BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY: FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

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BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

Following In The Footsteps Of The Apostle Paul
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INTRODUCTION

This biographical summary of life of the Apostle Paul should be studied in conjunction with the *Legacy Bible Outline* of the book of Acts. Paul's conversion is recorded in Acts 9, and the record of his ministry begins in Acts 13, with most of the remainder of the book focusing on his story.

Paul made three major missionary journeys, a voyage to Rome, and other outreaches which are not recorded in scripture but for which there is historical evidence. He also wrote the books of Romans, Philippians, 1 and 2 Timothy, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Titus, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Galatians, and Ephesians, and possibly the book of Hebrews. See the *Legacy Bible Outline* series to study these epistles.
PAUL'S EARLY YEARS

TARSUS

Our expedition with the Apostle Paul begins in Tarsus, a culturally diverse city and leading commercial center, where Paul was born. He was originally named Saul, which means "asked for, sought after". His name was changed to Paul after his conversion to Christianity.

Paul was the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6) and was also a Roman citizen, born free by birth (Acts 22:25-29). Paul was "a Hebrew of Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 11:22), meaning both sides of his family were Jewish. He was a member of the tribe of Benjamin, a son of Jacob who was one of the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel (Genesis 49:1,27).

No mention is made of Paul's natural mother. Some theorize that she died at an early age. Paul mentions a spiritual mother in Romans 16:13, but he does not mention his family, siblings, or whether or not he was married. Perhaps his family was part of the loss of "all things" he suffered when he converted to Christianity (Philippians 3:8). He does mention a few relatives in Romans 16:7,11,21 and in Acts 23:12-24.

Every Jew was taught a skill, and Paul learned tent-making. It was an appropriate trade for the wandering life-style he would have after his conversion as he traveled to share the Gospel. Always remember that every experience of your life--every skill learned, every difficulty endured--serves God's ultimate purpose in your life. Nothing is wasted.

Paul had a divine destiny from the time of his birth: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen"...(Galatians 1:15-16). You, too, have a divine destiny from the time of birth. God has not only destined you to be a believer, but He has a purpose for your life. Are you fulfilling His divine purpose?

As the son of a Pharisee*, Paul learned the prayers, traditions, and feasts associated with Judaism. He was circumcised on the eighth day (Genesis 17:1-11). According to The Code Of Jewish Law, he would have memorized Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Psalms chapters 113-118 shortly after his sixth birthday. At age 13, he was considered a man and, as such, he would have worn phylacteries on his left arm and forehead. (These were small boxes that contained the Word of God.)

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* For information on what the Pharisees believed, see Supplemental Study Two.
Paul was a Pharisee and stated regarding his early years:

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. (Philippians 3:4-6)

Your past--your family education, experiences, or environment--is not what is important spiritually. Paul came from a holy heritage, yet for many years he lived contrary to God's purposes. The Old Testament Joseph came from a dysfunctional family, a bad environment, and negative experiences, yet he lived a purposeful and holy life. Do not use your past experiences as an excuse for your present conduct.

JERUSALEM

From his own testimony, we learn that Paul studied with a teacher of the Mosaic law named Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). Acts 5:38-39 provides a sample of the wisdom of this man. When Jewish leaders were attacking believers...

...there was one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, who had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. And to him they agreed...(Acts 5:34-40)

Gamaliel was obviously a wise man, and his teaching was rooted in Old Testament scriptures. This developed in Paul the discipline of intensely examining God's Word. Paul gained spiritual knowledge at an early age, but he had yet to gain a revelation that would result in transformation. Paul wrote some years later under the inspiration of the Spirit:

Knowledge puffeth up...And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. (1 Corinthians 8:1-2)

Information without revelation does not result in transformation. Paul had knowledge and zeal, but he had no personal revelation of the divine plan of God and the true Messiah, Jesus Christ until his conversion.

Have you gone beyond head knowledge and zeal to really experience God?
WITNESSING THE DEATH OF A MARTYR
Acts 7:60; 22:20

The first mention of Paul (Saul) in the biblical record is found in Acts chapter seven. When angry Jewish leaders were stoning a young believer named Stephen they ...“cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul” (Acts 7:58).

Paul witnessed Stephen's death, so he was probably part of the crowd that heard Stephen's powerful sermon. Stephen's message, recorded in Acts 7, must have greatly angered the young Pharisee. It was inconceivable to Paul that the followers of Christ not only claimed that He was the Messiah, but also declared that Jewish leadership had been instrumental in killing their long-awaited King.

We know little of Stephen's life--he appears only briefly in the book of Acts. But we learn much about him through the message he delivered right before his martyrdom and as we observe the way he died. Stephen not only lived right, but he died right. Are you living right? Are you prepared to die right?

Paul saw Stephen kneel in prayer and ask forgiveness for his murderers while they were in the process of killing him. Witnessing Stephen's powerful act of forgiveness and his spiritual strength in the face of death had a tremendous impact on Paul's life. It set the stage for his conversion to Christ.

Paul never forgot what he witnessed that day. The scene obviously made a lasting impression on him, as he later commented, "And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him" (Acts 22:20).

Who is observing your reaction in your time of great trial? Whose life might be greatly impacted if you chose to forgive those who have done you wrong?
PERSECUTING THE CHURCH
Acts 8:1,3; 9:1-2

Acts chapter eight records that...

...Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles...As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. (Acts 8:1 and 3)

Paul consented to and approved of Stephen's death. After Stephen died, a great persecution arose against the church and Paul was instrumental in these attacks. The words "made havoc" in this passage reflects the picture of a ferocious animal seeking its prey.

The positive aspect of the persecution of the church was that as the believers scattered from Jerusalem they preached the Word everywhere they went—which, if you recall—was the original command Jesus had given them. There is always divine purpose in suffering. Will you obey Christ's directives willingly, or will suffering be required to get you to respond?

Paul's story continues in Acts 9:

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1-2)

Paul later recalls this dark period in his life:

And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. (Acts 22:4-5)

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests... (Acts 26:9-12)

Paul confessed that he persecuted the church "beyond measure" prior to his conversion (Galatians 1:13-14). This dark period of his life is perhaps why Paul thought of himself as the "chief of all sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15).
The story of Paul's conversion is recorded in Acts 9. Paul was on his way to the city of Damascus which was about 160 miles from Jerusalem. Many believing Jews had fled to this city from Jerusalem because of persecution, and Paul was going there to arrest them.

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? (Acts 9:3-6)

Along the road to Damascus, a bright light suddenly shone from heaven and Paul fell to the ground. He heard a voice asking, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Paul thought he was doing a work for God by persecuting believers, but in reality he had been coming against God. Exodus 16:8 confirms that when you come against God's people, you are actually fighting against Him!

God told Paul it was difficult for him to kick against the pricks. Pricks--also called goads--were slender pieces of timber with a sharp end. Farmers used a prick to urge a stubborn ox into action by poking it lightly in the ribs. If the ox kicked against the goad, it hurt, so the animal usually cooperated. God will continue to goad you until you get it!

Paul was fearful and astonished at the sight of the light and upon hearing the voice. He cried out asking two vital questions: "Who are you and what will you have me to do?" These are the same two questions you must ask and answer in order to effect change in your life and discover your destiny.

When Paul asked the Lord what he should do...

...the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. (Acts 9:6-9)

So here is the man who was going to conquer the rebel Jews in Damascus now blinded and being led by the hand into the city. Paul had been going his own way, now he was going God's way. What about you? Are you going your own way doing your own thing? Or have you, like Paul, been supernaturally arrested to fulfill God's purposes?

God always directs us step-by-step. He told Paul to arise and go to the city, and Paul obeyed. It was only after this act of obedience that Paul received the next step in his new life. Is there any area of disobedience that is holding you back from spiritual progression? What is the next step
you need to take right now in order to advance in your spiritual destiny? Don't hesitate! Do it today!

When we consider the story of Paul's conversion, one major truth that emerges is that we cannot place specific requirements on how people come to Christ. We should not make it complicated. People can come to the Lord through a voice, a dream, a vision, a testimony of another, or a message read or heard. They may or may not weep or be emotional. The important thing is that their conversion is genuine and meets biblical standards of repentance, belief, and confession.

You never read another biblical record of a conversion experience like Paul's, yet he was truly converted to Christ through his unique experience on the Damascus Road.
The next part of Paul's story is intertwined with the account of a man named Ananias. You can read the story of Ananias in Acts 9:10-21 and study further about this man in the Legacy Bible Outline on Acts chapter 9.

Ananias was a disciple at Damascus to whom God spoke to go and minister to Paul. At first, Ananias was reluctant because he had heard how Paul was persecuting believers. Nevertheless, Ananias obeyed.

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. (Acts 9:17-19)

God will sometimes send you to difficult people. Never fear to go at God's command because that one contact may result in the saving of multitudes and affect the destiny of entire nations, as did Ananias' brief ministry to Paul. What future "Paul" might you be used by God to touch when you respond in obedience to His command to go?

Once Ananias found Saul, he addressed him without hesitation as "Brother Saul." By so doing, Ananias demonstrated love and acceptance to someone who had recently been a threat to his very life. What kind of acceptance do you show to those who have previously threatened or wronged you?

Ananias was faithful, not famous. He emerges from obscurity on the pages of scripture and then goes back into obscurity. Many powerful ministers of God, like Ananias, remain in the shadows faithfully obeying the voice of the Lord.
POST-CONVERSION EXPERIENCES
Acts 9:19-30; 11:25-30

DAMASCUS

After his conversion, healing, and baptism Paul was excited to share the Gospel with the Jews, so he began ministering right where he was in Damascus (Acts 9:20-22). But the response was not as he expected. The Jews plotted to kill him, so the disciples took him by night, let him down over the city wall in a basket, and he escaped. (How many friends have helped you on your way? Who has held the ropes of your "basket" in times of crisis? Take time to thank them!)

After experiencing rejection to his ministry in Damascus, Paul retreated to the Arabian desert where he was taught through divine revelation from God.

