ACTS 28: UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN ROME (A.D. 59-60)

- 1. Acts ends with Acts 28:30 And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

### C. NERONIAN PERSECUTION (A.D. 64)

### D. LAST IMPRISONMENT, TRIAL, AND EXECUTION (A.D. 64?)

## CONCLUSION: WHAT MADE PAUL A GREAT MAN OF GOD?

- 1. A MAN WHO PASSIONATELY LOVED JESUS, HIS MESSIAH –  
Philippians 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, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on



the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

2. **A MAN FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – Acts 19:11-12** God did extraordinary miracles through the apostle Paul so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out.