

# ***THE STORY OF PAUL***

Paul is known as the greatest missionary of all time; he went to the ends of the known world, heart set ablaze, to bring the Gospel message to all the lost people groups of the earth. Through his Journeys, we learn the Biblical model for doing missions and gain an understanding of how to press on through difficulties that are certain to arise.

How many missionary journeys did Paul take in the book of Acts? Traditionally, it is believed that Paul took three long missionary journeys through the Mediterranean, but it is possible that he went on four missionary journeys, even going as far as Spain.

Let's make a thorough examination of Paul's journey's so we can better understand the purpose and model of missions.

## **Who was Paul?**

Paul is known for a great many things, and the first thing I think of when I hear his name is a man who was as bold as a lion, and on fire for the Lord. He wrote thirteen of the New Testament books, planted at least 14 churches, and persevered through some of the toughest trials and persecutions.

### **Pharisee**

Before Paul was converted in Acts chapter 9, he was a Pharisee who trained under Gamaliel, also a Pharisee who was held in great esteem among the Jews.

*...I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law....*

*Philippians 3:5*

Pharisees were teachers of the law; they studied and followed scripture to the T, though they were severely misguided and lost the point of the law and scripture. And while the pharisaical system may have started with good intentions, it got lost along the way and became a cold shell that loved the power and esteem of man. Thus, when their long-awaited Messiah came, they completely missed it. This group of people was one of the biggest oppositions and persecutors of Christians.

### **Persecutor**

Paul, as a Pharisee was of the same mindset as the rest of his brethren. He persecuted the church massively and was known and feared because of it.

*But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison*

## Changed Man

One day, as Paul was traveling along the road to Damascus so that he could further persecute the church, Jesus stops him in his tracks and utterly wrecks him.

After he meets and is blinded by Jesus, Paul is completely transformed and baptized, then a defender and advocate of the Christian faith.

## The Holy Spirit Sends Paul and Barnabas

After Paul's conversion, he didn't get back on his horse and ride off to the next nation to spread the Gospel. Instead, he was met by a man named Ananias, who was sent by God to restore his sight.

***READ ACTS 9:1-19 TO LEARN ABOUT PAUL'S CONVERSION FROM CHRIST FOLLOWER PERSECUTOR TO FOLLOWER OF CHRIST.***

***ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:***

***WHAT WAS PAUL'S ORIGINAL NAME?***

***WHAT HAPPENED TO PAUL?***

***HOW DOES ANANIAS FIRST RESPOND TO GOD? WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS?***

***WHY DO YOU THINK GOD USES ANANIAS TO HEAL PAUL RATHER THAN JUST DO IT AS A MIRACLE, LIKE WHAT HAPPENED ALONG THE JOURNEY?***

***ARE THERE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU THINK GOD HAS SENT TO HELP YOU?***

## Paul's First Missionary Journey



***PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY IS FOUND IN ACTS 13 AND 14. READ THE CHAPTERS AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:***

***HOW WOULD YOU SUMMARIZE PAUL'S SPEECH IN ACTS 13?***

***AT THE END OF CHAPTER 13, PAUL AND BARNABAS ARE SENT AWAY FROM THE CITY - WHY?***

***IN CHAPTER 14, PEOPLE BEGIN TO WORSHIP PAUL AND BARNABAS, WHICH IS NOT WHAT PAUL DESIRES, PAUL SAYS "WE ARE ONLY \_\_\_\_\_".***

During his missionary journeys, Paul wrote multiple letters that became known as the epistles. And during Paul's first missionary journey he wrote a letter to the church in Galatia which was his first epistle and is known as the book of Galatians in the Bible.

He wrote to encourage the Galatians and bring truth to them because they were being choked out by a false understanding of the Gospel that taught that you needed Christ plus the Law to be saved.

## Paul's Second Missionary Journey

While Paul was in Antioch, men were coming and preaching that the Gentiles must be circumcised so he with other church leaders were appointed to go to Jerusalem to address this issue. After this was settled, Paul proposed a second missionary journey to Barnabas, to go visit and strengthen the believers and churches they had planted during the first missionary journey.