ARABIA

In Galatians chapter 1, Paul records his experience in Arabia after leaving Damascus:

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me. (Galatians 1:15-24)

When he first came to Christ, Paul did not consult with man, nor did he seek status with the apostles. He went to the Arabian desert. The wilderness to which Paul journeyed was no desert resort. It was a harsh wilderness, but it included the sites of many significant Old Testament events: Abraham's promises, Moses' call at the burning bush, Elijah's miracles. Now Paul was seeing all these sites he had previously studied about in light of his new revelation regarding Jesus Christ. Paul remained in the desert for three years, learning by divine revelation of the Holy Spirit. Time in the "deserts" of life are never wasted. What does God want to teach you in the midst of your wilderness experience?
DAMASCUS

After his Arabian exile, Paul returned to Damascus for a period of three years (Galatians 1:17; Acts 9:20-25; 2 Corinthians 11:32-33). Then he made a trip to Jerusalem to meet with the disciples.

JERUSALEM

By Paul's own testimony (Galatians 1:15-18), it is evident that his visit to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 9:26-29 occurred after the time spent in Arabia. At first, Jerusalem believers were fearful of Paul and reluctant to accept him. A man named Barnabas befriended Paul and presented him to the believers in Jerusalem:

And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. (Acts 9:26-28)

"But Barnabas": Aren't you glad for the "buts" inserted in your life by God? Aren't you glad for the Barnabas-like people God has used to make a difference in your ministry?

While in Jerusalem, Paul spent time with both Peter and James, two important leaders of the first church (Galatians 1:18). Peter's great vision regarding the Gentiles recorded in Acts 10 occurred after the time he spent with Paul. Peter apparently needed divine revelation to convince him that ministry to the Gentiles was the will of God.

Peter had previously denied Christ, Paul previously persecuted believers. Do not get hung up on your past or the past of others called to Christian service. God can use people despite their negative backgrounds.

Paul was called to the Gentiles, while Peter was called to the Jews. God ministers through different people in various ways to reach different nations, ethnic groups, and realms of society. You may not understand the calling of others and they may not understand your ministry, but there is a divinely ordained place for everyone in the Kingdom of God. Know and be secure in the ministry to which you are called.

Paul immediately went to the Jews in Jerusalem and began to minister in the synagogue. Who could be better qualified to do so? But what you plan and desire, even what you may have prepared for and be qualified for, may not be God's purpose for you. Your primary goals may become secondary and what you considered not so important may become the focus of your life.

Paul loved the Jews intensely, but his destiny and calling was with the Gentiles. The Jews in Jerusalem did not receive Paul's message:
And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. (Acts 9:29-30)

Paul was sent to Tarsus by the church leaders in order to escape death.

TARSUS

Once on the front lines of the Christian movement in Jerusalem, Paul was now in relative obscurity in Tarsus.

Some five years passed between Acts 9 and the next scriptural reference to Paul. We do not know what happened during this time, but the Lord had said He would show Paul what he would suffer for the sake of the gospel. It is possible that as Paul ministered in the Tarsus area he experienced some of the persecutions described in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, because some of the difficulties he mentions in this passage are not recorded in the books of Acts.

Chronology also reveals that Paul had a supernatural vision of heaven during this time (2 Corinthians 12). What great things might God want to reveal to you during your time in obscurity?

While in Tarsus, Paul most likely wondered at the years passing by. His heart was out on the mission field in the unknown regions where he could reach lost souls. He was in his prime physically, yet he remained in relative obscurity. But during this time God was training him for ministry. Paul was learning to endure difficult circumstances and receiving revelations from God. In short, God was preparing him for his destiny.

Joel 2:25 indicates that God will restore the losses of your life. What you consider loss, He sees as divine purpose. A major key to success in ministry is timing. God's time for you will come in the "fullness of time"--meaning His time. Quite often, you are prepared for His perfect timing in the deserts of life.

ANTIOCH

While Paul was in relative obscurity in Tarsus, the Antioch church had grown under the leadership of Barnabas. Eventually, Barnabas came and asked Paul to help him at Antioch (Acts 11:25-30).

While Paul was in Tarsus, he did not try to network, make contacts, send out his resume, or promote himself. In God's time, Barnabas came to get him. Barnabas came looking for a man who did not have a great track record, one who had originally persecuted believers, and one who was rejected by Jews.
When God places you somewhere in His Kingdom, it is not because of your great background or abilities. God does not see you as you were or as you are, but as what you will be when you are anointed by His miracle-working power. Despite your past and regardless of your present, God will open doors of ministry for you. God knows exactly where you are right now. Separation and isolation are part of your divine preparation. Wait for God's timing.

JERUSALEM

Because of Agabus' prophecy concerning a forthcoming famine, Paul traveled to Jerusalem from Antioch to deliver a collection taken up by the Antioch church (Acts 11:27-30; Galatians 2:1).

ANTIOCH

After the visit to Jerusalem to deliver the funds, Paul returned to Antioch. Soon afterwards, he and Barnabas were commissioned for missions by church leaders and the first missionary journey began (Acts 12:25).
THE COMMISSIONING FOR MISSIONS
Acts 13:1-3

Paul received a divine mandate for missionary work from God at the time of his conversion recorded in Acts 9. A call, commissioning, and anointing from God are essential in order to fulfill your spiritual destiny. Ordination by man is a wonderful confirmation of your call by fellow-believers, but do not let the lack of formal recognition hinder you from fulfilling your destiny.

Paul had already been active in ministry before he was commissioned by the church fathers to engage in missions. We know from Acts 9:20-30 that Paul ministered powerfully to the Jews. We also know that he went to Syria and Cilicia after he returned to Tarsus (Galatians 1:15-24). A call, commission, and anointing by God is what is most important for effective ministry.

Ordination by man can open doors for ministry and provide necessary resources, however, so in Acts 13 we find the record of the commissioning of Paul and his associate, Barnabas, by church leaders.

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.  (Acts 13:1-3)

Note that Paul (here called by his birth name, Saul) was now considered to be among the church leaders. During a time of prayer and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to these men to set aside Barnabas and Paul to the work to which God had called them. Note that Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to do what God had already called them to do. It was not some plan of the church fathers, a career path, or a job the leaders thought needed to be done. These men were separated by God--set apart for specific purpose in ministry.

Two men were selected to go, the others were to remain in Antioch. The other leaders released Paul and Barnabas without reluctance. We would have less problems in our churches if we practiced this strategy of releasing for service those who have a calling to go out from our fellowships and establish new works. Those called out should go forth instead of remaining and becoming disgruntled and causing division.

After fasting and praying, the leaders laid their hands on the two men and sent them on their way.
THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY
Acts 13-14
Estimated 1,450 Miles

Paul made three missionary journeys, a voyage to Rome, and other trips which are not recorded in scripture but for which there is historical evidence. The first missionary trip is recorded in Acts 13-14.

In the company of a young man named John Mark, Paul and Barnabas departed for Seleucia, a port city of Antioch. Sailing from there, their first destination was the island of Cyprus, the home of Barnabas (Acts 4:36) and of a large Jewish community.

Note that Acts 13:4 says they were "sent forth by the Holy Ghost". Man may select you, but it is God who elects you to do a work. Man may ordain you, but it is God who sustains you in ministry.

CYPRUS

Cyprus was located on a vital sealink in the eastern Mediterranean. Acts 11:19 informs us that believers fleeing Jerusalem after the stoning of Stephen had planted the gospel in Cyprus.

Departing from Seleucia, the team landed at Salamis and proclaimed the gospel across the island on their way to Paphos, the capital of Cyprus (Acts 13:4-5). This city was well-known for a temple dedicated to the heathen god, Aphrodite.

It was here that Paul and Barnabas successfully shared the gospel with the chief deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus. When a sorcerer Named Bar-jesus (also known as Elymas) interfered with their presentation of the gospel, Paul performed a miracle through the power of the Holy Spirit and the sorcerer was blinded for a season--we aren't told how long. This aborted his evil powers, and the chief deputy not only listened to the gospel, but responded positively (Acts 13:6-12).

PERGA

From Cyprus the men set out for Asia Minor, arriving at Perga on the Pamphylian coast. For some reason--we are not told why--John Mark abandoned the mission and returned home at this point. Barnabas and Paul continued on, however, pressing northward into the highlands to Antioch in Pisidia (a different city than where the Antioch church was located). These uplands presented considerable challenges to travelers. Perhaps Paul had this journey in mind when he wrote of “danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger in the wilderness”.

15
ANTIOCH OF PISIDIA

Take time to study Paul's powerful presentation of the gospel to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia as recorded in Acts 13:14-41. Note how he started where they were by quoting extensively from the Old Testament. He then skillfully guided the message to a powerful presentation of the gospel.

After this sermon, both Jews and Gentiles wanted Paul to preach again the next week. On the following Sabbath day, the whole city came together to hear the Word of God. When the Jews saw the multitudes, however, they were envious and spoke against Paul, contradicting and blaspheming him. There was such intense Jewish opposition to the gospel that Paul declared that he would turn his efforts toward the Gentiles (Acts 13:46-47). The Gentiles rejoiced when they heard this, and the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region (Acts 13:49).

The persecution instigated by the Jews, however, resulted in Paul and Barnabas eventually being expelled from the area (Acts 13:50-52). As they departed, they shook off the dust of their feet as Christ had commanded (Matthew 10:14). Always remember: People did not call you to ministry--God did--so do not let rejection get you off course. Do not abandon your call. Remain faithful to your calling and take the message to those who want to hear.

ICONIUM

Leaving Antioch, Paul and Barnabas ventured southeast to the Roman colony of Iconium. They ministered for a long time in Iconium, and many signs and wonders were done. Eventually, however, Paul and Barnabas again experienced opposition from both Jews and Gentiles. They narrowly escaped a plot to kill them by fleeing to Lystra (Acts 14:1-6).

LYSTRA

After healing a lame man in this city, Paul and Barnabas were mistaken for gods. This quickly changed, however, when Jews from Antioch and Iconium led a mob that stoned Paul and left him for dead. The disciples gathered around him and God supernaturally raised him up (Acts 14:6-20).

DERBE

The next day, Paul and Barnabas went to Derbe where they were received more warmly and were able to share the Gospel with many people (Acts 14:20-21).

RETRACING THEIR STEPS

Paul and his team then retraced their steps through Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia, and Perga (Acts 14:21-25). Despite previous persecution in some of these cities, the team returned to these churches:
Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. (Acts 14:22-23)

This passage provides an excellent model for follow-up ministry for new converts. Paul and Barnabas made sure the new believers were really established in their new faith. They did not sugar-coat their commitment. They let them know that they would suffer persecution. Prayer and fasting were an important part of the discipling of the new believers and they ordained leaders to carry on the work of the church after they departed.

