



## Walking Together in His Amazing Grace: A Study of Ephesians

Week 6: Paul's Life with God

Join the Wednesday Night Crew for a study of:

### Walking Together in His Amazing Grace: A Study of Ephesians

Begins Wednesday, January 5<sup>th</sup> with Pastor Orleen and Pastor Robin and Michelle Ingram, at the FLC, 6:30PM, in the auditorium.

- February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>(gone), 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>
- March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>
- April 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>

#### The Goal of Ephesians:

#### **Ephesians 4:1** Unity in the Body of Christ

*4 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,<sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,<sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

#### WHAT PROBLEMS WOULD EXIST FOR THESE TO BE THE ANSWERS?

**REDEMPTION 1:7** (Salvation, Restoration)

**DIVINE INTENTION for the human race 1:3-14** (God's plan for us)

**GRACE 1:2** (God's favor that we never can earn)

**PREDESTINATION 1:4-5** [The Tree DNA in the seed and...]

**RECONCILIATION 2:1-21**

**UNION WITH CHRIST 2:1-21**

**Week 1:** Welcome to Ephesus – Understanding the History

**Week 2:** Understanding the Culture of the Time: Individual Self/Collective Self

- WHO they were,
- WHOSE they were and how each Ephesian fit in with the whole of their group,
- WHERE they were,
- And the context, WHEN they were—in the timeline of history,
- Then WHERE were they headed,
- And to WHOM were they trying to reach,
- Once there, WHAT WERE THEY SUPPOSED TO DO?

**Week 3:** Understanding JC Headship of the Church. How/When/Why of being a member of a church.

**Week 4:** His Genesis – Predestination, What happened before Genesis and how it affects us today

**Week 5:** Ephesians 2:11-22 Being One – Not Two

**Ephesians 2:10** *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

**PAUL IS NOW ASKING US: WHAT TYPE OF ATMOSPHERE/INFLUENCE DOES MY LIFE BRING?**

HOW TO LIVE IN UNION WITH CHRIST--From being no community to being community.

**Step #1:** Remembering what WAS

**Step #2:** NOW, Declaring what IS

- a. Declaring His redemption in our life



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- b. Declaring Him as the *peace* in our life
- c. Declaring Him as the *unity* in our life
- d. Declaring Him through reconciliation--"There is no closure without accountability." Police Officer

**Step #3:** Access the Holy Spirit TRY

#### Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity

*12 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: <sup>2</sup>You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb[mute, silent] idols, however you were led. <sup>3</sup>Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*

*<sup>4</sup>There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup>There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup>And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. <sup>7</sup>**But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:** <sup>8</sup>for to one is given the word of **wisdom** through the Spirit, to another the word of **knowledge** through the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another **faith** by the same Spirit,*

*to another gifts of **healings** by the same Spirit, <sup>10</sup>to another the **working of miracles**, to another **prophecy**, to another **discerning of spirits**, to another **different kinds of tongues**, to another the **interpretation of tongues**.*

**On the checklist of spiritual gifts, which ones did we try this past week? What experiences did we have?**

Keep experimenting. 😊

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#### **Week 6: Paul's life with God.**

##### Sharing brief testimonies:

**What has following Jesus looked like for....**

Pr. Mike? Pr. Orleen? [40 years in ministry in the same community]

Me? Michelle?

He was a man, just like us, Christian, just like us, filled, guided & led by the Holy Spirit, just like us.

"He was a man little of stature," claims an account in the apocryphal second-century Acts of Paul, "partly bald, with crooked legs, of vigorous physique, with eyes set close together and nose somewhat hooked." If this statement is



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trustworthy, it tells a little more about this man from Tarsus who lived through nearly seven eventful decades after the birth of Jesus. It would fit Paul's own record of a taunt whispered against him in Corinth, "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10:10).

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### What did following Jesus mean for Paul?

*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. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:15-16 [The Holy Spirit speaking to Ananias.]*

His life reveals his priorities:

- There is no indication that Paul's love for Jesus and passion for the gospel ever diminished. On fire, all the time, ready to do whatever was needful in the situation he found himself in. Paul's commitment to God completely directed his life & choices.
- He kept the main thing the main thing—Jesus, and only Jesus for salvation. Not circumcision, not Jew/Gentile, not gender.
- He was hard working. He'd learned a trade—tent making from goats' hair cloth & used that to support himself.
- He shared the gospel with those who don't know Jesus as a daily practice.
- He preached and taught wherever he went.
- His instruction was sincere & not manipulative:

<sup>3</sup>For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.

<sup>4</sup>But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. <sup>5</sup>For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. 2 Thess 2:3-5

- It didn't seem to matter how far he had to travel or how much work that meant in order to share the gospel.
- He worked to establish the new churches on solid truth so healthy Christian communities could flourish.

The New Testament book that best displays this investment throughout is 2 Corinthians. There we see Paul's willingness to be open and sharing (chap. 1), his heartbreak over misunderstandings (chap. 2), his commitment despite disappointments (chap. 4), and his deeply rooted confidence that God will keep working in the believers' lives until they mature in righteousness (chap. 5).

While some have miscast the great apostle as a legalistic and harsh man, his own words, written to those who know him well and could not be deceived, reveal a man with a great and tender heart. He loved and kept on loving, nurtured and kept on nurturing, however his loved ones might respond to him.

- He disciplined:

<sup>10</sup>You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; <sup>11</sup>as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged[fn] every one of you, as a father does his own children, <sup>12</sup>that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. 2 Thess. 2:7-12

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<sup>1</sup> J.I. Packer, Merrill Chapin Tenney, and William White Jr., [Nelson's Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997).



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- Staying connected to continue to encourage the believers in the newly planted churches was important to him.
- He rarely traveled alone, having at least 1, usually 3 to 4 others with him.
- He learned how to live with much resource and how to live with little. Whether he had much or little at his disposal didn't impact his ability to preach or teach.
- Whether he was warm or cold, wet or dry, in good health or recovering from abuse, he kept going with and for Jesus.
- He knew how to forgive and live free from offense causing his heart to become bitter while being mistreated & abused. [likely highly impacted by how much he knew he needed forgiveness for how he'd lived before meeting Jesus.]

### Suffering for Christ

**22** Are they Hebrews? So **am** I. Are they Israelites? So **am** I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So **am** I. **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.** **29** Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn **with indignation?**

**30** If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. **31** The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. **32** In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; **33** but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands. 2 Corin 11:22-33.

Note: this was written BEFORE his shipwreck on Malta, so there must have been at least 4 shipwrecks.

- He loved his companions and invested heavily in their lives.
- He treated those who were considered lesser by society & culture with respect—i.e. women and slaves, which was entirely counter cultural and would not ingratiate him to those in power.
- By the Holy Spirit, he overcame his Pharisaical training in relation to women, began co-laboring with them & encouraging them to use their gifts for the betterment of the body of Christ.
- He continued growing in grace towards others—we see this in whether or not to include John Mark on the second missionary journey and where he eventually came to as he writes Timothy, asking that Mark be sent to him, “for he is useful to me for ministry” 2 Tim 4:11
- he was willing to be direct & firm where truth & people needed to be protected. The naughty, naughty, Corinthians



For us:

Without shame or condemnation, realizing none of us are perfect, if someone were to review our life,

- What does following Jesus look like for us?
- What priorities would be revealed?
- Are those answers I can live with? Or are some changes important to make now while we can?

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# PAUL AND HIS JOURNEYS

“He was a man little of stature,” claims an account in the apocryphal second-century Acts of Paul, “partly bald, with crooked legs, of vigorous physique, with eyes set close together and nose somewhat hooked.” If this statement is trustworthy, it tells a little more about this man from Tarsus who lived through nearly seven eventful decades after the birth of Jesus. It would fit Paul’s own record of a taunt whispered against him in Corinth, “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor. 10:10).