This, however, did not go as planned.

Barnabas and Paul had a very sharp disagreement about whether or not to bring John, who had deserted them during the first journey, and in the end, they went their own separate ways—Barnabas bringing John along, and Paul bringing along Silas.



Paul's second missionary journey lasted from 49 to 52 A.D. and is recorded in Acts chapters 16-18. Paul and Silas first came to Derbe and Lystra where they met Timothy, who they decided to bring with them on their journey. They traveled through the region of Phrygia and Galatia and eventually on to Troas where Paul had a vision in the night calling him and his companions to travel to Damascus and preach the Gospel there. He intentionally avoided Asia as the Holy Spirit would not allow him to go there and preach.

That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.

Acts 16:9-10

During their time in Damascus, Paul once again faced much opposition but in spite of this, they

planted the churches in Philippi and Thessalonica. Once they reached Macedonia, they met a woman named Lydia in Philippi who converted to the faith. During their stay with her in Philippi, they went out and were followed by a young girl who was demon-possessed.

After some time of this girl shouting and causing trouble, Paul finally cast the demon out of her, which then caused the crowds to stir up against them and led to their imprisonment. In the night, however, an angel of the Lord came and set them free, and as a result, the jailer was saved.

***WHY DO YOU THINK THE PEOPLE WOULD BE UPSET ABOUT A DEMON BEING CAST OUT OF SOMEONE?***

They went on to travel through Thessalonica, Brea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus, then to Jerusalem and finally back to Antioch for a short time. During his journeys, he went to the synagogues in every city and reasoned with the Jews.

All along the way, Paul understood the culture he was stepping into and thus entered in with a strategy, conscious of the culture's traditions. In chapter 17, Paul begins reasoning with the Greek philosophers, speaking to them in the way that they were familiar with and would receive which led to the conversion of many Greek philosophers.

Paul made a stop in Corinth, then Ephesus, and then made his way back to Antioch. The Book of Acts tells us that he spent some time there before setting out for his third journey.

While he was traveling from country to country on his second missionary journey, Paul wrote 1st and 2nd Thessalonians. He wrote this letter to the church of Thessalonica because he had to leave them in the midst of persecution and was not there to walk through it with them. The first letter was to urge them on through the persecution, and the second letter was addressing fears of having already missed the second coming of Christ.

## Paul's Third Missionary Journey

After his visit to Antioch, Paul traveled again to the region of Galatia and Phrygia, with the intent of strengthening his brothers and sisters in Christ. His third missionary journey lasted from 53 to 57 A.D. and is found in Acts chapters 18:23-21:14.

Paul's third missionary journey was a longer trip than the previous two, and he spent his time shoring up the churches he had planted on his first two journeys. Acts tells us that he spent a significant portion of his time in Ephesus, about 2-3 years. And while he was there he encountered

some disciples who had not heard the full Gospel message or the Holy Spirit. So he told them of Christ's death and resurrection and placed his hands on them and then they were filled with the Holy Spirit.



Ephesus went through a great revival during Paul's time there, he performed many miracles, signs, and wonders, and the people were to Christ in great numbers.

When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

Acts 19:17-20

In response to this great revival, a riot broke out in the city against Paul because their way of life was being threatened by the Gospel. A silversmith who made shrines of Artemis was angered because of his loss of business, so he stirred up the city into a state of rage and confusion. It took several hours before the city clerk was able to quiet them down.

Paul then met with the disciples in Ephesus and encouraged them, said goodbye, and left for Macedonia, accompanied by Sopatrem Aristarchus, Secundus, Galius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus. They visited the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea before he made his

way to Corinth after a short time there, Paul sought to go back to Syria but was stopped short when he discovered a plot against his life.

Paul then retraced his steps back through Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, stopping in Troas where he stayed for seven days. Led by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem, and eager to be there for Pentecost, Paul bypassed Ephesus knowing that he would need to stay there longer than he had time, so he called for the Ephesian elders to come and meet him in Miletus.

This meeting was a difficult one for all the disciples and elders because Paul knew he was saying goodbye for the last time.

When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

Acts 20:36-38

None of Paul's journeys were easy or without persecution, but his journey to Jerusalem was nothing but pain and difficulty. In about 55 A.D. Paul made his way to Jerusalem where he would be "bound hand and foot by the Jews and given over to the Gentiles (Acts 21:10)."

After Paul had received a prophecy that he would be persecuted in Jerusalem, the people whom he was staying with at Caesarea pleaded with him not to go, but Paul refused to stay.

Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

Acts 21:13-14

So on he went, and this concluded his third and final missionary journey.

While in Ephesus on his third trip, Paul wrote 1st and 2nd Corinthians in about 53-55 A.D. to the people of Corinth. In these two letters, he addressed some false doctrines that were being taught, as well as some specific concerns they had brought to Paul's attention.

## Paul's Proposed Fourth Missionary Journey

After Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he was quickly met by men who sought to destroy him. He was beaten, falsely accused, imprisoned, transferred from one place to the next, shipwrecked, held under house arrest, all in the course of around 4 years.

After Paul entered the Jewish Synagogue for the first time to teach, he was immediately met with opposition by the Jews. They incited a riot so violent and chaotic that Paul was arrested and carried off by two soldiers for his own safety.



Paul later discovered a plot against his life and brought it to the commander's attention and was then transferred to Caesarea where he was imprisoned for two years—58 to 60 A.D. Finally Festus planned to transfer Paul back to Jerusalem to be put on trial there, but before this happened, Paul appealed to Caesar and was transported by ship to Rome.

***WHY DO YOU THINK PAUL KEPT OPPOSING PEOPLE WHEN HE KEPT GETTING PERSECUTED OR IMPRISONED?***

It was during this journey to Rome that Paul was shipwrecked and experienced many difficulties before finally making it to Rome in 60 A.D. where he was under house arrest for two years.

It is hard to say for sure whether Paul went on a fourth missionary journey or not, and some count his trip from Caesarea to Rome as his fourth, as he ministered to many people along the way. Others, however, believe that his letters to Timothy point to Paul being imprisoned in Rome two times, and it is after the first release that he embarked on a fourth journey, possibly to Spain, though there isn't solid evidence for this.

Nevertheless, we know that during Paul's imprisonment he wrote many of the epistles, which are



actually known as the prison epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

**WHAT CAN WE LEARN?** If we live by Paul's example, we would live a life obedient to the call of God and would persevere in faith through even the most difficult times. What else did you learn from the story of Paul that may change your understanding of the church, the world, or your own personal faith?

### ***PAUL'S LETTERS:***

The following books are contributed to Paul's writing - as you heard about many of them throughout this timeline of Paul's life, we know that many were written to churches, whether Paul had been there in person or not.

1. Romans
2. 1 Corinthians
3. 2 Corinthians
4. Galatians
5. Ephesians
6. Philippians
7. Colossians
8. 1 Thessalonians
9. 2 Thessalonians
10. 1 Timothy
11. 2 Timothy
12. Titus
13. Philemon

Each of Paul's letter is to a certain time and place, to a community facing certain issues. It is important to remember the context of such a time and place when reading scripture today, noting that we have different contexts. It is also important to read the story/letter as a whole rather than picking out one or two verses we think supports an idea we want it to.

***CHOOSE ONE OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE FROM THE LIST ABOVE, READ THIS BOOK OF THE BIBLE AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:***

Identify one encouraging thing Paul writes here:

Identify one instruction Paul gives them:

After reading this letter, what do you think is one of the issues this community was facing at the time?

**Is there any issues raised or discussed in this book that remind you of the church today? How so? (do not just answer yes or no, please explain your answer).**

**If you had to pick a favorite verse that stood out to you in your reading of this book, what would it be?**