ANTIOCH

The missionary team then returned to Antioch in Syria from the sea port of Attalia. They gathered the church together and told of all God had done and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:26-28).

A SUMMARY

During the first missionary trip, Paul's name was changed from Saul to Paul, Sergius Paulus was saved, and we find the first record of miracles done through Paul's ministry. Gentiles were anxious to hear the Gospel, and many believed. Paul's message was continually opposed by the Jews, and the mission team experienced great persecution. Despite the fact that John Mark deserted them, Paul and Barnabas continued on to plant churches and encourage believers all along the route.

Years later, Paul mentions the challenges of this first missionary journey:

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:10-11)

Although the missionaries experienced great persecution, Acts 13:52 declares that that they were joyous despite the difficulties and according to Acts 14:26 they fulfilled their mission successfully.
BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SECOND 
MISSIONARY JOURNEYS
Acts 15

ANTIOCH

Sometime after Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch at the conclusion of their first missions trip, a group from the Jerusalem church came to minister and taught that it was necessary for Gentiles to be circumcised in order to be saved.

When Paul and Barnabas had "no small dissension and disputation" with them, they determined that they would go up to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles and elders about this question (Acts 15:1-2).

PHENICE AND SAMARIA

On their way to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, which resulted in great joy among the brethren (Acts 15:3).

JERUSALEM

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were received warmly by the church, the apostles, and the elders, and they declared all the things that God had done with them and through them.

After their reports, the leaders conducted what has come to be called the "Jerusalem council" where they discussed at length the issue of whether or not a Gentile convert must submit to circumcision or other Jewish ordinances in order to be a true believer.

According to Acts 15:4-18, there was quite a debate on the subject. Peter shared how God had sent him to the Gentiles and how Cornelius and his family had been saved. The next witnesses were Paul and Barnabas, who testified how many Gentiles had come to faith during their missionary journey. Finally the moderator of the council, James, gave a summation, quoting Amos 9:11-12 to confirm that the Gentiles could be recipients of God's grace as well as the Jews.

The Jerusalem leaders finally concluded that Gentile believers need not submit to circumcision and other Jewish ordinances. The conference ended with the decision that Paul and Barnabas should minister to the Gentiles, while the other leaders worked among the Jews. The council's only request was that Gentile believers remember the poor in Jerusalem and that they abstain from fornication, idolatry, and imbibing blood.

The council wrote letters explaining their decision regarding the matter, and Paul, Barnabas, and two other leaders named Judas and Silas were dispatched to bear the news to the churches (Acts 15:19-29).
ANTIOCH

When these four men returned to the church at Antioch and read the letters from Jerusalem, there was much rejoicing. After a period of time, Judas returned to Jerusalem but Silas remained in Antioch (Acts 15:30-34).

Paul and Barnabas began planning a second missionary trip but they could not agree on whether or not to take John Mark (Acts 15:35-41). Their disagreement over John Mark did not lead to hostility and hatred. Paul and Barnabas did not get angry, stop speaking, and have nothing more to do with one another. Neither one dropped out of Christian service because "someone had hurt them." The problem was solved by forming a second evangelistic team, a solution which actually advanced the spread of the Gospel.

In every disagreement there are issues with opposing viewpoints. Each viewpoint has validity, and believers can learn to disagree without being disagreeable. People can disagree without having conflict, but conflict often results from disagreements. It is not differences of opinion that hurt and destroy, but our failure to resolve our differences in love and in behalf of the advancement of the work of God.
THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY
Acts 15:36–18:21
Estimated 2,800 Miles

SYRIA AND CILICIA

Paul and Silas first headed into Galatia, encouraging the churches in Syria and Cilicia along the way (Acts 15:40).

DERBE AND LYSTRA

The men went to Derbe and Lystra, and at Lystra, Paul asked Timothy to join the team. Timothy was the son of a believing Jewish woman and a godly grandmother, both of whom had taught him in the scriptures since childhood (2 Timothy 1:1-8). Timothy became one of Paul’s most faithful companions (1 Corinthians 4:17; Acts 19:22).

TROAS

Here Paul received what has come to be known as "the Macedonian call", a vision of a Macedonian imploring him to cross over into Europe with his message (Acts 16:8–10).

Acts 16:10 introduces the “we” passages of Acts. Most scholars believe the remainder of the book is the eyewitness account of one of Paul’s companions--Luke--who joined the team at this point.

THROUGH SAMOTHRACIA AND NEAPOLIS

Boarding a ship at Troas, Paul and his companions spent the night on the island of Samothraceia before arriving at Neapolis, the chief port of Macedonia (Acts 16:10-11). From Neapolis, Paul probably followed the Via Egnatia highway to the heart of Macedonia (Acts 16:12). Along its length were important cities like Philippi, Apollonia, Amphipolis, and Thessalonica.

PHILIPPI

Located ten miles inland from Neapolis, Philippi was the chief city in that region of Macedonia. Here, Paul had his first convert on European soil, a woman named Lydia, a dealer of purple-dyed cloth from Thyatira. He met her at a prayer meeting by a river outside the city at Philippi on the Sabbath day. The Lord opened Lydia’s heart to the gospel and she invited the missionary team to stay in her home (Acts 16:12-15).

In Philippi, when Paul delivered a woman from a demonic spirit, the merchants who profited from her occult practices accused Paul and Silas of being trouble-makers and stirred up the whole city. The local magistrates then beat and imprisoned them.
For some reason, their traveling companions, Timothy and Luke, were not arrested. This might have been because Rome was anti-Semitic and had expelled all Jews from the city. Philippi was a Roman colony and most likely also prejudiced against Jews. Perhaps that is why Timothy and Luke, as Gentiles, were not arrested.

A supernatural earthquake provided an opportunity for the two prisoners to escape from prison, but they remained to share their faith with the jailer who was saved, along with his whole household (Acts 16:23-24). Sometimes, like when the Apostle Peter was incarcerated, you may be delivered to walk away from a difficult situation. At other times, like in this case of Paul and Silas, you are called upon to remain and do a work for God right where you are. (See the Legacy Bible Outline on Acts 16 for guidelines on "What To Do At Midnight").

Paul’s appeal to officials on the basis of his Roman citizenship prompted fear among the magistrates and he and Silas were released from prison. They spent a brief time at Lydia's house and then departed for Thessalonica (Acts 16:35-40).

THESSALONICA

After passing by way of Amphipolis and Apollonia, Paul arrived in Thessalonica. His ministry there affected a multitude of Greeks and chief women. His success agitated a mob of unbelieving Jews who attacked the house of Jason where the two missionaries were staying.

The mob accused Paul of proclaiming a king other than Caesar, an act of treason against the Roman Empire. Although the charge was false, because of the increasing danger the missions team went on to Berea to minister (Acts 17:1-10).

BEREA

In Berea, several prominent Jews and Greeks accepted the gospel. Paul was impressed with these new believers, commenting that "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so " (Acts 17:11). Always search the scriptures to be sure what you are being taught is truth from God's Word.

Eventually, Jewish agitators from Thessalonica came to Berea and stirred up trouble. Paul went on to Athens, while Silas and Timothy remained in Berea (Acts 17:10-14).

ATHENS

When Paul arrived in Athens, Greece, he was saddened by paganism’s grip upon the ancient city which was evidenced by a multitude of idols and altars. The Bible says Paul's spirit was stirred within him. Is your spirit stirred over the spiritual conditions of your city?
Paul reasoned regularly in the synagogue and had daily debates with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in the marketplace. Paul's message of the resurrected Christ soon attracted the attention of members of the Areopagus, a group of men concerned with investigating new ideas. They wanted to know more about Paul's teachings (Acts 17:15-21).

So Paul went to Mars Hill and delivered a profound sermon which is recorded in Acts 17:22-31. He began by addressing where the men were spiritually by mentioning their altar to the unknown God. He made the message relevant to them by quoting their own poets. He used what was known to them to explain the unknown. He spoke the truth without fear, and presented the simple truths of the gospel. This message is a good pattern to study for an accurate presentation of the Gospel.

A man named Dionysius became a believer, as did a woman named Damaris and a few others, but most members of the Areopagus scoffed at the idea of a resurrection (Acts 17:22–34). It is more difficult to preach to indifferent people than to face outright opposition because the concept of the indifferent is that "anything goes". What is called "new age" in our generation is not so new after all, as it also embraces an "anything goes" philosophy.

It could be that the difficulties Paul experienced in Athens is why he said that he went to Corinth in fear and trembling (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Perhaps Paul felt he had failed in Athens and was a bit intimidated as he traveled on to Corinth?

CORINTH

When Paul left Athens, he went to Corinth, fifty-five miles to the southwest. Corinth was one of the major commercial centers of the Roman world. Here Paul met fellow tent-makers Aquila and Priscilla, recently forced to leave Rome because of the banishing of Jews from the city. This couple became beloved friends and co-workers with Paul.

Silas and Timothy rejoined Paul in Corinth, and he spent eighteen months there, the second-longest stay of his missionary record. Although Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, accepted the gospel, the unbelieving Jews caused problems. Finally, Paul experienced such resistance to his message in the local synagogue that he moved into the home of Justus and concentrated his efforts on the Gentiles (Acts 18:1-8).

While at Corinth, Paul penned two of his New Testament epistles: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. In the midst of his difficulties in the city, the Lord appeared to him and told him not to fear:

> Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. (Acts 18:9)

Near the end of Paul’s stay in Corinth, the Jews brought charges against him before Gallio, the Roman proconsul, who found no merit in their claims. The proconsul dismissed the charges as religious matters that were of no concern to Rome (Acts 18:12-18).
EPHESUS

Paul left Corinth for the nearby port of Cenchreae accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla. There he fulfilled a vow he had made by cutting his hair before sailing back to Syria.* Paul stopped briefly at Ephesus, where he ministered and fellowshipped with friends prior to sailing on to Caesarea (Acts 18:18-23).

JERUSALEM

After arriving at Caesarea and saluting the church, Paul returned to Jerusalem to report to the mother church regarding their journey (Acts 18:22). Paul was accountable to those who supported his missions, as so should we be also.

ANTIOCH

Paul returned to his home church in Antioch (Acts 18:23).

A SUMMARY

During the second mission trip, churches that were established during the first trip were strengthened, plus the team delivered the good news to Gentile believers that Jewish mandates were not essential for salvation and that they need not be circumcised. Paul received the Macedonian call and led the first European convert to the Lord. Churches were established at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos entered the Lord's service as co-workers and Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, came to the Lord. No church was established in Greece, but Paul gave the famous Mar's Hill sermon and a few were saved. Paul experienced great persecution in Thessalonica, Berea, and Philippi.

* Paul had apparently made a Nazarite vow, a pledge made by those who desired to separate themselves unto the Lord for a period of time. During the separation the person could not eat or drink anything from the vine; he could not touch a dead body; and he could not cut his hair. At the end of his separation, specific sacrifices were made at which time the long hair marking his separation was shaven and all restrictions of the vow were removed. The Nazarite vow was offered voluntarily and apparently each person determined the length of his separation.
THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY
Acts 18:23–21:16
Estimated 3,900 Miles

Paul's principal co-worker on his third missionary journey was Timothy, who is mentioned at least 24 times by Luke and Paul. Silas is apparently no longer on this trip. (Paul refers to Silas again in his epistles in Corinthians and Thessalonians. The last time Silas is mentioned in the Bible is in 1 Peter 5:12 where he is serving as Peter's assistant.)

GALATIA AND PHRGIA

Paul began this missionary journey by traveling northwest into Asia Minor strengthening believers all over Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23).

EPHESUS

Paul’s next destination was Ephesus, a great commercial city located on the western coast of Asia Minor. Ephesus controlled important land and sea routes and thousands of people visited the city each year to honor the goddess Artemis, whose temple was located there. Ephesus was a strategic "sending station" for the spread of the gospel and Paul remained in this city for over two years. The record of the events that occurred during this time are recorded in Acts 19.

According to Acts 19:1-7, twelve key leaders received the baptism in the Holy Spirit shortly after Paul's arrival. All of Asia heard the Word while Paul preached in this region (Acts 19:10) and special miracles were done through cloths and handkerchiefs that were placed first on Paul, then on sick people (Acts 19:12).

While in Ephesus, Paul extended his ministry through letter writing--1 and 2 Corinthians, and possibly Romans were written at that time. He also dispatched assistants to the churches of Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17) and Macedonia (Acts 19:22).

There were many spiritual victorious, but Paul also wrote about being “burdened immensely, beyond strength” while he was in Ephesus (2 Corinthians 1:8–9). He compared his experiences there to “fighting wild beasts” (1 Corinthians 15:32). Despite these challenges, Paul persevered, preaching first in the synagogue and then teaching daily in the lecture hall of an orator named Tyrannus.

Paul’s ministry greatly influenced both Jews and Gentiles as well as local magicians, who subsequently burned their magic wares. His preaching also affected the sale of idols of Artemis (Diana), prompting a riot led by Demetrius the silversmith. The mob was stopped only when Alexander, the city clerk, warned them that they risked reprisals from Rome for such unlawful actions (Acts 19:35-41).
MACEDONIA, ILLYRICUM, AND CORINTH

When Paul left Ephesus, he went to Macedonia and Greece, fulfilling a previously expressed desire to revisit the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 1:15–16). The team ministered in the city of Corinth for three months. When spring came, Paul determined to sail for Syria, but a plot on his life forced him to retrace his steps back through Macedonia, where he sailed for Troas (Acts 20:1-3).

TROAS

At Troas, Paul restored life to a young man named Eutychus who, while dozing off during Paul’s sermon, suffered a deadly fall (Acts 20:6-12).

ON THE WAY TO MILETUS

Traveling on to Assos by land, the team rejoined the ship and traveled through Mitylene, Chios, Samos, and Trogyllium before arriving at Miletus (Acts 20:13-16).

MILETUS

At Miletus, Paul sent for elders from Ephesus and met one last time with them, saying he would not see them again. His final words to them are recorded in Acts 20:17-35. After prayer and an emotional farewell, they accompanied him to his ship (Acts 20:36-38).

ENROUTE TO JERUSALEM

From Miletus, Paul journeyed back towards Jerusalem by way of Coos, Rhodes, Patara, Phenicia, past Cyprus to Syria, and landing at Tyre where he remained for seven days while the ship was unloaded. When Paul met with believers here, the Holy Spirit warned that he should not go to Jerusalem. Despite the warning and after another emotional farewell, Paul departed. While meeting with believers in Ptolemais, Paul was once again warned through a prophetic word that he should not continue on to Jerusalem. Again, Paul rejected the warning, declaring he was ready to die if necessary. He then departed for Caeserea (Acts 21:1-15).

A SUMMARY

During the third missions trip, the Word of God spread throughout Asia Minor. The elders in Ephesus were informed of the way of God "more perfectly" and were baptized in the name of the Lord. Many Ephesians believed on the Lord because of the miracles done through Paul's ministry, but a riot broke out because of the negative effect on the economy surrounding the goddess Diana. Paul visited Macedonia and went as far west as Illyricum. While in Corinth for three months, Paul's life was once again spared. As he preached the gospel, Paul also fellowshipped with and strengthened believers all along the way.
WARNED ABOUT JERUSALEM

Paul was repeatedly warned not to return to Jerusalem for fear of reprisals from the Jews. Paul was not deterred, however, and was determined to report his work to the Jerusalem church.

Paul had been to Jerusalem several times previously--to spend time with church leaders, to take an offering for the poor, to testify before the Jerusalem council, and to report on his missionary outreaches. There were no warnings on those trips, but this time he was warned about returning to the city.

One warning came from the Holy Spirit through the saints at Tyre:

Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. (Acts 21:3-4)

Another warning came from the Holy Spirit through the prophet Agabus:

And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. (Acts 21:10-14)

Paul knew that Agabus was a true prophet because the famine he previously prophesied came to pass, yet Paul ignored this warning as well as the others.

In Acts 20:22, Paul said "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem..." The word "spirit" here is with a small "s", indicating it was his own desire rather than that of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps he thought he was the only one who could minister effectively to the Jews there.

Paul himself writes of a warning he had previously received:

And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me...And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. (Acts 22:17-18, 21)
God’s original mandate was quite clear. Paul was to minister to the Gentiles. Whether Paul was disobedient or not in going to Jerusalem is the subject of much discussion. The bottom line is this: Even if we act in error or disobedience, God still can bring good out of it. Paul not only touched lives in Jerusalem through his imprisonment, he eventually bore witness to the Lord in Rome as well.

RECEIVED BY THE BELIEVERS

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, James and the believers received the returning missionary warmly. Paul gave them a report of what God was doing among the Gentiles through his ministry and when they heard it, they glorified God (Acts 21:15-20).

REQUESTED TO APPEASE JEWISH LEGALISTS

Paul was urged by some of the brethren to prove to Jewish legalists that he had not abandoned Judaism. They asked him to take four believers into the temple for the purification process required of Jewish men. Although church leaders had conceded that Gentiles need not abide by Jewish traditions, legalists were still promoting it. It is amazing that someone like Paul, who had preached salvation by grace alone would do this, but he did it to please the Jewish legalists. By complying, however, Paul provoked other believers who thought he would refuse to do it. You can't please everyone, so you must determine to please God alone and stick with that decision (Acts 15:20-26).

SEIZED BY THE JEWS

Just before the seven days of purification were over for the men Paul had taken to the temple, certain Jews from Asia stirred up a mob against him. They accused Paul of heresy against the law of Moses and of bringing Gentiles into the temple. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, but as they were about to kill him word reached the chief captain that the entire city was in an uproar (Acts 21:27-31).

RESCUED BY A ROMAN CAPTAIN

A Roman captain named Claudius Lysias came to Paul's aid and stopped the crowd from stoning him. There was much confusion, with some of the people crying one thing and others saying something else. The mob was finally chanting, "Away with him."

As Paul was being led into the castle, he asked Claudius if he could speak with him. He spoke in Greek, which surprised Claudius. Claudius inquired concerning who Paul was, and then gave him permission to speak. Paul stood on the stairs, called for silence, and addressed the crowd in the Hebrew language (Acts 21:31-40).
SPEAKING TO THE JEWS

Because Paul spoke in Hebrew, the people grew quiet and listened. Paul's message to the violent mob is recorded in Acts 22:1-21. Paul gave his testimony, telling of his birth, his upbringing, his studies under Gamaliel, and how he persecuted believers, including witnessing the death of Stephen. Then Paul recounted his miraculous conversion on the Damascus road and how Ananias came to minister to him. Paul then shared how God had warned him that he would face rejection in Jerusalem, but had promised that he would be a missionary to the Gentiles.

At this point, (Acts 21:22) the crowd interrupted and began to chant, "Away with such a fellow. It is not fit he should live." They cried out, ripped off their clothes, and threw dust in the air--all of which were signs of intense negative emotions (Acts 21:23).

CAPTIVE IN THE CASTLE

The chief captain commanded that Paul be brought into the castle to be beaten, perhaps hoping to beat the truth out of him. As they bound him for the beating, Paul asked a centurion standing nearby if it was lawful for them to bind and beat a Roman citizen who had not been found guilty of any crime.

The centurion warned the chief captain to be careful what he did, because Paul was a Roman citizen. The chief captain declared that he had bought his freedom as a citizen. Paul said, "I was born free." The chief captain was fearful when he found out Paul was a Roman citizen because he had bound him unlawfully. The captain loosed Paul from his restraints, demanded that the chief priests and their council appear before him, and set Paul before them (Acts 22:24-30).

APPEARING BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

In Acts 23:1-9, Paul spoke before the Sanhedrin council. He began by saying that he had lived in good conscience before God. Upon hearing this statement, the High Priest Ananias commanded them to hit Paul on the mouth. Paul retorted, "God will smite you, you white wall! You sit in judgment of me after the law and command me to be smitten contrary to the law?" Those who stood by accused Paul of dishonoring the high priest. Paul answered that did not know that the man was the high priest or else he would not have done this. Paul respected the office even if the man was not worthy of respect.

Paul perceived that part of the crowd were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, so he told them he was the son of a Pharisee and believed in the hope of the resurrection of the dead. When he said this, dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees arose because the latter group did not believe in the resurrection (Acts 23:6-10). The chief captain, fearing lest Paul should be torn apart, commanded the soldiers to take him by force into the castle.
RECEIVING A WORD FROM GOD

The next night, the Lord appeared to Paul and told him, "Be of good cheer, Paul. For as you have testified of me in Jerusalem, you will also bear witness at Rome." Even if Paul had been disobedient in going to Jerusalem, God still had a plan for his life (Acts 23:11). He was still being used by God. The same is true for you also, no matter the failures of your past.

ESCAPING A JEWISH CONSPIRACY

About 40 fanatical Jews made an oath that they would not eat or drink until Paul was dead. They shared this with the chief priests and elders, asking that they bring Paul to them for further inquisition. The real purpose was so that they would have opportunity to kill him. Paul's unnamed nephew overheard their plot, went to the castle, and told Paul. Paul relayed this information to a centurion who took the young man to the chief captain to share the information (Acts 23:12-22). How many nameless people have intervened for you on the road to your destiny? Don't forget to thank them.

ESCORTED TO CAESAREA

In Acts 23:22-24, the chief captain provided Paul with 472 bodyguards which included 200 soldiers, 200 spearmen, 72 horsemen, and two centurions to escort him to Caesarea. God will do whatever necessary to get you to where you need to be!

The chief captain wrote a letter to Felix, telling him how Paul was taken by the Jews and would have been killed had he not rescued him. He let him know that Paul was a Roman who he did not think was guilty of any of the Jews' accusations, but since there were some questions about the charges, he was sending him on to Felix (Acts 23:25-39). Paul arrived safely, Felix read the letter, and he said he would hear Paul's case when his accusers arrived. Meanwhile, he commanded that Paul be kept in Herod's judgment hall (Acts 23:31-35).
THE YEARS IN CAESAREA
Acts 24-26

PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT

According to historical records, there were three types of Roman imprisonment:

- The local jail, which was the most severe kind of imprisonment. These were dungeons where prisoners were kept in chains or tortured. This was the type of jail in which Paul and Silas were confined in Philippi.

- There was free custody, where the accused party was committed to a magistrate who became responsible for his appearance on the day of trial.

- The third type of imprisonment was military custody. This is the type of confinement Paul experienced in Caesarea. Guarded confinement was necessary to keep him safe from the Jews.

Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea lasted for two years. It is probable that Paul used this time to write some of his epistles—even some unknown to us. For example, in Colossians 4:16 he refers to a letter to the Laodicean church which is not accounted for in our biblical canon.

BEFORE FELIX

When Paul appeared before Felix, the Jewish high priest and elders were accompanied by a professional orator named Tertullus who outlined the charges against him. First he charged Paul with treason for causing disturbances among the Jews, which was also considered an offense against the Roman government. Second, he accused him of heresy against the law of Moses. Third, he charged him with profanity, claiming Paul had profaned the temple. Tertullus said the Jews would have judged Paul themselves, but that the chief captain had taken him by force to appear before Felix (Acts 24:1-9).

Finally, Paul was permitted to speak. Paul's argument was that he should have the same freedom under Roman law to worship God in his way as the Jews did in their way. Since Rome tolerated religious parties like the Sadducees and Pharisees, then they should tolerate him as being of the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:10-21).

Felix remanded Paul to remain in custody, saying he would hear him again on the matter (Acts 24:22-23). After some time, Paul appeared before Felix and his wife, Drusilla. Paul reasoned regarding righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. Felix responded by saying, "Go your way. When I have a convenient season, I will call for you" (Acts 24:24-25).

Although Felix knew Paul was not guilty of any crime, he remanded him to custody and refused to release him. His motives? They are revealed in Acts 24:26-27: He was hoping to receive a bribe for Paul's release and he wanted to please the Jews.
BEFORE FESTUS

History reveals that the province governed by Felix became rather unruly, and eventually he was summoned to Rome. He departed, leaving Paul incarcerated (Acts 24:27). A man named Porcius Festus replaced Felix.

One of the first requests of the new governor by the Jews was that Paul be brought to Jerusalem to be tried again in the Sanhedrin. Their real motive, however, was to assassinate him on his way to the city. Festus responded that Paul was in his custody and that if they wanted him tried again, they should come to Caesarea (Acts 25:1-5).

They did so, and when Paul appeared before Festus, the charges were the same: Heresy, sacrilege, and treason. Festus was convinced that Paul was innocent, but to appease the Jews he suggested that Paul go to Jerusalem to be tried. Paul knew that certain death awaited him if that happened, so he requested an appeal before Caesar (Acts 25:6-12).

BEFORE AGRIPPA AND BERNICE

Around this time King Agrippa came to visit the new governor. Festus related Paul's case to Agrippa, both the Jews' accusations and Paul's defense. Agrippa said he wanted to hear Paul himself, so Paul was brought to appear before Agrippa and Bernice (Acts 25:13-22).

After the pair arrived with much ceremony, Festus summarized Paul's case (Acts 25:23-27). Then Agrippa told Paul to speak for himself. Paul's message is recorded in Acts 26:1-23. Paul recounted his Jewish heritage, told of his previous life as a persecutor of believers, and testified about his conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ, using Old Testament references to support his presentation.

As Paul continued his references to Moses and the prophets concerning Jesus, Festus interrupted expressing ridicule (Acts 26:24). He accused Paul of being mad. Paul denied this, and then turned to King Agrippa and asked if he believed the prophets. Agrippa replied, "Almost, thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Paul replied, "I wish you were such as I, except these bonds" (Acts 26:24-29).

THE VERDICT

Their verdict was that Paul was innocent of all charges. King Agrippa said, "This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Caesar." As a Roman citizen, it was Paul's right to appeal and his request must be honored. So Paul was sent to Rome. (Acts 26:30-32)
PAUL’S JOURNEY TO ROME
Acts 27:1–28:16
Estimated 2,000 Miles

Because of Paul's appeal for a hearing before Caesar, he was sent to Rome. Sea travel on the Mediterranean from east to west was often treacherous due to the prevailing northwesterly winds. In addition, Paul's voyage began late in the season when unexpected storms often occurred.

Accompanied by Aristarchus of Thessalonica, Luke, and in the custody of a centurion named Julius, Paul joined other prisoners for the 2,000 mile voyage to Rome. The passengers and crew first embarked on a small trading vessel heading to its home port at Adramyttium, a city on the northwest coast of Asia Minor.

SIDON

The initial phase of the trip followed the coast to Sidon where the centurion allowed Paul, accompanied by his guard, to go ashore and visit friends (Acts 27:1-3).

MYRA

The ship then headed northwest past Cyprus because of contrary winds, arriving in Myra, a city of Lycia. There, the centurion located a much larger grain freighter bound for Rome. Paul and his party joined 276 crew members and passengers bound for Italy. The heavy cargo and the number of crew and passengers also increased the risk of sailing so late in the season (Acts 27:4-7).

FAIR HAVENS

From Myra, the ship sailed to Fair Havens, a small harbor on the island of Crete. Paul suggested remaining in Fair Havens for the winter, but those in charge wanted to winter at Pheni on the Cretan coast, some forty miles to the west (Acts 27:8-12). Favorable winds caused them to presume it was okay to make the trip (Acts 27:13). Do not make the same mistake. Avoid the error of presumption. Wait for God’s guidance instead of presuming you know what is best. Don't make a move until God has shown you exactly what to do.

A STORM AT SEA

Unfortunately, the captain decided to sail against Paul's warning. The travelers faced disaster when gale-force winds drove the ship southwestward. The crew fought to gain control of the vessel, using anchors and dumping cargo in a desperate attempt to avoid sinking. Drifting helplessly for several days, they lost any hope of rescue.
Then Paul received a vision and a promise from God that he and the crew would be spared. On the fourteenth night at sea the vessel approached land, but the crew feared the ship would be smashed against the rocky shoreline.

After an aborted attempt to abandon ship, the crew deployed anchors to slow their drifting and prayed for daylight to come. Dawn revealed a nearby island with a bay. The crew set a course for the beach, but ran aground on a reef where the ship broke into pieces under the relentless, pounding waves.

The centurion ordered his soldiers not to kill the prisoners to prevent their escape. He gave the command to everyone to abandon ship and swim for the shore. Those who could not swim clung to debris as they washed to shore on the waves (Acts 27:13-14).

MELITA

The survivors discovered that they had landed on the island of Melita where they were graciously received by the residents. A man named Publius, a leading citizen of the island, provided hospitality to Paul and his companions while the group wintered there awaiting more favorable sailing weather.

During this time, Publius' father became quite ill. Paul prayed for him, God healed him, and many others were healed of various diseases. Another miracle occurred when Paul was putting logs on a fire and a poisonous snake bit him without him suffering any ill effects (Acts 28:1-10).

ITALY

Three months later and still in custody, Paul boarded another ship bound for Italy. Going through Syracuse and Regium, the vessel landed at Puteoli, a major seaport receiving supplies from Egypt which were vital to Rome. Believers at Puteoli hosted Paul for a week before he headed northward to Rome.

Upon hearing of Paul’s arrival in Italy, groups of believers went to greet the apostle at two locations which he passed on his way to Rome: The Forum of Appius (forty-three miles from Rome) and Three Taverns (thirty-three miles from Rome). Roman believers had probably been wanting to meet the great apostle for a long time.

Upon arrival in Rome, Paul spent two years in custody living in a rented house and preaching the gospel while awaiting the resolution of his appeal to Nero (Acts 28:11-31).
AWAITING TRIAL

Upon arrival in Rome, the centurion accompanying Paul delivered him to the captain of the guard where Paul was placed under arrest but allowed to live in a private home under guard. Paul waited for two years for his hearing before Caesar. During this time, he continued to share the Gospel.

A MEETING WITH THE CHIEF JEWS

After being in Rome for three days, Paul called together the chief Jews. He told them that he had done nothing against the Jewish people or their customs, yet he had been taken prisoner in Jerusalem. He told them how officials there had found no fault in him, but sent him to Rome because he had appealed to Caesar. Paul said that "for the hope of Israel" he was bound with his chains.

The chief Jews indicated they had heard nothing about Paul's alleged crimes or his arrest and that they wanted to hear him concerning the "sect" of believers to which he belonged. On an appointed day, many people came where Paul was being held. Paul taught about the Kingdom of God and Jesus, using the law of Moses and the prophets. The meeting went from morning until evening.

Some believed Paul's message, others did not. After dissension arose, Paul quoted the words of Isaiah:

Saying, "Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. (Acts 28:26-29)

After a long discussion, the unbelieving, objecting Jews departed and continued to debate among themselves regarding Paul's teachings.

THE PRISON EPISTLES

During Paul's incarceration in Rome he wrote what is commonly called the "prison epistles." These include the New Testament books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

It is also probable that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, although the author is officially unknown. Some attribute the book of Hebrews to Barnabas, Apollos, Clement, or Luke.
The probability that the author was Paul is indicated by the fact that the writer was in bonds (Hebrews 10:34) and desired to see his converts (Hebrews 13:18-19). The reference to Timothy in 13:12; the apostolic benediction in verses 13:20-21; and the phrase "they of Italy salute you" in 13:24 all indicate the author could have been Paul. Debate over this is not important, however, because the true author was the Holy Spirit and it is more important to understand what is said than know who took dictation from the Spirit. (See the Legacy Bible Outlines for study of Paul's prison epistles.)

**A FINAL REFERENCE**

The final reference to the Apostle Paul in the book of Acts is found in the closing verses:

> And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him. (Acts 28:30-31)

Nothing is said Paul's trial or whether or not he was released from custody. Records indicate that he was released and traveled again prior to his final incarceration and martyrdom. Biblical and historical evidence for this is discussed under the next heading.
AFTER RELEASE FROM ROME
Estimated 5,800 Miles

Luke ends his narrative in the book of Acts without reference to whether or not Paul was released from prison or engaged in additional missionary outreaches. There is verification from the Word of God and historical records, however, which indicate that Paul was released and did complete additional missions.

THE BIBLICAL RECORD

God had told Paul that he would be tried before Caesar, although there is no record of this occurring in the book of Acts:

*For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul: thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.* (Acts 27:23-24)

Paul told Timothy that he had been delivered from the lions. The Greek word "lions", as used here, means death:

*At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.* (2 Timothy 4:16-17)

In 1 Timothy 1:3, Paul urged Timothy to "stay here in Ephesus" while he went on to Macedonia, There is no record of this trip in the book of Acts.

In Philemon, Paul indicates that Paul believed he would soon be released from prison (Philemon 2:24).

In the book of Titus, Paul says that he left Titus on Crete to establish order in the church. "Left him" indicates Paul had been there. No mention of Paul evangelizing Crete is made in the book of Acts, so it is probable that Paul visited Crete after being released from his first incarceration in Rome.

Paul also mentioned to Titus about going to Nicopolis to spend the winter (Titus 3:12). He told Timothy that he previously left Trophimus sick at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20). These incidents are also not recorded in the book of Acts, so they are thought to have occurred between Paul's first and second imprisonments.

There is no biblical evidence that Paul went to Spain, except for the fact that he said he planned to do so and at the end of his life he declared he had finished his course--so that very well may have included Spain.
HISTORICAL RECORDS

One of Paul's disciples was Clement (Philippians 4:3). He was a prolific historian of the first century and in his writings, there is some evidence of Paul's release and his additional missions. A document known as "Muratori's Canon" compiled by an early historian, also reflects this.

In addition, early church fathers concluded that "Paul, after his release from Rome, departed to Spain and again went forth to proclaim the Gospel. Afterwards, he came to Rome a second time and was martyred under Nero."

CONCLUSION

Piecing together biblical and historical records, it appears that after Paul's release from his first incarceration in Rome he may have visited Spain, Ephesus, Macedonia, Crete, Miletus, Nicopolis, and Troas prior to his second arrest.
PAUL'S FINAL IMPRISONMENT AND DEATH

It is estimated that the Apostle Paul traveled approximately 9,500 miles by foot and 10,300 miles by sea during his years of ministry, a total of approximately 19,800 miles. Paul also wrote the books of Romans, Philippians, 1 and 2 Timothy, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Titus, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Galatians, and Ephesians, and possibly the book of Hebrews.

The Bible does not record Paul's final imprisonment and death, but historical records give us an idea of why he was taken into custody and martyred. Nero, a very evil ruler, eventually seized power in Rome. He came from an extremely dysfunctional family with a sordid record of deceit, murder, adultery, and other evils. Nero had an intense dislike for Christians, and many of the believers in Rome took refuge in the catacombs (tunnels that ran under the city) to try to escape his wrath. The Roman Coliseum became the scene of many brutal deaths of believers.

People in Rome knew Paul because of his previous incarceration there. Guards would have known him, as well as dissenting Jews. With Nero's intense hatred of Christians, it is probable that a search began for Paul who was considered a key leader in the movement. It would not have been difficult to find him, for as he traveled he left a trail of new believers and churches behind him.

According to historical records, Paul was eventually captured, brought to Rome, and incarcerated, this time facing certain death. Paul viewed his eminent death without fear. He considered it like finishing a fight and completing a race. He had kept the faith and that is why he could say with confidence that a crown of righteousness was reserved for him--and not only for him, but for all who keep the faith, love the Lord, look forward to His return, and finish well.

Paul wanted to glorify God whether he lived or died (Philippians 1:20). Actually, Paul was caught in a quandary: He desired to live and continue to minister, but he also desired to die and be with the Lord (Philippians 1:23-24).

Paul did not fear death, nor need we fear it. Paul started his life, he finished it. We have started and we shall someday finish also. Until Jesus returns, death is part of life. We must learn to live right and die right, as did the Apostle Paul.

In the closing days of his life, Paul could remember his pre-conversion past, but he had a clear conscience despite the terrible things he had done:

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should
hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.
(1 Timothy 1:12-17)

Gifts, sacrifices, and good works don't ease an evil conscience (Hebrews 9:9), but God can and will cleanse it (Romans 9:1 Acts 23:1 and 24:16). As Paul, you can die with your conscience clear, ready to meet your God.

First and Second Timothy were written as Paul faced the end of his life. One thing he asked of Timothy was to "bring the parchments" to him. The parchments contained the Scriptures (2 Timothy 4:13). Paul was a student of God's Word until the very end, as so should we be.

Paul probably appeared in a hearing before the courts of Rome, where the tradition was that the prosecutor would present his case, witnesses would be heard, and then the accused would question the witnesses. Most likely, as Paul had done in previous court appearances, he took the opportunity to share the Gospel when it was his turn to speak.

Historical records indicate that the Apostle Paul was executed for his faith in AD 67. Because he was a Roman citizen, torture was forbidden. Roman citizens found guilty of crimes were decapitated and that is most likely how he died.

Prior to his death, Paul wrote these inspired words:

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

Then--at last--there came that final day when it could be said of the great apostle: "Paul is absent from the body and present with the Lord."
SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY ONE
SEQUENTIAL EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF PAUL

Pre-Conversion
-Studied in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3).
-Persecuted the church (Acts 8:1-3; Philippians 3:6).

Conversion
-Converted on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:12).
-Led into Damascus blind, fasted and prayed three days (Acts 9:8-9).
-Healed, baptized, and his calling confirmed by Ananias (Acts 9:10-19).

Post-Conversion
-Went to Arabia for an unspecified time (Galatians 1:17).
-Went to Jerusalem for 15 days to see Peter and James (Acts 9:26-29; Galatians 1:18-19).
-Sent back to Tarsus to avoid capture (Acts 9:30).
-Ministered in and around Tarsus, from Caesarea to the regions of Syria and Cilicia (Acts 9:30; Galatians 1:21).
-Traveled to Jerusalem from Antioch to deliver a collection taken up in Antioch because of Agabus' prophecy (Acts 11:27-30; Galatians 2:1).
-Following the relief visit to Jerusalem to deliver the offering, Paul returned to Antioch. Soon afterwards, the first missionary journey began. (Acts 12:25)
The First Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14)

- Called and commissioned as a missionary.

- Traveled from Antioch to Seleucia, then to Salamis on the island of Cyprus.

- Next he went to Paphos in Cyprus and to Perga in Pamphylia.

- From there, he went to Antioch of Pisidia.

- From Antioch he went to Iconium.

- From Iconium to Lystra.

- From Lystra to Derbe.

- They returned through the same cities, traveling in the opposite direction.

- Finally, they sailed from Attalia to Selecia and then went to Antioch of Syria.

The Council At Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-30 and Galatians 2:11-14)

- Traveled from Antioch to Jerusalem for the council regarding Gentiles and Jewish rites.

- On the way to Jerusalem they visited Phenice and Samaria.

- Paul and Barnabas returned to minister in Antioch of Syria.

- Contention over John Mark results in Paul and Barnabas separating and Paul ministering with Silas.

The Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)

- Paul and Silas strengthen the churches in Syria and Cilicia.

- They visit Derbe and Lystra, and Timothy joins the team in Lystra.

- They travel to Troas where Paul received the "Macedonian Call".

- From Troas, they went to Samothracia, Neapolis, and Philippi.

- From Philippi, the team passes through Amphipolis and Apollonia on the way to Thessalonica.
From Thessalonica, they travel to Berea. Silas and Timothy remain there while Paul goes on to Athens.

From Berea Paul traveled to Athens.

From Athens he traveled to Corinth where he was rejoined by Silas and Timothy.

From Corinth they travel to Ephesus.

From Ephesus the team goes back to Jerusalem to report on their journey.

From Jerusalem, they returned to Antioch.


The team traveled from Antioch to Phrygia and Galatia.

Next, they traveled back to Ephesus where Paul remained for two and a half years.

A visit was made to Corinth (2 Corinthians 13:1) and then the team went to Macedonia and Illyricum.

They went to Greece—Athens and Corinth—and from Greece back to Troas.

They visited Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Togyllium.

They visited Miletus, where Paul exhorted the Epheian elders.

They went through Cos, Rhodes, Patara, and Phoenicia.

Tyre, Ptolemais, and Caesarea.

Despite warnings, Paul returned to Jerusalem.


Paul was arrested in Jerusalem shortly after arriving back from his third missionary journey.

He was taken to Caesarea where he was imprisoned for two years.

Because of his appeal to Caesar, Paul left Caesarea as a prisoner and sailed to Sidon, Myra, and Fair Havens on Crete, where he stayed until after the Day of Atonement.

He then sailed west until shipwrecked on Malta, where he stayed three months.
In the spring, Paul sailed to Italy traveling to Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli, finally arriving in Rome where he was imprisoned for two more years.

**After The First Roman Imprisonment**

Paul was apparently freed after his first imprisonment in Rome. Biblical and historical evidence confirm that Paul was released and traveled again, probably including a trip to Spain (according to Clement of Rome in I Clement and Paul in 2 Timothy.) He may have also visited Ephesus, Macedonia, Crete, Miletus, Nicopolis, and Troas prior to his final arrest.