What he actually looked like will have to be left to the imagination of the artists—we cannot be sure. But more important matters press for attention—what he felt, what he thought, what he did.

We know what this man from Tarsus came to believe about the person and work of Christ, and other subjects crucial to Christian faith. Letters from his pen, preserved in the New Testament, bear eloquent testimony to the passion of his convictions and the power of his logic.

Here and there in these letters are bits of autobiography. Also, we find a broad outline of Paul’s activities in the Acts of the Apostles, recorded by Luke, first-century gentile physician and historian.

So while the theologian has enough material to create endless debate about what Paul believed, the records for the historian are skimpy. A biographer of Paul soon discovers gaps in the apostle’s life that cannot be spanned with anything more than a learned guess.

Like a flaming meteor, Paul flashes suddenly into view as an adult in a religious crisis, resolved by conversion. He disappears for many years—years of preparation. He reappears in the role of missionary statesman, and for a time we can trace his movements across the first-century horizon. Before his death, he flames on into the shadows beyond the limits of our straining eyes.

### **I. YOUNG SAUL**

- A. From the City of Tarsus**
- B. A Roman Citizen**
- C. Of Jewish Ancestry**
- D. The Death of Stephen**
- E. A Career of Persecution**



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### II. CONVERSION ON THE DAMASCUS ROAD

### III. EARLY MINISTRY

### IV. MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

### V. IMPRISONMENT AND TRIAL

### VI. PAUL'S PERSONALITY IN HIS LETTERS

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#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND INSIGHTS

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##### Paul's Method of Preaching

##### Gamaliel

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**I. Young Saul.** But before we can understand Paul, the Christian missionary to the Gentiles, it is necessary to spend some time with Saul of Tarsus, the young Pharisee. We find in Acts Paul's explanation of his identity: "I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city" (Acts 21:39). This gives us our first thread for weaving the background of Paul's life.

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**ANCIENT WALL, TARSUS.** *The capital city of Cilicia in the eastern part of Asia Minor, Tarsus was the birthplace of the apostle Paul (Acts 21:39), who visited it at least once after his conversion (Acts 11:25). The city was mentioned in historical records as early as the ninth century B.C. and was noted for its schools.*

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**A. From the City of Tarsus.** In the first century, Tarsus was the chief city of the province of Cilicia in the eastern part of Asia Minor. Although about 16 km. (10 mi.) inland, the city was a major port having access to the sea by way of the Cydnus River, which flowed through it.

Just to the north of Tarsus towered the lofty, snow-covered Taurus Mountains, which provided the timber that formed one of the principal objects of trade for Tarsian merchants. An important Roman road ran north out of the city and through a narrow passage in the mountains known as the "Cilician Gates." Many an ancient military struggle was fought at this mountain pass.

Tarsus was a frontier city, a meeting place for East and West, a crossroad for commerce that flowed in both directions by land and sea. Tarsus had a prized heritage. Fact and legend intermingled to make its citizens fiercely proud of its past.

The Roman general Mark Antony granted it the status of *libera civitas* ("free city") in 42 B.C. Thus, though part of a Roman province, it was self-governing, and not required to pay tribute to Rome. The democratic traditions of the Greek city-state had long been established in Paul's day.

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**MILETUS.** *The southernmost of the great Greek cities on the west coast of Asia Minor, Miletus flourished as a commercial center before it was destroyed by the Persians in 494 B.C. When Paul arrived here (Acts 20:15; 2 Tim. 4:20), it was part of the Roman province of Asia and declining commercially because its harbor was filling up with silt. Beyond the theater is the former harbor, now a marsh.*

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In this city, young Saul grew up. In his writings, we find reflections of sights and scenes in Tarsus when he was a lad. In sharp contrast with the rural illustrations of Jesus, the metaphors of Paul spring from city life.

The glint of the Mediterranean sun on Roman helmets and spears would have been a common sight in Tarsus when Paul was a boy. Perhaps this was the background for his illustration concerning Christian warfare, when he insisted that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:4).

Paul writes of “shipwreck” (1 Tim. 1:19), of the “potter” (Rom. 9:21), of being led in “triumph” by Christ (2 Cor. 2:14). He compares the “earthly tent” of this life with “a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1). He takes the Greek word that became *theater* in English and daringly applies it to the apostles, who “are made a spectacle (*theatro*) unto the world” (1 Cor. 4:9).

Such statements reflect the typical life of the city in which Paul spent the formative years of his boyhood. So the sights and sounds of this bustling seaport form a backdrop against which Paul's life and thought become more understandable. Small wonder that he should refer to Tarsus as “no mean city.”

The philosophers of Tarsus were mostly Stoics. Stoic ideas, though essentially pagan, produced some of the noblest thinkers of the ancient world. The Tarsian Athenodorus is a splendid example.

When Athenodorus was retiring from public life in Rome to return to his native city, he gave this parting counsel to Augustus Caesar: “When you are angry, Caesar, say nothing and do nothing until you have repeated the letters of the alphabet.” He is also credited with saying, “So live with men as if God saw you; so speak with God as if men were listening.”

Though Athenodorus died in A.D. 7, when Paul was but a small boy, he long remained a hero in Tarsus. Young Saul could scarcely have escaped hearing something about him.

Just how much contact did young Saul have with this world of philosophy in Tarsus? We do not know; he has not told us. But the marks of wide education and contact with Greek learning are upon him as a grown man. He knew enough about such matters to plead the cause he represented before all sorts of men. He was also aware of the subtle dangers present in the speculative religious philosophies of the Greeks. “See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition ... and not according to Christ,” he warned the church at Colosse (Col. 2:8, RSV).

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**WALL OF DAMASCUS.** *Saul of Tarsus, on his way to persecute the Christians of Damascus, was struck to earth and heard the heavenly voice as he neared this city (Acts 9:1–9). This is the traditional site along the wall of Damascus where Paul was lowered in a basket to escape persecution after preaching in the city's synagogues (Acts 9:23–25). Paul had returned to Damascus after a period of solitude in Arabia (Gal. 1:17).*

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**B. A Roman Citizen.** Paul was not only “a citizen of no mean city,” but a Roman citizen as well. This furnishes still another clue to his boyhood background.

Acts 22:24–29 shows Paul carrying on conversations with a Roman centurion and a Roman tribune. (The *centurion* was a captain over 100 men in the Roman army; the *tribune* in this case would be a military commander.) On orders from the tribune, the centurion was about to have Paul scourged. But the Apostle protested, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman [citizen], and uncondemned?” (Acts 22:25). The centurion carried the news to the tribune, who queried further. To him Paul not only affirmed his Roman citizenship but explained how he became one: “I was free born” (Acts 22:28). This implies that his father had been a Roman citizen.



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Roman citizenship could be obtained in various ways. The tribune in the narrative states that he “bought” his citizenship “for a large sum” (Acts 22:28, RSV). More often, however, citizenship was a reward for some service of unusual distinction to the Roman Empire, or was granted when an individual was freed from slavery.

Roman citizenship was precious, for it carried special rights and privileges, such as exemption from certain forms of punishment. A Roman citizen could not be scourged or crucified.

However, the relationship of the Jews to Rome was not entirely a happy one. Jews rarely became Roman citizens. Most Jews who attained citizenship lived outside of Palestine.

**C. Of Jewish Ancestry.** We should also consider Paul's Jewish ancestry and the impact of his family's religious faith. He describes himself to the Christians at Philippi as “of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee” (Phil. 3:5). On another occasion, he called himself “an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin” (Rom. 11:1).

Thus Paul stood in a proud lineage reaching back to the father of his people, Abraham. From the tribe of Benjamin had come Israel's first king, Saul, after whom the boy of Tarsus was named.

The synagogue school helped Jewish parents pass on the religious heritage of Israel to their children. A boy began reading the Scriptures when he was but five years old. By the time he was ten, he would be studying the Mishna with its involved interpretations of the Law. Thus, he became steeped in the history, customs, Scriptures, and language of his people. Paul's later vocabulary was strongly colored by the language of the Greek Septuagint, which was the Bible of Hellenistic Jews.

Of the major “parties” of the Jews, the Pharisees were the most strict. (See “Jews in New Testament Times.”) They were determined to resist the efforts of their Roman conquerors to impose new beliefs and ways of life upon them. By the first century, they had become the “spiritual aristocracy” of their people. Paul was a Pharisee, the “son of Pharisees” (Acts 23:6). Thus we can be certain that his religious training found its roots in loyalty to the regulations of the Law, as interpreted by the Jewish rabbis. At 13, he was expected to assume personal responsibility for obedience to that Law.

Saul of Tarsus spent his young manhood in Jerusalem “at the feet of Gamaliel,” where he was “taught according to the perfect manner of the law ...” (Acts 22:3). Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel, one of the greatest of the Jewish rabbis. The school of Hillel was the more liberal of the two major schools of thought among the Pharisees. Acts 5:33–39, RSV, gives a glimpse of Gamaliel, who is described as “held in honor by all the people.”

Rabbinic students were required to learn a trade so that they could eventually teach without becoming a burden to the people. Paul selected a typical Tarsian industry, making tents from goats-hair cloth (Acts 18:3). His skill in this trade later proved a great boon to him in his missionary work.

Upon completion of his studies with Gamaliel, this young Pharisee probably returned to his home in Tarsus for a few years. We have no clear evidence that he met or knew Jesus during the Master's ministry in the flesh.

From Paul's own pen as well as from the book of Acts, we learn that he then returned to Jerusalem and dedicated his energies to the persecution of Jews who accepted the teachings of Jesus the Nazarene. Paul could never quite forgive himself for the hate and violence that characterized his life during these years. “For I am the least of the apostles,” he later wrote, “... because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor. 15:9). In other references, he brands himself as “a persecutor of the church” (Phil. 3:6), one who “persecuted the church of God, and wasted it” (Gal. 1:13).

An autobiographical reference in Paul's first letter to Timothy sheds some light on the question of how a man of such sensitive conscience could become involved in this violence against his own people. “I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him [Christ, represented by His people]; but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:13, RSV). The history of religion is replete with examples of others



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who made the same mistake. In the same passage, Paul refers to himself as “the foremost of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15, RSV), undoubtedly because he persecuted Christ Jesus and His followers.

**D. The Death of Stephen.** Had it not been for the way Stephen died (Acts 7:54–60), young Saul might have turned away unmoved from the stoning, at which he held the executioners' clothing. It would have seemed just another legal execution.

But as Stephen knelt and the martyring stones rained upon his defenseless head, he testified to his vision of Christ in glory, and prayed, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60). Though this crisis launched Paul on his career as a hunter of heretics, it is natural to suppose that Stephen's words stayed with him so that he became “hunted” as well—hunted by conscience.

**E. A Career of Persecution.** The events that followed the martyrdom of Stephen do not make pleasant reading. The story is told in a breath: “Saul laid waste the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3).

**II. Conversion on the Damascus Road.** The persecution in Jerusalem actually scattered the seed of faith. Believers dispersed, and soon the new faith was being preached far and wide (cf. Acts 8:4). “Yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1), Saul decided it was time to carry the campaign to some of the “foreign cities” in which the scattered disciples had lodged. The long arm of the Sanhedrin could reach to the farthest synagogue in the empire in matters of Jewish religion. At this time, the followers of Christ were still regarded as a heretical Jewish sect.

So Saul set out for Damascus, about 240 km. (150 mi.) away, armed with credentials that would empower him to bring “any of this way, whether they were men or women ... bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2).

What was in his mind as he tramped on, day after day, in the dust of the road and the burning heat of the sun? The intensely personal self-revelation of Romans 7:7–13 may give us a clue. Here we see a conscientious man's struggle to find peace through observing all the minute ramifications of the Law.

Did it free him? Paul's answer from experience was no. Instead it became an intolerable burden and strain. The influence of Saul's Hellenistic environment in Tarsus must not be overlooked as we try to find the reason for his inner frustration. After his return to Jerusalem, he must have found rigid Pharisaism galling, even though he professed to accept it wholeheartedly. He had breathed freer air most of his life, and he could not renounce the freedom to which he had become accustomed.

However, the deeper reason for his distress was spiritual. He had tried to keep the Law, but learned that he could not do so, by reason of his sinful fallen nature. How then could he ever be right with God?

With Damascus in sight, a momentous thing happened. In one blinding flash, Saul saw himself stripped of all pride and pretension, as the persecutor of God's Messiah and His people. Stephen had been right, and he was wrong. In the face of the living Christ, Saul capitulated. He heard a voice that said, “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.... Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:5–6). And Saul obeyed.

During his stay in the city, “He was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink” (Acts 9:9). A disciple at Damascus by the name of Ananias became a friend and counselor, a man not afraid to believe that Paul's conversion had been genuine. Through his prayers, God restored Paul's sight.

**III. Early Ministry.** Paul began witnessing to his newfound faith in the synagogue at Damascus. The burden of his message concerning Jesus was, “He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20). But Paul had bitter lessons to learn before he could emerge as a trusted and effective Christian leader. He discovered that people do not forget easily; a man's mistakes can haunt him for a long time, even after he has forsaken them. Paul was suspected by many of the disciples and hated by his former companions in persecution. He preached briefly in Damascus, went away to Arabia, and then returned to Damascus.



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Paul's second attempt to preach in Damascus did not work out well, either. A year or two had elapsed since his conversion, but the Jews remembered how he had deserted his original mission to Damascus. Hatred against him flamed anew, and "the Jews took counsel to kill him" (Acts 9:23). The story of Paul's dramatic escape over the wall in a basket has captured the imagination of many readers.

Paul's days of preparation were not over. The Galatian account continues by saying, "After three years I went up to Jerusalem ..." (Gal. 1:18). There he met the same hostile reception as at Damascus. Once more he had to flee.

Paul dropped from view for several years. These hidden years brought the ripened convictions and spiritual stature he would need for his ministry.

In Antioch, Gentiles were being converted to Christ. The church in Jerusalem had to decide how to care for these new converts. It was then that Barnabas remembered Paul and went to Tarsus to look for him (Acts 11:25). Barnabas had already been instrumental in introducing Paul in Jerusalem, in an effort to allay suspicions against him.

These two men were entrusted with the task of carrying relief funds back to Judea, where the followers of Jesus were suffering from a famine. When Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch, mission accomplished, they brought young John Mark, Barnabas' nephew, with them (Acts 12:25).

**IV. Missionary Journeys.** The thriving young church at Antioch now sent out Barnabas and Paul as missionaries. The first port of call on the first missionary journey was Salamis on the island of Cyprus, the home country of Barnabas. This fact, together with the Bible's frequent listing of these missionaries as "Barnabas and Saul," indicates that Paul was playing the lesser role. This was Barnabas' journey, Paul was second in command, and the two of them "had John [Mark] to assist them" (Acts 13:5, RSV).

The success of their missionary endeavors on that island fired Paul and his partners to press on into more difficult territory. They made a longer sea voyage, this time across to Perga on the mainland of Asia Minor. From there Paul meant to travel inland on a dangerous mission to Antioch in Pisidia.

But just at this point, something happened that was to cause much heartache for all three. The helper, John Mark, "departing from them returned to Jerusalem" (Acts 13:13), his home. We are not told why, though it is natural to guess that his courage and confidence had failed. Mark's sudden change of plans would later cause friction between Paul and Barnabas.

In Antioch, Paul became the spokesman and a familiar pattern developed. Some believed his message and rejoiced; others rejected his message and stirred up opposition. It happened first at Antioch, then at Iconium. At Lystra he was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19), but he survived to press on to one more city, Derbe.

The visit of Paul and Barnabas to Derbe completed their first journey. Soon Paul decided to retrace the difficult route over which he had come, in order to strengthen, encourage, and organize the Christian groups he and Barnabas had established.

In this we discern Paul's plan of planting congregations in the principal cities of the Roman Empire. He did not leave his converts unorganized and without suitable leadership; but by the same token, he did not remain long in one place.

The Jews often made converts among the Gentiles, but these gentile converts were kept in a "second-class" position. Unless they were ready to undergo circumcision and accept the Pharisaic interpretation of the Law, they remained on the fringes of the Jewish congregation. Even if they went that far, the fact that they were not born Jewish still barred them from complete fellowship.



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So what would be the relationship of gentile converts to the Christian community? Paul and Barnabas journeyed to Jerusalem to confer with the leaders there regarding this fundamental issue.

At Jerusalem, Paul set forth his convictions and won the day. Paul's own description of the controversy in Galatians states that he was given "the right hands of fellowship," along with Barnabas. The elders at Jerusalem agreed that these men "should go unto the heathen" (Gal. 2:9).

Following the conference in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas "continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord" (Acts 15:35). Here, two incidents put severe strains upon Paul's working relationships with Peter and Barnabas.

The first of these incidents arose out of the same problems that brought on the Jerusalem conference. The conference had freed Gentiles from the Jewish regulation of circumcision. However, it had not decided whether Christians of Jewish background could eat with gentile converts. Peter took his stand with Paul in favor of this practice, which involved relaxing the Jewish food regulations. In fact, Peter set the example by eating with the Gentiles. But later he "withdrew and separated himself" (Gal. 2:12), and "Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation" (v. 13).

Paul, regarding these acts as a new threat to his mission to the Gentiles, resorted to drastic action. "I opposed [Peter] to his face, because he stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11, RSV). He did this "before them all" (v. 14). In other words, he resorted to public rebuke.

This incident helps us to understand the second one, which Luke records in Acts 15:36–40. Barnabas wanted young Mark to accompany them on a second missionary journey; Paul opposed the idea. And the narrative says "there arose a sharp contention" (v. 39, RSV).

We do not know whether Paul and Barnabas ever met again. They "agreed to disagree" and embarked on separate journeys. No doubt the gospel was thereby furthered more than it would have been had they stayed together.

Then "Paul chose Silas, and departed, ... and he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches" (Acts 15:40–41). After revisiting Derbe, which had been the last point visited on the first journey, Paul and his company pressed on to Lystra to see their converts in that place. Here Paul found a young Christian named Timothy (Acts 16:1), and perhaps saw in him a potential replacement for Mark.

What happened here redeemed Paul from any charge of not being willing to place confidence in men younger than himself. In 1 Timothy 1:2, Paul addressed Timothy as "my own son," and in the second epistle he speaks of him as "my dearly beloved son" (2 Tim. 1:2). In the second epistle we also read, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you" (1:15, RSV). This may imply that Timothy's family had been won by Paul and Barnabas on their first journey. Certainly, when Paul came again, he "wanted Timothy to accompany him" (Acts 16:3, RSV). This same verse adds that Paul "took and circumcised him because of the Jews." Was this inconsistent with Paul's earlier judgment upon Peter? Or was it that he had learned the wisdom of not forcing unnecessary issues? At any rate, since Timothy was half-Jewish, this decision would avoid trouble many times. Paul knew how to fight for a principle and how to yield for expediency when no principle was at stake. Paul maintained that circumcision was not necessary to salvation (cf. Galatians), yet he was ready to circumcise a Christian Jew as a matter of expediency.

When the evangelistic party (directed in some unspecified way by the Holy Spirit—Acts 16:6–8) reached Troas and stood gazing across the narrow strait, they must have pondered the prospect of advancing their campaign to what is now the European mainland. The decision came when "a vision appeared to Paul in the



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night; There stood a man of Macedonia ... saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9). Paul's response was immediate. The party set sail for Europe. Many writers have suggested that this "man of Macedonia" may have been Luke the physician. At any rate, he seems to enter the travel drama at this point, for now he begins referring to the missionaries as "we."

The journey continued along the great Roman road running westward through the principal cities of Macedonia—from Philippi to Thessalonica, and from Thessalonica to Berea. For three weeks, Paul spoke in the synagogue at Thessalonica; then he moved on to Athens, center of Greek learning and a "city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16). Restlessly, he journeyed on to Corinth.

His first major mission to the gentile world extended to almost three years. Then he turned back to Antioch.

After a short stay in Antioch, Paul set out on his third missionary journey in A.D. 52. This time his first stops were in Galatia and Phrygia. After visiting the churches in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, he decided to do some intensive missionary work in Ephesus. Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Strategically located for commerce, it was surpassed in size and importance only by Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. As the outcome of Paul's labors there, it became the third most important city in the history of early Christianity—Jerusalem, Antioch, then Ephesus.

Paul came to Ephesus to undertake what proved to be the most extended and successful of his missionary efforts in any one locality. But these were strenuous years for him. Since he supported himself by working at his trade, his days were long. Following the custom of laborers in such a hot climate, he would be up and working at his trade before dawn. His afternoon hours were given to teaching and preaching, and likely his evening hours as well. He did this "daily" for "two years." In his own description of these labors, Paul adds that he not only taught in public, but "from house to house" (Acts 20:20). He succeeded—too well. We are told of "special miracles" (Acts 19:11) that took place during these stirring days in Ephesus. The new faith made such an impact on the city that "a number of those who practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them" (Acts 19:19, RSV). This aroused the hatred of pagan worshipers, who feared that the Christians would undermine the influence of their religion.

After three winters in Ephesus, Paul spent the next one in Corinth, in line with the promise and hope expressed in 1 Corinthians 16:5–7. There Paul made further preparation for a visit to Rome. He penned a letter, telling the Christians in Rome, "I long to see you, ... Oftentimes I purposed to come unto you" (Rom. 1:11, 13), and "I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain" (Rom. 15:24, RSV).

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**STREET IN EPHESUS.** *Paul's words incited a mob of angry Ephesians to riot in the theater at the end of this marble street (Acts 19:21–41). Demetrius, who made small silver models of the great temple of Diana, stirred up the trouble when he found that Paul's preaching endangered his craft. Paul left the city, choosing Timothy to remain behind and prevent the church from being corrupted by false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3).*

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Paul ignored warnings of the dangers that threatened him if he should appear in Jerusalem again. He felt that it was crucial that he return in person, bearing the gift of the gentile congregations. He was "ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). So Paul came again to Jerusalem, and Luke writes that "the brethren received us gladly" (21:17). But lurking in the shadows was a reception committee with different intentions.



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**V. Imprisonment and Trial.** The Christians in Jerusalem were happy to hear Paul's report of the spread of the Christian faith. However, some of the Jewish Christians doubted Paul's sincerity. To show his respect for the Jewish Christians, Paul helped four men who were keeping a Nazarite vow at the temple. Some Jews from Asia seized Paul and falsely accused him of bringing Gentiles into the temple (Acts 21:27–29). The tribune of the Roman garrison took Paul into custody to prevent a riot. Upon learning that Paul was a Roman citizen, the tribune removed his chains and asked the Jews to convene the Sanhedrin to interrogate him.

Paul realized that the heated mob might send him to death. So he told the Sanhedrin that he had been arrested because he was a Pharisee and believed in the resurrection of the dead. This divided the Sanhedrin into its Pharisaic and Sadducean factions, and the Roman tribune had to rescue Paul again.

Hearing that the Jews were plotting an ambush for Paul, the tribune sent him by night to Caesarea, where he was guarded in Herod's palace. Paul spent two years under arrest there.

When Paul's Jewish accusers arrived, they charged that the apostle had tried to profane the temple and had created a civil riot in Jerusalem (Acts 24:1–9). The Roman procurator Felix demanded more evidence from the tribune in Jerusalem. But before new evidence could arrive, Felix was replaced by a new procurator, Porcius Festus. This new official asked for Paul's accusers to come to Caesarea again. When they arrived, Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen to present his case to Caesar.

While waiting for the ship to Rome, Paul had an opportunity to plead his cause before King Agrippa II, who visited Festus. Acts 26 records Paul's speech, in which he recounted the events of his life up to that point.

Festus committed Paul to the charge of a centurion named Julius, who was taking a shipload of prisoners to the imperial city. After a very rough voyage, the ship was wrecked on the island of Melita (Malta). Three months later, Paul and the other prisoners boarded another ship for Rome.

The Christians of Rome traveled about thirty miles from the city to welcome Paul (Acts 28:15). Julius delivered Paul to "the captain of the guard" (Acts 28:16), who placed the apostle under house arrest. Acts 28:30 tells us that Paul rented a house for two years while waiting for Caesar to hear his case.

The New Testament gives us no account of Paul's death. Many modern scholars believe that Caesar freed Paul, and that the apostle engaged in more missionary work before being arrested a second time and executed.

Two books written before A.D. 200—the First Epistle of Clement and the Acts of Paul—assert that this happened. They indicate that Paul was beheaded in Rome near the end of the reign of Emperor Nero (*ca.* A.D. 67).

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**OLD APPIAN WAY.** *Paul traveled to Rome on this, the oldest and most famous highway in Italy (Acts 28:14–16). Appius Claudius began its construction in 312 B.C. Roman tombs, catacombs, and towering cypress trees line the way for many kilometers.*

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**VI. Paul's Personality in His Letters.** Paul's epistles are the mirror of his soul. They reveal his inner motives, his deepest passions, his basic convictions. Without the surviving letters of Paul, he would be only a dim figure for us.

Paul was more interested in persons and what was happening to them than in literary formalities. As we read Paul's writings we note that his words may come tumbling out in hot haste, as in the first chapter of Galatians. Sometimes he breaks off abruptly to plunge into a new line of thought. At points he draws a long breath and dictates a sentence almost without end.



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Second Corinthians 10:10 gives a clue as to how Paul's letters were received and regarded. Even his enemies and critics acknowledged the impact of what he had to say, for they were known to comment, "His letters are weighty and powerful ..." (2 Cor. 10:10).

Strong leaders, such as Paul, tend to attract or repel those they seek to influence. Paul had both devoted followers and bitter enemies. Consequently, his contemporaries held widely differing opinions about him.

Paul's earliest writings antedate most of the four Gospels. They mirror him as a man of courage (2 Cor. 2:3), of integrity and high motive (vv. 4–5), of humility (v. 6), and of gentleness (v. 7).

Paul knew how to differentiate between his own opinion and a "commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:25). He was humble enough to say "I think" on some matters (v. 40). He was very aware of the urgency of his commission (9:16–17), and of the fact that he was not beyond the danger of being "disqualified" through succumbing to temptation (1 Cor. 9:27, RSV). He recalls with sorrow that once he "persecuted the church of God" (15:9).

Read Romans 16 with special attention to Paul's generous attitude toward his co-laborers. He was a man who loved and appreciated people and prized the fellowship of the believers. In the letter to the Colossians, we see how warm and friendly Paul could be, even with Christians whom he had not met. "I want you to know how greatly I strive for you ... and for all who have not seen my face," he writes (Col. 2:1, RSV).

In the Colossian letter, we also read about a man named Onesimus, a runaway slave (Col. 4:9) who had evidently added theft to the crime of forsaking his owner, Philemon. Now Paul had won him to the Christian faith and had persuaded him that he should return to his master. But knowing the severity of punishment meted out to runaway slaves, the apostle wanted to persuade Philemon to treat Onesimus as a brother. Here we see Paul the reconciler. He maneuvered to ensure a Christian welcome for Onesimus as he returned to Philemon. As we would say it today, he put Philemon "on the spot" in the eyes of the church and in terms of his personal relationship to Paul. And he did all this in behalf of a man on the bottom rung of the ladder in Roman society. Contrast this with the behavior of young Saul, guarding the garments of those who stoned Stephen. Observe how profoundly Paul had changed in his attitude toward persons.

In these writings we see Paul as a generous, warmhearted friend, a man of great faith and courage—even in the face of extreme circumstances. He was utterly committed to Christ, whether in life or death. His testimony is one deep anchorage in spiritual realities: "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:12–13).

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### PAUL

#### *Scripture References*

*Acts 9; 13–28; Paul's epistles*



*Date: About A.D. 1–67*

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<sup>2</sup> J.I. Packer, Merrill Chapin Tenney, and William White Jr., [\*Nelson's Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997).



## Walking Together in His Amazing Grace: A Study of Ephesians

Week 6: Paul's Life with God

*Name: Paul [PAWL, "little"]*

*Greatest Accomplishment: Paul led the first-century expansion of the church and was its greatest theologian and minister.*



To some, the apostle Paul seems the corrupter of Christianity, a man who took the "simple" religion of Jesus and made it something entirely different. To the student of Scripture, however, the apostle Paul is history's premier theologian and missionary, the man God chose to reveal the deepest significance of the new covenant instituted in Christ's death, and the nature of the life to be lived "in Christ." As the writer of thirteen of the twenty-one New Testament letters, Paul is undoubtedly the most influential Christian of our era.

### PAUL'S LIFE AND TIMES

***Paul, the zealous*** (Acts 9:1–2). The apostle Paul was a Jew from the city of Tarsus. As a young man, he came to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), perhaps the most notable of first-century sages. Paul, known then as Saul, was totally committed to the Law as interpreted and understood by the rabbis, and was a member of the sect of the Pharisees. When Stephen, the bold Christian evangelist, was stoned to death in Jerusalem by a mob, Saul stood watch over the cloaks of the killers, fully supporting their action (Acts 7:58). Later, when official persecution developed, Saul took a leading role in rounding up Jesus' followers. To this young persecutor, the followers of Christ were heretics, and their faith an affront to the God he served, an aberration that must be purged from Judaism.

***Saul's conversion*** (Acts 9:3–30). Saul was on his way to Damascus with a commission from the high priest charging him to return Christian Jews to Jerusalem when his conversion took place. This event was so significant that the story is repeated three times in the New Testament (Acts 9; 22; 26).



### SAUL'S COMMISSION

In the Roman Empire each national and ethnic group was granted the privilege of living under its own laws. This meant that the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem had authority over Jews living anywhere in the Roman Empire insofar as Jewish law was concerned. Pairs of rabbis from Jerusalem typically traveled to Jewish communities in foreign lands to adjudicate difficult cases according to Mosaic and rabbinic law. Saul's commission, which allowed him to capture Jews who followed Christ and return them to Jerusalem, was an extension of this legal principle.





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As the party traveled, Saul was blinded by a flash of brilliant light and heard the voice of Jesus speaking to him from heaven. Saul was totally stunned, and realized that those he had been persecuting were right: Jesus *was* the Son of God!



Before his conversion, Saul—later the apostle Paul—showed his zeal for God by binding Christians and bringing them before the court at Jerusalem.



Saul, still blind, was led to a house in Damascus. The Lord sent a Christian named Ananias, who prayed for Saul and restored his sight. Immediately, Saul became as bold and zealous in preaching Christ as he had been in persecuting Christians! Saul's aggressive preaching soon aroused so much hostility that the believers in Damascus were able to save his life only by lowering him over the wall of the city in a basket. Apparently, angry Jews lay in wait at every exit to the city, eager to kill Saul.

Saul returned to Jerusalem, where at first the believers were fearful of approaching him. Although they had heard of Saul's conversion, they feared he had simply gone "undercover" to identify them. Even when the Christian community accepted Saul, he was a problem for them. Saul remained totally zealous and bold. He so outspokenly preached Christ that he further aroused hostility in Jerusalem too. Finally, Paul had stirred up such opposition that a delegation of Christians took Saul to Caesarea and put him on a boat for Tarsus. He was simply too contentious to keep around!

***Saul's maturing*** (*Gal. 1:17*). Later, in reference to Saul's years after leaving Jerusalem, he spoke of spending his time in Arabia. Whether the apostle was speaking literally or using "Arabia" as symbolic of a desert experience, the years Saul spent isolated from the church in Jerusalem were critical ones. It was during these years that Paul, immersing himself in the Old Testament and open to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, began to work out the overwhelming significance of Christ's death and resurrection. Later, Paul asserted that the gospel he proclaimed, while the same gospel as that preached by Peter and the other apostles, he had "neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (*Gal. 1:12*).

Some years later, Barnabas, who had befriended Saul in Jerusalem and was then a leader of a predominantly Gentile church in Antioch, looked for Saul and recruited him to join the Antioch leadership team.



Paul founded churches in each of these New Testament cities, and quite probably in Spain as well.



***Paul's missionary ministry*** (*Acts 13–28*). Around A.D. 46, approximately a decade after his conversion, Saul set out with Barnabas to carry the gospel to the major cities of the Roman Empire. For the rest of his life, Saul, soon to be known by his Roman name of Paul, would plant churches throughout Asia Minor and Europe.



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Paul developed a simple but effective missions strategy. He would go to one of the major population centers located along established travel routes. He would first go to the Jewish synagogue and present Christ as the Messiah. Not only Jews would hear his message, but also many Gentile “God fearers” who had been attracted to Judaism’s high vision of God and of morality and who attended synagogue services heard him. From this group of listeners, a core of converts would be won. At times, this core represented a mixture of Jew and Gentile, but all too often it was predominantly Gentile. Paul would then instruct this core of believers in the faith, and, after a time, move on to another city where he would repeat the process.

Paul kept in touch with the congregations he founded. His associates would often visit the young churches, and Paul wrote letters of instruction to the churches. When possible Paul would return to visit the churches himself, and give official sanction to the leaders who emerged in these congregations. Paul himself, however, kept on the move, leaving the task of evangelizing the districts beyond central cities to the Christians there.

This process is beautifully reflected in words Paul wrote to the Christians at Thessalonica:

And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place (1 Thess. 1:6–8).

In Paul, God had chosen not only a man who was totally committed to sharing the gospel, but a man who was a true innovator and missions strategist.

**Paul, the theologian** (*the Epistles*). Paul, while a profound theologian, was essentially a *practical* theologian. He wrote his letters to real men and women struggling with real-life issues. Thus, Paul’s challenge was to explain the great truths about God and His relationship to humankind in such a way that their implications for daily life would be clearly understood.

In Romans, which has rightly been called the greatest theological treatise of all times, Paul took the theme of righteousness. He pointed out that human beings are sinners who lack righteousness, but that God has chosen to give human beings righteousness as a gift, made possible by Jesus Christ in His death on Calvary. Cloaked in a righteousness that God provides, human beings now have peace with God. But the righteousness God provides is no mere legal fiction. It has dramatic and life-changing potential. For God gives believers the Holy Spirit who works within to enable Christians to live righteous lives here and now. Paul explains how this is possible, and in the last chapters of his letter describes how a people of God infused with the righteousness of God will live in society and in the faith community.

In each of his letters, Paul taught truths that shape lives—realities about knowing and walking with God that put every relationship in fresh, transforming perspective. As a theologian and a pastor Paul was without peer.

### EXPLORING PAUL’S RELATIONSHIPS

Paul was a complex individual. His complexities are clearly seen in the various relationships he maintained.

**Paul’s relationship with young Christians** (*1 Thess. 2; 2 Cor.*). In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul recalls the time he spent with his converts and speaks of the relationship he had with these new Christians.

But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how



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devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children (1 Thess. 2:7–11).

Clearly the best way to describe Paul's relationship with young Christians is "nurturing." Taking the role of both mother and father, the apostle totally invested himself and his love in new believers.

The New Testament book that best displays this investment throughout is 2 Corinthians. There we see Paul's willingness to be open and sharing (chap. 1), his heartbreak over misunderstandings (chap. 2), his commitment despite disappointments (chap. 4), and his deeply rooted confidence that God will keep working in the believers' lives until they mature in righteousness (chap. 5).

While some have miscast the great apostle as a legalistic and harsh man, his own words, written to those who know him well and could not be deceived, reveal a man with a great and tender heart. He loved and kept on loving, nurtured and kept on nurturing, however his loved ones might respond to him.

***Paul's relationship with his coworkers.*** Despite the fact that we tend to view Paul as a towering individual, he was in the best sense of the phrase a "team player." From his first missionary journey through the end of his life, Paul traveled with a team of believers. While Paul was the acknowledged leader, he was never without companions whom he valued as fellow-workers and partners in ministry.

*Paul as a team player (Acts 13; Rom. 16).* The team that set out from Antioch on the first missionary journey (Acts 13) was initially led by Barnabas, since his name was mentioned first (Acts 13:2). Soon, however, Paul's great gifts made him the accepted leader of the team (13:46), which included Barnabas and several others. Along the way, Paul was quick to recruit others to travel with him, notably Timothy (Acts 16:1) and Luke, who wrote Acts as well as the Gospel that bears his name.

What is particularly notable is that as new churches were planted, Paul drew others into his inner circle to share his ministry. Romans 16, in which Paul mentioned a number of individuals by name, makes it clear that Paul saw both men and women as "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 16:3).

*Paul as a demanding leader (Acts 15:36–41).* While Paul was a nurturing individual, he was also a demanding leader. Paul never spared himself in his commitment to reach, win, and equip men and women for Christ. Paul had little sympathy with others who were unwilling to make a similar commitment. This trait was illustrated when Barnabas wished to bring John Mark along on their second missionary journey. Paul refused. John Mark had abandoned them on their first missionary venture, and Paul had no room on his team for a quitter. The disagreement between the two long-time friends and teammates was so great that Paul and Barnabas parted, with Barnabas taking John Mark along on a missionary journey of his own.

History proved Barnabas wiser than Paul. Years later, Paul wrote from prison asking that Mark be sent to him, "for he is useful to me for ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11).

***Paul's relationship with those he mentored (Acts 16:1; 1, 2 Timothy).*** While Paul had little sympathy with quitters, he had infinite patience with those who were willing to keep trying. Paul had recruited Timothy in Lystra on his second missionary journey and invested years in training Timothy to be among the next generation of church leaders. Paul's mentoring style followed a classic pattern: Timothy spent years traveling with Paul and learning from him; Timothy was then given assignments to carry out on his own under Paul's tutelage. In time and after Paul's death, Timothy would himself follow the same pattern with others, as described in 2 Timothy 2:2: "The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

Paul's two letters to Timothy reflected Paul's deep affection for his "beloved son" (2 Tim. 1:2) whom he urged to "be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5). While the letters suggest that Timothy was far from being bold and in some instances had been ineffective,



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Timothy was a committed Christian. Paul was willing to invest whatever it took to shape Timothy into the leader Paul was sure he could become.

***Paul's relationship with the Roman Empire*** (Acts 16; 22–28; Rom. 13). The apostle Paul was a complex individual. Although a Jew and a Pharisee, Paul was also thoroughly trained in secular philosophy and was a Roman citizen.

In the first century, Roman citizenship was not common outside of Italy. Wherever the various peoples in the empire might travel, they retained citizenship in their homeland. They were subject to its laws and its courts. Roman citizens were subject to Roman laws and might bring civil and criminal cases to Roman courts. Roman citizens also enjoyed many other privileges. For instance, Roman citizens could not be examined by torture or condemned without trial.

In Paul's travels, he never hesitated to identify himself as a Roman citizen or to claim the rights of a citizen when brought before Roman authorities. When the Jews accused Paul in the court of the Roman governor of Judea, Paul exercised his right as a citizen and appealed to the emperor's court in Rome to avoid being taken back to Jerusalem, where Paul knew he would be assassinated (Acts 28:17–19).

While Paul never hesitated to assert his rights as a Roman citizen, he also fully accepted a citizen's responsibilities. Paul taught and urged Christians to be good citizens, "subject to the governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1). Paul saw government officials as God's servants who had been placed in office to maintain an orderly society. Paul was deeply concerned that Christians live as good citizens, for they were to represent Christ and carry His message to all. Paul agreed wholeheartedly with Peter, who also urged submission to "every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," that through the Christian's honorable conduct "they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12).

During most of Paul's lifetime, the Roman government viewed Christianity as a sect of Judaism, and thus as a *licit* (approved) religion. Later, Christians would come under persecution for no other reason than their commitment to Jesus Christ. Even then, for conscience sake, most Christians sought to live as good citizens under oppressive regimes. Like Christ Himself, they chose to suffer for doing right rather than for doing wrong.

***Paul's relationship with God.*** Before his conversion to Christ, Paul, then known as Saul, was both zealous and dedicated. He lived as a Pharisee, dedicated to following the most minute commandments as interpreted and defined by the rabbis. Paul, intensely hostile to all who seemed to him to violate God's will, was undoubtedly a fiercely religious individual.

***The totality of Paul's commitment*** (Phil. 3). When Paul became a Christian, all his zeal was poured into his commitment to Jesus Christ. His own words perhaps best convey the totality of his dedication.

If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (Phil. 3:3–10).

***The expression of Paul's commitment*** (1 Thess. 2:19). Earlier, we looked at Paul's loving, nurturing relationship with new converts. In his early life, Paul's expression of commitment to God was a rigorous attention to keeping the law as interpreted and expanded by generations of rabbis. After his conversion, Paul changed. While we might correctly say that his commitment was expressed in preaching the gospel, it is more



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accurate to say that Paul suddenly began to care about *people*. Paul realized that God loves all people. The Holy Spirit quickened this same love in Paul's heart. Paul could write early in his missionary ministry: "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ as His coming?" (1 Thess. 2:19).



Paul's life as a missionary was filled with hardship and danger, as in the three shipwrecks he experienced.



This passion for seeing people saved and growing in Christ is beautifully expressed in prayers recorded in Paul's letters. One of the most beautiful is found in Ephesians 3:16–19, and expresses the yearning of the great apostle for his converts. Paul prayed:

that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

*The cost of Paul's commitment (2 Cor. 10)*. In this passage, Paul compares himself to some who had come to Corinth claiming to be apostles and contradicting his teaching. Even though Paul was the founder of the church and had lived among the Corinthians for some three years, a number of believers were deceived by the intruders who made much of their supposed credentials. In his response, Paul briefly revealed how foolish the Corinthians had been. In the process Paul mentioned some of his own credentials.

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. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 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; 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; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches (2 Cor. 11:23–28).

Paul was not so foolish as to think that such things are true credentials of an apostle (2 Cor. 3:1–3). But the terrible personal cost Paul had gladly paid to share the gospel and serve God's people gives unmistakable witness to the sincerity and depth of Paul's commitment.

### PAUL: AN EXAMPLE FOR TODAY

Paul was a truly unique man. He possessed great intellectual gifts and an unusually strong will. Paul also was fully dedicated to God even before his conversion to Christ. The biblical text suggests that in his first years as a Christian he also possessed an abrasive personality. Yet as God worked in Paul's life, the great apostle grew into an individual motivated by a passionate love both for Christ and for people. It is most unusual to find a person



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with both absolute strength of character and a capacity for tenderness and nurturing. In a significant sense, Paul may be viewed as a primary example of a “real man.”

- Paul shows us that a real man has a commitment to God that gives direction and focus to his life.
- Paul shows us that a real man will face opposition with courage, taking stands for what is right no matter how powerful the opposition.
- Paul shows us that a real man can be tender and nurturing. Too often, we view nurture as a woman's role, and picture real men as emotionally detached. Paul reveals how wrong this impression is.
- Paul shows us that a real man is willing to pay a price to serve God and others—even when that price is personal suffering and pain.
- Paul shows us that a real man has deep convictions and is committed to live by them. A real man will not compromise his convictions but will stand up for them when he is convinced they are right.
- Paul shows us that real men will invest themselves in others, building a mentoring relationship with those younger than themselves.
- Paul shows us that a real man is a team person, not a rugged individualist. A real man links his energies with others who have similar goals, builds a close relationship with them, and works together with them.
- Paul shows us that a real man is a people person, committed to the task but ever sensitive to the concerns of others, ever encouraging to draw the best from them.

Paul shows us that a real man models what God wants all His people to become. Paul had lived the faith, becoming an example that others gladly followed.

#### **Every Man in the Bible, 1999, Lawrence Richards**

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Where did Barnabas and company find accommodations, food and laundry facilities as they traveled? The physician Luke reports on their going about from place to place, but he writes nothing about where they stayed and how they met their personal needs. In the first place, they were sent by the Antioch church and evidently carried funds for their support. Second, there were inns or places where businessmen and government agents could stay. Third, Oriental or Mediterranean hospitality was practiced from earliest times to the present. The Old Testament has accounts of perfect strangers being entertained in the home—from Abraham's day onward. Fourth, Barnabas had owned property on Cyprus and presumably still had relatives and possibly even property on the island. Fifth, by the time the trio landed there were converts of the persecuted preachers (Acts 11:19) who would probably receive them. Sixth, there were their own converts or others who might receive them into their homes. Jesus himself had given instruction to itinerant evangelists about staying in private homes (see, e.g., Matthew 10:11–13).

<sup>1</sup> Vos, H. F. (1999). [\*Nelson's new illustrated Bible manners & customs: how the people of the Bible really lived\*](#) (p. 503). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers.

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<sup>3</sup> Vos, H. F. (1999). [\*Nelson's new illustrated Bible manners & customs: how the people of the Bible really lived\*](#) (p. 503). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers.



## GAMALIEL I.:

By: [Solomon Schechter](#), [Wilhelm Bacher](#)

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### His Correspondence.

Son of Simon and grandson of Hillel: according to a tannaitic tradition (Shab. 15a), he was their successor as nasi and first president of the Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem. Although the reliability of this tradition, especially as regards the title of "nasi," has been justly disputed, it is nevertheless a fact beyond all doubt that in the second third of the first century Gamaliel (of whose father, Simon, nothing beyond his name is known) occupied a leading position in the highest court, the great council of Jerusalem, and that, as a member of that court, he received the cognomen "Ha-Zaḥen." Like his grandfather, Hillel, he was the originator of many legal ordinances with a view to the "tikḥun ha-'olam" (= "improvement of the world": Giṭ. iv. 1-3; comp. also Yeb. xvi. 7; R. H. ii. 5). Gamaliel appears as the head of the legal-religious body in the three epistles which he at one time dictated to the secretary Johanan (account of Judah b. 'Illai: Tosef., Sanh. ii. 6; [Sanh. 11b](#); Yer. Sanh. 18d; Yer. Ma'as. Sh. 56c). Two of these letters went to the inhabitants of Galilee and of the Darom (southern Palestine), and had reference to the tithes; the third letter was written for the Jews of the Diaspora, and gave notice of an intercalary month which Gamaliel and his colleagues had decided upon. That part of the Temple territory—a "stairway of the Temple mount"—where Gamaliel dictated these letters is also the place where he once ordered the removal of a Targum to Job—the oldest written Targum of which anything is known (report of an eye-witness to Gamaliel II., grandson of Gamaliel I.: Tosef., Shab. xiii. 2; [Shab. 115a](#); Yer. [Shab. 15a](#)).

### His Relative Position.

Gamaliel appears also as a prominent member of the Sanhedrin in the account given in Acts (v. 34 *et seq.*), where he is called a "Pharisee" and a "doctor of the law" much honored by the people. He is there made to speak in favor of the disciples of Jesus, who were threatened with death (v. 38-39): "For if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught: but if it be of God, ye can not overthrow it." He is also shown to be a legal-religious authority by the two anecdotes ([Pes. 88b](#)) in which "the king and the queen" (Agrippa I. and his wife Kypris; according to Büchler, "Das Synhedrion in Jerusalem," p. 129, Agrippa II. and his sister Berenice) go to him with questions about the ritual. Tradition does not represent Gamaliel as learned in the Scriptures, nor as a teacher, because the school of Hillel, whose head he undoubtedly was, always appears collectively in its controversies with the school of Shammai, and the individual scholars and their opinions are not mentioned. Hence Gamaliel is omitted in the chain of tradition as given in the Mishnah (Abot i., ii.), while Johanan b. Zakkai is mentioned as the next one who continued the tradition after Hillel and Shammai. Gamaliel's name is seldom mentioned in halakic tradition. The tradition that illustrates the importance of Johanan b. Zakkai with the words, "When he died the glory of wisdom [scholarship] ceased," characterizes also the importance of Gamaliel I. by saying: "When he died the honor [outward respect] of the Torah ceased, and purity and piety became extinct" (Soṭah xv: 18).

### His Classification of His Pupils.

Gamaliel, as it appears, did most toward establishing the honor in which the house of Hillel was held, and which secured to it a preeminent position within Palestinian Judaism soon after the destruction of the Temple. The title "Rabban," which, in the learned hierarchy until post-Hadrianic times, was borne only by presidents of the highest religious council, was first prefixed to the name of Gamaliel. That Gamaliel ever taught in public is known, curiously enough, only from the Acts of the Apostles, where (xxii. 3) the apostle Paul prides himself on having sat at the feet of Gamaliel. That the latter paid especial attention to study is shown by the remarkable classification of pupils ascribed to him, for which a classification of the fish of Palestine formed a basis (Ab. R. N. xl.). In this arrangement Gamaliel enumerates the following kinds of pupils: (1) a son of poor parents who has learned everything by study, but who has no understanding; (2) a son of rich parents who has learned everything and who possesses understanding; (3) a pupil who has learned everything, but does not know how to reply; (4) a pupil who has learned everything and knows also how to reply. These correspond



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to the following varieties of fishes: (1) an unclean, *i.e.* ritually uneatable fish; (2) a clean fish; (3) a fish from the Jordan; (4) a fish from the great ocean (Mediterranean).

Besides this dictum of Gamaliel's, which is no longer wholly intelligible, only that saying has been preserved which is related in the Mishnah Abot (i. 16) under the name of Gamaliel; for, in spite of Hoffmann's objections ("Die Erste Misclina," p. 26), it is probably right to hold with Geiger ("Nachgelassene Schriften," iv. 308) that Gamaliel I. is intended. The saying is in three parts, and the first clause repeats what Joshua b. Perahyah had said long before, (Abot i. 5): "Secure a teacher for thyself," The other two parts agree very well with the impression which the above-mentioned testimonial gives of Gamaliel as a thoroughly conscientious "Pharisee": "Hold thyself [in religious questions] far from doubt, and do not often give a tithe according to, general valuation." Tradition probably contains many sayings of Gamaliel I. which are erroneously ascribed to his grandson of the same name. Beside his son, who inherited his father's distinction and position, and who was one of the leaders in the uprising against Rome, a daughter of Gamaliel is also, mentioned, whose daughter he married to the priest Simon b. Nathanael (Tosef., 'Ab. Zarah, iii. 10).

### Christian Legends.

As a consequence of being mentioned in the New Testament, Gamaliel has become a subject of Christian legends (Schürer, "Geschichte," ii. 365, note- 47). A German monk of the twelfth century calls the Talmud a "commentary of Gamaliel's on the Old Testament," Gamaliel is, here plainly the representative of the old Jewish scribes (Bacher, "Die Jüdische Bibelexegese," in Winter and Wünsche, "Jüdische Literatur," ii. 294). Even Galen was identified with the Gamaliel living at the time of the Second Temple (Steinschneider, "Hebr. Uebers." p. 401). This may be due to the fact that the last; patriarch by the name of Gamaliel was also known as a physician ([see Gamaliel VI.](#)).

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- Weiss, *Dor*;
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- Derenbourg, *Hist.* pp. 239 et seq.;
- Schürer, *Gesch.* 2d ed., ii. 364;
- Büchler, *Das Synhedrion in Jerusalem*, pp. 115-131.

### Veneration<sup>[edit]</sup>



*Saint Stephen Mourned by Saints Gamaliel and Nicodemus*, follower of Carlo Saraceni, c. 1615, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Ecclesiastical tradition claims that Gamaliel had embraced the [Christian faith](#) and his tolerant attitude toward [early Christians](#) is explained by this. According to [Photios I of Constantinople](#), he was baptised by [Saint Peter](#) and [John the Apostle](#), together with his son [Abibon](#) (Abibo, Abibas, Abibus) and [Nicodemus](#).<sup>[19]</sup> The [Clementine Literature](#) suggested that he maintained secrecy about the conversion and continued to be a member of the Sanhedrin for the purpose of covertly assisting his fellow Christians.<sup>[20]</sup> Some scholars consider the traditions to be



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spurious,<sup>[21]</sup> and the passage in which Gamaliel is mentioned does not state that he became a Christian either implicitly or explicitly.

The [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) venerates Gamaliel as a saint, and he is commemorated on August 2,<sup>[22][23][24]</sup> the date when [tradition](#) holds that his [relics](#) were found, along with those of [Stephen](#) the [Protomartyr](#), [Abibon](#) (Gamaliel's son), and [Nicodemus](#). The traditional liturgical calendar of the [Catholic Church](#) celebrates the same feast day of the finding of the relics on August 3. It is said that in the fifth century, by a miracle, his body had been discovered and taken to [Pisa Cathedral](#).<sup>[25]</sup>

Gamaliel is referred to in the 15th-century [Catalan](#) document, [Acts of Llätzer](#).<sup>[26]</sup>