



Paul

On a Mission from God

Week 2

Paul's Resume and Letters

Michael Gorman's book, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, has been very helpful in the development of this class.



A few keys

- ❖ Born Saul, Paul (the Greek version of his name, probably given by his parents at birth) was a diaspora Jew – growing up in Tarsus. As a Pharisee, Paul probably read Hebrew.
- ❖ Paul was a Pharisee and a student of Gamaliel, a famed teacher who defends Peter and the others in Jerusalem (Acts 5:33-42).
- ❖ Paul was an aggressive persecutor of the Jesus-followers and was present at Stephen's stoning (Acts 7).
 - Could there be a more dramatic conversion story?!
- ❖ Paul encountered Jesus while he was on his way to round up Jesus-followers in Damascus.
- ❖ Paul became God's Apostle to the Gentiles for the next three decades.



A “reasonable” chronology of Paul’s life

- ❖ 5BC – born in Tarsus
- ❖ 30-33AD – persecutes Christians
- ❖ 33 – encounters Jesus
- ❖ 33-36 – three years in Arabia Minor and Damascus
- ❖ 37-48 – years of early missionary work in Syria and Cilicia
- ❖ 48-49 -- 1st journey
- ❖ 49 – Council meeting in Jerusalem re circumcision
- ❖ 50-52 -- 2nd journey, including 18 months in Corinth
- ❖ Mid-50’s -- 3rd journey. 2-3 years in Ephesus, including possible imprisonment
- ❖ 57-59 – arrest in Jerusalem and trip to Rome
- ❖ 60-62 – under house arrest in Rome
- ❖ 62-66 – released in Rome, further missionary work
- ❖ 66 – executed in Rome

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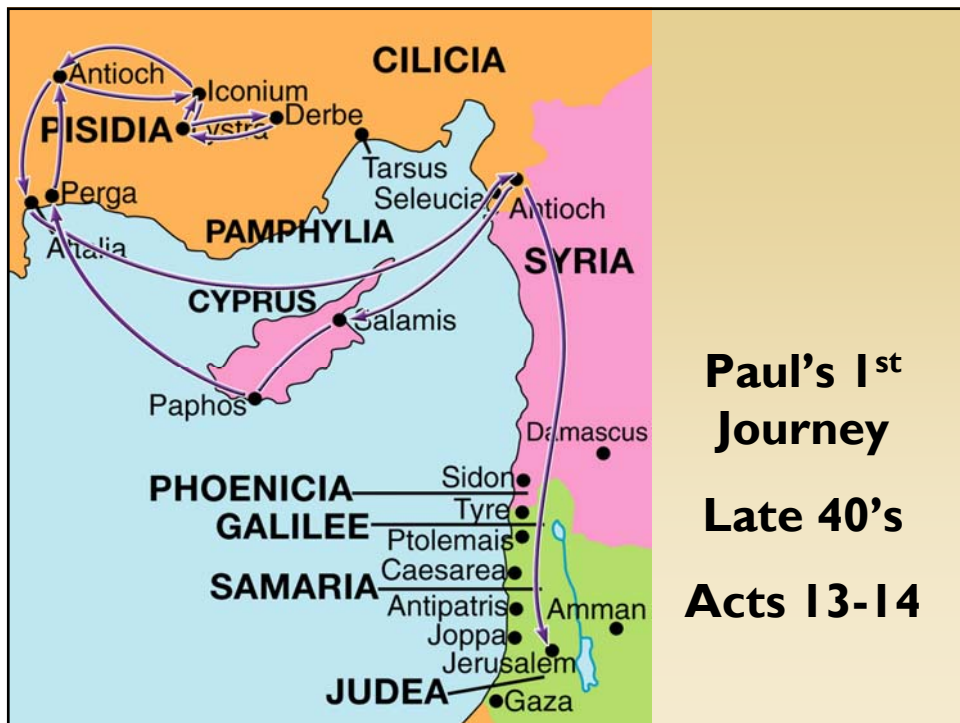


Paul’s Missionary Journeys

- ❖ Acts tells of three missionary journeys
 - 1st is in Asia Minor
 - 2nd goes through Asia Minor, over to Macedonia, and southward through Greece before returning through Ephesus to Jerusalem. Paul spent 18 months in Corinth during this trip.
 - The 3rd Journey went back through Asia Minor and Greece.
- ❖ After Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem, he made a trip to Rome to stand trial. Acts ends with him under house arrest in Rome in about 62AD.
- ❖ If Paul wrote 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, it means he was released in Rome and continued his missionary work for another five or six years. Paul was probably executed in Rome in 66AD under Nero.

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Paul's mission field



Paul heads to Rome late 50's

Acts 21-28



Paul – diaspora Jew, Pharisee & persecutor

❖ The Diaspora

- For centuries there had been a growing number of Jews living away from Palestine. Most used the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT done in Alexandria). It is likely that Paul was educated in Greek language, culture, philosophy, fine arts and so on. Paul moved to Jerusalem at some point in his youth.