**Final Arrest, Imprisonment, And Death**

According to historical records, Paul was eventually arrested and returned to Rome where he was imprisoned again and finally martyred in 64 A.D.
Prior to his conversion, Paul was a Pharisee. The following is a composite of facts regarding the Pharisees.

- The Pharisees were one of the sects of the Jews, the Saducees and Essenes being the other two main divisions in New Testament times.

- The distinguishing characteristic of the Pharisees was a belief in an oral law that God gave to Moses at Sinai along with the Torah. They believed the Torah was the written law of God which set down a series of laws that were open to interpretation. The Pharisees believed that God gave Moses the knowledge of what these laws meant and how they should be applied. This oral tradition was passed down through generations and eventually recorded in what is known as the Talmud.

- They were outwardly moral and self-righteous, but inwardly wicked.

- Jesus called them blind leaders of the blind, hypocrites, and compared them to white sepulchers. Jesus said they strained at gnats and swallowed camels.

- They often tried to discredit and destroy Jesus.

- They believed in the resurrection, the punishment of the wicked, and the reward of the righteous.

- They believed in a messiah who would herald in an era of world peace.

- They falsely arrested, tried, and condemned Christ, demanding His life.

- They bribed soldiers to say Christ's body had been stolen from the tomb by His disciples.

SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY THREE
RECORDED MIRACLES IN PAUL'S MINISTRY

A man made blind.

Paul's first miracle was not a positive one of healing, but it had positive consequences:

And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. (Acts 13:6-12)

Bar-jesus was a sorcerer who was trying to prevent the deputy of Paphos from hearing and receiving the gospel. Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, pronounced a miraculous curse upon Bar-jesus. The man was blinded "for a season"--we are not told how long. This miracle aborted his powers as a sorcerer and enabled the deputy, who saw what happened, to accept the gospel and believe in the Lord.

Signs and wonders.

And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed...Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. (Acts 14:1,3)

Healing a lame man at Lystra.

And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. (Acts 14:8-10)
Delivering the demonized woman.

And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. (Acts 16:16-18)

Healings from handkerchiefs/aprons.

And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. (Acts 19:11-12)

Raising the dead.

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted. (Acts 20:7-12)

Curing a bedridden man.

In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. (Acts 28:7-8)

Healings of entire crowds of people.

So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed. (Acts 28:9)
SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY FOUR
PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH

Many people have been taught that Paul's thorn in the flesh mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 was illness and that, even as he prayed three times for it to depart without results, they are destined to have their own "thorn in the flesh" of sickness or torment. The "thorn in the flesh" tradition is a major blockade which prevents many from receiving healing and deliverance.

Here is what the Bible teaches about Paul's thorn in the flesh:

WHAT IT WAS: The Bible says Paul's thorn was a messenger. The Greek word "messenger" appears seven times in the New Testament. It is translated "angel" 181 times. All 188 times the word is used it is speaking of a personality or a messenger, not a sickness or disease. The use of the word "thorns" in the Old Testament also supports this. “Thorns” is used in Numbers 33:55 and Joshua 23:13 to describe the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. In both of these cases, the word did not mean a physical affliction, but buffeting by an enemy.

WHO IT WAS FROM: The Bible says it was a messenger from Satan. Paul said, "There was given me..." but he did not say it was from God--although we know that nothing affects a believer's life without God's permission.

WHY IT WAS PERMITTED: The thorn was permitted for three major reasons:

-It prevented sin: Paul said the thorn was permitted because of the abundant revelations he received and to prevent pride. Before anyone claims to have a thorn in the flesh he should consider how many revelations and visions he has had. Does he qualify for a thorn? Most folks who think they have a thorn in the flesh have not had any kind of supernatural revelation or vision.
-It fulfilled prophecy: The thorn also fulfilled prophecy. When Paul was converted, God said: "...I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16).
-It provided strength: The problems created by the "thorn" provided opportunity for the strength of God to be manifested.

WHAT IT DID: The thorn buffeted Paul. To "buffet" means to "give repeated blows, over and over and over." The word "buffeting" does not refer to a permanent state of sickness. The messenger was sent to buffet Paul to try to stop the Word of God from being preached.

HOW IT WAS MANIFESTED: Here are some examples of the various ways this "thorn" manifested and stirred up opposition to buffet Paul:

- The Jews determined to kill Paul right after his conversion: Acts 9:23
- Paul was hindered in joining the believers: Acts 9:26-29
- He was opposed by Satan: Acts 13:6-12
- He was opposed by Jews in a mob: Acts 13:44-49
- He was expelled out of Antioch in Pisidia: Acts 13:50
- He was mobbed and expelled from Iconium: Acts 14:1-5
- He fled to Lystra and Derbe where he was stoned and left for dead: Acts 14:6-19
- He was disputing continually with false brethren: Acts 19:8
- He was beaten and jailed at Philippi: Acts 16:12-40
- He was mobbed and expelled from Thessalonica: Acts 17:1-10
- He was mobbed and expelled from Berea: Acts 17:10-14
- He was mobbed at Corinth: Acts 18:1-23
- He was mobbed at Ephesus: Acts 19:23-31
- There was a plot against his life by the Jews: Acts 20:3
- He was seized by Jews, mobbed, tried in court five times, and suffered other hardships: 2 Corinthians 11:23-33

Paul did experience sickness as indicated in Galatians 4:13-16, but this was not his thorn because it was not a permanent condition. He said he had it only "at first." Some believe Paul's thorn was defective eyes, but his eyes were healed of blindness (Acts 9:18). Believing that he still continued to have eye trouble discredits the healing power of God. Also, would it be right to call eye problems that resulted from seeing the glory of God a messenger of Satan? Paul himself tells us in the year 60, when he wrote Corinthians, that it was "around 14 years ago" that he received the "abundant revelation" which resulted in the thorn in the flesh. That was 12 years after his conversion experience in which he saw God's glory.

When Paul uses the phrase in Galatians 4:15 that "you would have plucked out your eyes and have given them to me," it is a Hebrew figure of speech. It is similar to phrases used in some places today to express intense desire. For example, "I would give my right arm... " If Paul had an oriental eye disease with pus running from his eyes as some claim, it is strange that this would inspire people to have faith for special miracles.

**ITS RESULTS:** Paul speaks of his "infirmity" which means "want of strength, weakness, and an inability to produce results through his own natural abilities." Through this weakness, God's power and strength were manifested.

**THE CONCLUSION:** The conclusion regarding Paul's thorn is that although we cannot know for certain exactly what the thorn was, keep the following in mind:

Paul's thorn resulted in God's power being demonstrated in His life. Some people use the "thorn in the flesh" excuse to languish in illness or bondage. They should remember that the only Biblical example of a thorn in the flesh out-wrote, out-preached, and out-traveled all of his partners in ministry. The thorn did not hinder his dynamic service for the Kingdom nor the demonstration of God's power through his life.
SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY FIVE
PAUL'S PRAYERS

The Apostle Paul was a man of prayer. Try personalizing and praying the prayers of Paul in your devotional time.

| Romans 1:8-10 | 1 Timothy 1:12 |
| Romans 10:1 | 1 Timothy 2:1 |
| Romans 12:12 | 2 Timothy 1:3-7; 16-18 |
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| 1 Corinthians 16:23 | Philemon 1:4-7;25 |
| 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 | |
| 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 | |
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| 2 Corinthians 12:7-9a | |
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SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY SIX
PAUL'S RELATIONSHIPS

We can learn much from Paul's relationships. Here are some key principles:

First, God does not call us to be independent of other members of the Body of Christ. Paul did not travel or minister alone.

Second, we are to work as a team. The church is described in function as a human body, each part being dependent on the other parts. A "network" is another term to express such relationships.

Third, we are called to relationship in ministry. The people God sends to minister with you are not employees to be hired or fired at will. They are your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Fourth, you will have different levels of relationship. Some are friends, others are co-workers, while others are so committed that they would die for you or with you if necessary.

Fifth, you should cherish the godly relationships God sends into your life. In his epistle, Paul continually expresses thanks and prayers for those who labor with him. He calls them sons, fellow-workers, and beloved.

Sixth, as in the case of John Mark, relationships that may not function well at one point in your life may become profitable later.

Seventh, your relationships should not be limited by ethnicity or social status. Paul had both Jews and Gentiles as friends, as well as wealthy and poor.

Eighth, Paul's co-workers were not afraid to disagree with him and express their opinions (Acts 19:30). In some cases, listening to them saved Paul's life. Are your co-workers able to freely express their opinions to you?

Ninth, there will be some co-workers who abandon you and return to the world (Demas). Others may fail, but if given a second chance may become profitable for ministry (John Mark).

Here is a list of Paul's friends and co-workers for further study.

Achaicus was a contributor to Paul's ministry (1 Corinthians 16:17).

Agabas was a prophet from Jerusalem who warned of a coming famine and of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-28; 21:10).

Ampliatus was Paul's beloved in the Lord (Romans 16:8).
Ananias was a devout man with a good testimony (Acts 9:1-17; Acts 22:11-12). He was sent by God to Paul after his conversion on the Damascus Road. Ananias prayed for Paul and his eyes were healed, and he was baptized, and he was launched into a destiny that would impact the then-known world.

Andronicus was Paul's relative and fellow-prisoner (Romans 16:7).

Apelles, mentioned in Romans 16:10, was called "approved in Christ" by Paul.

Apollos was a man who was strong in the scriptures (Acts 18:24). He came to Ephesus and was discipled by Aquila and Priscilla. Apollos teamed up with Zenas the lawyer in mission work.

Apphia, Philemon's wife, was called "beloved" by Paul (Philemon 2).

Aquila was a Jewish convert, tentmaker, Paul's helper, and husband of Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 24-28; Romans 6:3-5).

Archippus was Philemon's son and Paul's fellow-soldier (Colossians 4:17; Philemon 2).

Aristarchus was a fellow-prisoner with Paul (Colossians 4:10). He accompanied Paul to Asia and then on to Rome where they were both imprisoned (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:23).

Aristobulus was a fellow-worker with Paul (Romans 16:10).

Artemis was Paul's companion (Titus 3:12).

Asyncritus was one a man skilled in combining spiritual ideas with appropriate words (Romans 16:14).

Barnabas brought Paul to the apostles (Acts 9:27) and came seeking Paul to bring him into the ministry at Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). He and Paul were called into ministry together (Acts 13:2) and made a missionary journey. They later parted ways over a disagreement concerning John Mark (Acts 15:25-26).

Carpus was Paul's host in Troas (2 Timothy 4:13).

Chloe was a Corinthian believer who informed Paul of problems in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 1:11).

Claudius Lysias was a Roman captain who helped Paul after his arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:31-40; 22:30; 23:1-30).

Claudia was a Christian in Rome who probably visited Paul in prison (2 Timothy 4:21).
*Clement* was Paul's fellow-worker in Philippi (Philippians 4:3).

*Crescens* was a companion of Paul in Rome who later went to Galatia (2 Timothy 4:10).

*Crispus* was the chief ruler of the Jews who was converted and baptized by Paul (Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:14).

*Demas* was originally mentioned by Paul as a loyal worker (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24), but Demas later left the faith and returned to the world (2 Timothy 4:10).

*Epaenetus* was an early convert of Paul and was spoken of as well-beloved and the first-fruits of Asia unto Christ (Romans 16:5).

*Epaphras* is called a bond-servant of Christ who labored fervently in prayer (Colossians 4:12). His work in the church in Colosse was vital (Colossians 1:7-8) and he was zealous for God (Colossians 4:12-13).

*Epaphroditus* is referred to by Paul in Philippians 2:25 as his brother, fellow-worker, fellow-soldier, and a faithful messenger. In Philippians 2:29-30 and 4:18, we see that Epaphroditus was instrumental in meeting Paul's needs.

*Erastus* was Paul's friend and a city treasurer in Corinth (Acts 19:22; Romans 16:23).

*Eubulus* was a disciple in Rome (2 Timothy 4:21).

*Eunice* was the daughter of Lois and mother of Timothy who taught her son the scriptures (Acts 16:1-2; 2 Timothy 25:3:15).

*Euodias* helped travelers by providing lodging. At one point, she was at odds with another believer named Syntyche (Philippians 4:2).

*Eutychus* was a young man who went to sleep during one of Paul's sermons, fell out a third story window and died, but was raised from the dead by Paul (Acts 20:9).

*Fortunatus* helped Achaicus and Stephanas take supplies to Paul (1 Corinthians 16:17).

*Gaius 1*, mentioned in Acts 19:29; Romans 16:23; and 1 Corinthians 1:14, was a Macedonian who was Paul's companion and host.

*Gaius 2*, from Derbe, accompanied Paul from Macedonia to Asia (Acts 20:4).

*Hermas* was a disciple at Rome to whom Paul sent greetings (Romans 16:14).

*Hermes* was a Roman disciple (Romans 16:14).
**Hermogenes** was a professing Christian in Asia who eventually deserted Paul (2 Timothy 1:15; 4:16).

**Herodion** was Paul's kinsman and a Roman believer (Romans 16:11).

**Hymenaeus** was a professing believer who became shipwrecked in his faith, denying the resurrection and opposing Christianity. (1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:16-18).

**James** was an apostle who moderated the Jerusalem council which discussed Jewish mandates being imposed upon Gentile believers (Acts 15:13; 21:18).

**Jason** hosted Paul and Silas in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-9; Romans 16:21).

**John Mark**. a relative of Barnabas, accompanied Paul and Barnabas on a portion of the first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). He left the team in Pamphylia, and Barnabas and Paul disagreed later over giving him another chance in ministry (Acts 15:38). Eventually, Paul asked for Mark to be sent to him, saying that he was profitable to the ministry (2 Timothy 4:11). Paul referred to him as a fellow-laborer (Philemon 1:24), and commended him to the Colossian church (Colossians 4:10).

**Judas** hosted Paul in his home in Damascus after Paul was converted to the Lord (Acts 9:11).

**Judas Barsabas** was a prophet in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22, 27, 31).

**Julia** was a Roman believer and Philologus' wife (Romans 16:15).

**Julius** was a Roman guard in charge of Paul's voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1-3, 43).

**Junia** was a Roman believer and one of Paul's relatives (Romans 16:7).

**Justus**, a Jew who worked with Paul, was called a comfort and fellow-worker in the Kingdom of God (Colossians 4:11).

**Linus** befriended Paul during his second imprisonment (2 Timothy 4:21).

**Lois**, Timothy's maternal grandmother, was commended for her faith and for raising her daughter, Eunice, and grandson, Timothy, in the scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15).

**Lucius 1** was a Cyrenian who ministered to the church in Antioch of Syria.

**Lucius 2** was Paul's kinsman in Rome (Romans 16:21).

**Luke** was called the beloved physician (Colossians 4:14) and fellow-laborer (Philemon 1:24). He was Paul's companion to the end (2 Timothy 4:11) and was author of the gospel that bears his name and the book of Acts.
**Lydia** was a resident of Tyhatira who had a heart for God and worshipped by the river. There she met Paul, Silas, and Luke and accepted their message of the gospel (Acts 16:14). She was Paul's first European convert and showed hospitality to the missionaries by providing lodging for them (Acts 16:15 and 16:40).

**Manaen** was a leader in the Antioch church and related to Herod the tetrarch (Acts 13:1).

**Mary 1** was the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12).

**Mary 2** was a faithful worker at Rome who labored in behalf of Paul (Romans 16:6).

**Mnason** was a believer who hosted Paul and his friends in Jerusalem at the end of the third missionary journey (Acts 21:16).

**Narcissus** was a disciple at Rome to whom Paul sent greetings (Romans 16:11).

**Nereus** was a Roman believer who was a servant of the emperor (Romans 16:15).

**Nymphas** hosted the church of Laodicea (Colossians 4:15).

**Olympas** was a disciple at Rome to whom Paul sent greetings (Romans 16:15).

**Onesiphorus** was mentioned as being a great help to Paul in Ephesus (2 Timothy 1:16-18; 4:19).

**Onesimus** was a runaway slave, a man with a sinful past who had stolen from his master, Philemon. He met Paul, was converted, and helped establish a church. Paul wrote to Philemon to appeal for mercy for this new brother in Christ (Philemon 1:10-13).

**Patrobas** was a Roman believer (Romans 16:14).

**Persis** was a Roman woman who labored much in the Lord (Romans 16:12).

**Peter**, also called Cephas, was a key leader of the church in New Testament times. Paul stayed with him 15 days (Galatians 1:18) after his three years in Arabia. Peter was called to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles, yet Peter had a high regard for Paul and his ministry (2 Peter 3:15-16).

**Philemon** was a prominent believer and generous giver. Paul called him a dear friend and fellow worker (Philemon 1).

**Philologus** was a Roman believer (Romans 16:15).

**Phlegon** was a Roman believer to whom Paul sent greetings (Romans 16:14).

**Phoebe** is mentioned in Romans 16:1. She was a deaconess and was commended by Paul as a servant at the church at Cenchrea.
Phygellus was once a believer, but eventually deserted Paul and the Word of God (2 Timothy 1:13-15; 4:16).

Priscilla Jews (Acts 18:2) was the husband of Aquila. The couple risked their lives for Paul (Romans 16:4). They accompanied him to Ephesus where they tutored Apollos in Christ (Acts 18:26). Their home was used for a church (Romans 16:3-5).

Pudens was a Roman believer (2 Timothy 4:21).

Quartus was a worker in the Roman church (Romans 16:23).

Rufus was chosen in the Lord, a Roman disciple, brother of Alexander, and son of Simon the Cyrenian who carried the cross of Jesus (Romans 16:13; Mark 15:21).

Secundus accompanied Paul into Asia (Acts 20:4).

Silvanus (Silas) was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37), a prophet (Acts 15:32); and served as a delegate from the Jerusalem council to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to confirm the decisions of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:22). Paul chose him to join him and Timothy on the second missionary journey (acts 15:36). Acts 16 records his imprisonment with Paul. He also assisted Paul in writing letters to the Thessalonians and eventually served the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:12).

Simeon was a prophet and teacher in the Antioch church (Acts 13:1).

Sopater accompanied Paul from Corinth to Jerusalem on the third missionary journey (Acts 20:4).

Sosipater, who Paul calls his kinsman, may have been from the same tribe as Paul (Romans 16:21).

Sosthenes succeeded Crispus as a ruler of the synagogue at Corinth. He was beaten by the crowd when Gallio freed Paul, and was later converted (Acts 18:17; 1 Corinthians 1:1).

Stachys was Paul's beloved and a Roman believer (Romans 16:9).

Stephanas and his household were Paul's first-fruits of Achaia. He was baptized by Paul and helped Archaicus and Fortunatus supply Paul's needs. He was "addicted to the ministry of the saints", laboring in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 1:15-17).

Syntyche was a member of the Philippian church who had a disagreement with Euodias. Paul encouraged her to be of the same mind and repair the breech between them (Philippians 4:2).
**Tertius** was one of Paul's secretaries who took dictation for the epistle to the Romans (Romans 16:22).

**Timothy** was Paul's beloved son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2). The epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy were written by Paul to Timothy and you can learn much about their relationship in these books. Timothy was converted during Paul's first trip through Lystra (Acts 16; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:11). Paul listed Timothy as co-author of six epistles: 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Timothy was trusted to deliver Paul's messages and represent him to the churches (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2) and he was a fellow prisoner with Paul (Hebrews 13:23). The final recorded words of Paul to Timothy express his hope to see him one last time if possible (2 Timothy 4:21).

**Titus** was a partner and fellow-worker and Paul's son after the faith (2 Corinthians 8:16-17 and Titus 1:4). He was trusted to discipline the Corinthians and bring back a report about them (2 Corinthians 7:6-7). Titus had the same love and passion for the churches as Paul did (2 Corinthians 8:16 and 12:18. He is last mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:10 as being in Dalmatia.

**Trophimus** was a faithful companion to Paul who would have been with him to Rome had not sickness detained him at Miletus (Acts 20:4-5; 21:27-29; 2 Timothy 4:20).

**Tryphena** was a woman believer in Rome, a co-laborer in the Lord (Romans 16:12).

**Tryphosa** was a co-laborer in the Lord.

**Tychicus** was a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow-servant (Colossians 4:7). He was dispatched often by Paul on ministry-related tasks (Titus 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:12). The churches in Ephesus (Ephesians 6:21-22) and Colosse (Colossians 4:7-9) both benefitted from his ministry.

**Urbanus** was a Roman believer and helper in Christ (Romans 16:9).

**Zenas** was a Christian lawyer in Crete (Titus 3:13).
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