❖ The Pharisees

- Paul was a zealous Pharisee, committed to the keeping of the Law, to Israel's purity (separation from the Gentiles), and the bodily resurrection from the dead. Paul never saw himself as having abandoned Judaism – most of his fellow Jews abandoned their own Messiah.

❖ Persecution of the Jesus-followers

- Paul was very aggressive in his persecution of the first Christians. After his encounter with Jesus, he was viewed, understandably, with deep suspicion by Jesus' followers and spent considerable time becoming part of the movement. As Paul put it himself, he "was violently persecuting the Church of God and was trying to destroy it" (Galatians 1:13).



Paul's transforming experience

- ❖ Appearance
 - Paul said that Jesus appeared to him just he did to the original apostles and believers (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). A great deal of Paul's theology followed from this experience. Here's the question: What are the implications of the fact that Jesus was resurrected? Paul's theology sought to answer that question.
- ❖ Call and commission
 - Paul said that God called him, as God had called Jeremiah and the rest. Paul's call carried with it a commission – to take the Good News to the Gentiles (Galatians 1:16). Paul's encounter with the risen Christ showed him that the last days had begun, which meant that it was time for the Gentiles to come into God's household – and it was his job to urge them to do so.
- ❖ Conversion
 - Not a change of religions – but a conversion of religious identity and community. It entailed a radical change in belief, behavior, and belonging.

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Paul's vocation: Apostle among the Gentiles

- ❖ The nature of apostleship
 - An apostle (Gk. *apostolos*) is an authoritative messenger from God. It is God's message and God's authority.
 - Paul seems a bit defensive about this, probably because his authority has been attacked. But he is clear that he is every bit as much an apostle as Peter and the others. And this apostleship is to be in the living, not just the preaching (see 1 Cor. 4:9-13). The mark of discipleship is conformity to Christ.
- ❖ Paul was not a charismatic man. He lacked the skills associated with good public speakers . . . and knew it (2 Cor 10:10).
- ❖ Though Paul's mission was to the Gentiles, we shouldn't think that he ignored the Jews. Acts depicts a pattern of going to the Jews first in a city and then to the Gentiles. Paul was seeking to build Christ communities consisting of both Jews and Gentiles.
- ❖ What is our own vocation? Paul is not shy in calling the Christian communities to lives of sacrifice and even suffering, patterned after his own. WWPD!!
 - "I appeal to you then, be imitators of me" (1 Cor. 4:16). "Be imitators of me, as I am of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:1). "Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me" (Philippians 3:17).

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Paul's work

- ❖ Traveling preacher
 - 10,000 miles! . . . place to place to place
 - Continued to practice his trade as a tentmaker
- ❖ Community builder
 - Creating colonies of the new human race, outposts for God from which the Kingdom would spread.
 - Often traveled with coworkers. Look for the names of dozens in his letters – men and women.
- ❖ Suffering servant
 - In 1/3 of Acts, Paul is on trial or under arrest.
 - In 5 of the 13 letters, Paul is identified as a prisoner.
 - His letters tell of five occasions when he was stoned or flogged.
 - In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, catalogs his trials. Paul was honored to suffer in love for Christ and for others. It was a way of identifying with his Lord.

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Paul's Correspondence

- ❖ Paul's writings are "occasional" letters, written in response to specific circumstances. Thus, we are hearing only one-side of a two-way conversation.
- ❖ The letters are authoritative and pastoral. Paul, even while absent, is building and protecting these new colonies. The letters are written to communities.
 - "Y'all" do what builds up the community and is a good witness to others. "Y'all" avoid what tears down the community and is a bad witness to others.
- ❖ The letters were read orally – for the group.
- ❖ Because this has been revealed to Paul by God, he considered it to be Spirit-inspired prophecy – not merely suggestions. And what he says via letter he would say in person.
- ❖ Look for the story – the intersection of God's story, Paul's story, and the recipients' story. Finding the narrative will really help you to understand the letter.
 - Acknowledge that Paul's letters are not always, even mostly, easy. "There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16).
 - Paul's letters are solid food, not milk (1 Corinthians 3:2).

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The Thirteen Letters

- ❖ Paul used both “co-senders” and secretaries when sending letters. Many scholars doubt that Paul himself authored all thirteen letters. Key differences center on the language, the theology, and the historical situation.
- ❖ The % of scholars who reject Paul’s authorship of letters like Colossians and Ephesians is falling.
- ❖ In the ancient world, it was permissible (even expected) to use another’s name if the ideas and message were that person’s rather than your own. We use quotations and citations for this now.
- ❖ Paul’s letters began circulating quickly. There were also some letters that were in his name but were not ok with Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:2). There were other letters from Paul that did not survive. (1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 7:8)

- ❖ “Undisputed”
 - Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon
- ❖ “Disputed”
 - 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus