

PAUL - MAN ON THE MOVE

Tonight's chapters focus on the journeys of Christianity's greatest missionary - the persecutor turned preacher - Saul of Tarsus, also known as Paul the apostle.

Much has been written about *Paul's mind*, his vast intellect - *Paul's heart*, his deep passion for God and people - *Paul's shoulders*, the sense of responsibility he carried for the churches - *Paul's back*, the beatings he endured for the sake of the Gospel - but of all his attributes none is more impressive than *Paul's feet!*

Paul crisscrossed the empire four times - mostly on foot. In the part of Acts that concerns his travels, 40 different cities are mentioned by name. His three missionary journeys logged more than 8100 miles and kept him on the road over a decade. Imagine the destination stickers on Paul's suitcase - what a collection!

Oswald Sanders writes, "Other missionaries opened continents to the Gospel. Paul opened a world." The rest of the book of Acts tracks the journeys of Paul.

AFRICANS IN ACTS

Verse 1 lists five leaders in the church at Antioch - Barnabas, Saul, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen. Simeon's nickname was "Niger" which means "*black*." Lucius was from Cyrene in North Africa. Both men were Africans and probably had dark skin.

And they're not the only Africans to play a role in the early church. The Simon who helped carry the cross for Jesus - the Ethiopian in Acts 8 - some of the early church

fathers were dark-skinned. Augustine, Athanasius, Tertullian were all from North Africa. The idea that the first exposure Africans had to Christianity was on the slave plantations in North America is a myth.

Africans were among the apostles and prophets of the early church. In fact, the Gospel came to a black Africa years before it arrived in a white Europe.

Devotion Box - From Saul To Paul

A side-note in Acts 13:9 - Saul is also called Paul. From this point forward, in the book of Acts, he is referred to as Paul.

"Saul" meant "*the requested one*" - "the man in demand." "*Paul*" means "*little*." It reflected the change in attitude.

At the beginning of his ministry Paul calls himself, in 1 Corinthians 15:9, "the least of the apostles." Toward the middle of his life he said, in Ephesians 3:8, "I am the least of all the saints." In 1 Timothy 1:15, at the end, he called himself, "chief of sinners." The longer Paul walked with God the smaller he became in his own eyes.

ANTIOCH OUTREACH

Chapter 13 opens, "Now in the church that was at Antioch..."

In the first 12 chapters of Acts, the activity swirled around the Jewish church at Jerusalem. Now the scene shifts. The hub of activity becomes the Gentile church of Antioch. Christianity is expanding from Jew to Gentile!

The Lord picked... the church prayed... and Saul and Barnabas parted.

From the beginning, the church had accepted Gentiles, but now a deliberate attempt is made to reach them. Saul becomes the apostle to the Gentiles.

Devotion Box - Ministering To The Lord

We're told in Acts 13:2, "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" The Bible gives us examples of ministry *by the Lord*, and ministry *for the Lord*, but here, six saints are ministering *to the Lord*.

It's an amazing thought - that you and I can actually minister to the Lord - you can bring a smile to God's face, and pleasure to His heart - when you praise and worship Him! When He ministers to us, it's nice to know we can return the favor.

Bible Scan - Acts 13-19

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Devotion Box - Paul's Most Dangerous Moment

When the lame man walked at Lystra, the people assumed Paul and Barnabas were the gods on a visit to earth. The Roman poet Ovid told a tale about Zeus and Hermes, gods of the Greek Pantheon. Disguised as men they visit earth - and when some of the people are inhospitable, the people are later punished. The superstitious pagans of Lystra don't want to make the same mistake, so they worship and treat Paul and Barnabas as if they are gods.

I believe this was the most dangerous moment Paul ever faced. Yes, he'll be stoned and beaten and shipwrecked - but this was his most dangerous moment...

When James Cook discovered the Hawaiian islands, the natives mistook him as a god. Rather than correcting the error, Cook let the Hawaiians cater to his whims. He took advantage of their women, lived a life of ease and luxury - until a villager saw him bleed. The blood gave him away. He was just a man - and they killed him.

Paul could've pulled a James Cook and used the miracle for his own benefit, but he tells them he's a man just like them. Paul points them to Jesus! When people think that you are more than you are, do you play along with the ruse or do you point them to Jesus?

APOSTLE OF COURAGE

It's amazing, after the miracle, the people had wanted to worship Paul - but while Paul preaches, the Jews from Antioch and Iconium show up. These are the men who tried to kill Paul. They mingle with the crowd and stir up contention.

Oh, the fickleness of the crowd... Paul ends up being stoned and left for dead. Paul's pals are planning his funeral when suddenly he snaps back. He stands up, brushes off the dust, and enters the city to finish his sermon. What courage! Years later Paul recalls the scars he bore in his body to bring the Gospel to Galatia.

Paul is a dynamo of determination that can't be stopped. Guys, Paul had no problem dying *for Christ*, because he'd already died *with Christ*. How about you? *Have you died to your own agenda, and given your whole heart to Jesus?*

THE JUDAIZERS

When you think of villains, words like "Nazis," "mafia," "KKK," "hell's angels," "Al Quida" - probably come to your mind. But, add to your list "Judaizers." In Acts 15, we encounter the Judaizers. These villains had supplemented grace with good deeds and religious rituals. They believed Gentiles could never be part of God's family unless they conformed to Jewish law and were first circumcised.

In essence, they taught you'll never *cut it* with God unless you're circumcised.

The Jews labored to keep the Law for 1500 years. Through diligence and discipline, they carved out their own self-righteousness. It didn't seem fair to them to watch the Gentiles enter the family of God while making no attempt to keep the Law. They agreed that faith in Jesus was fine - but it couldn't possibly be enough... the believer needed to add a little of his hard work and diligence. In essence, righteousness according to the Judaizers included the blood of Jesus - along with a little of a person's own blood, sweat, and tears.

Paul and Barnabas disputed the doctrine of the Judaizers. They insisted nothing can add to what Christ has done. Faith alone makes a person right with God. Rules and rituals are needless baggage!

THE FIRST CHURCH COUNCIL

Throughout church history, leaders have gathered in church councils to clarify the biblical position on hot topics. The first such council was held in Acts 15.

From the start, the conversation was heated. Peter's was the first voice of reason. In verse 7, he recalls his experience in Acts 10 at Cornelius' house. In verse 9 he says God "made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." Then in verses 10-11 he concludes, "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

Paul and Barnabas go next. They also recounted their experiences. Peter and Paul agree that in light of the blessing God has poured out on the Gentile believers - what bothered the Judaizers was no bother to God...

In verse 13, James, the half-brother of Jesus, takes charge. He quotes Amos 9:11-12 as Biblical proof that God had intended all along to save the Gentiles without turning them into Jews. James suggests a letter be written to the Gentiles welcoming them to the body of Christ *by faith, and as is!* This letter from Jerusalem will clear up any confusion caused by the Judaizers.

And to promote fellowship with Jews, James asks the Gentiles to not only enjoy their liberty, but to use it to refrain from a few practices he knows the Jews will find particularly repulsive - *eating meat sacrificed to idols, sexual impurity, eating meat that's strangled, and drinking blood*. Later, Paul frees the Gentile believers from these last prohibitions. The only one that still stands is the call for sexual purity.

Devotion Box - A Rift Among The Righteous

Acts 15 closes with Paul and Barnabas planning their second mission trip – but they hit a snag. Barnabas insists on taking Mark – but Mark had bailed on the first trip and Paul is reluctant to give him a second chance. The disagreement causes a split.

Barnabas and Mark head one way. Paul and Silas head the other way. You could say, “Mark may’ve been a chicken, but Paul and Barnabas were turkeys.” The incident proves even apostles have problems. Egos, stubbornness, fiery tempers create broken fellowship – yet it’s interesting, God uses their divisiveness to double their efforts. He ends up with two teams of missionaries instead of one. Later, we learn that all four men mend their differences.

Devotion Box - Green Lights And Red Lights

Jesus told us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel – but it’s the Holy Spirit’s job to tell us where in the world to go.

In 16:6 Paul wants to go to Asia – then in verse 17, into Bythinia. In both cases, the Spirit closes the door. God uses green and red lights to guide His people. And when the Spirit closes one door, don’t get discouraged. It means He’s about to open another.

When Paul arrives in Troas he receives a vision from God. A man from Macedonia, across the Aegean Sea, calls for Paul to come over and help. Paul and Silas travel to Philippi – a major landmark in the spread of the Christianity.

The Gospel has now leaped from the Middle East to Europe.

JAILHOUSE ROCK

In Philippi, Paul and Silas are tortured – their backs are beaten into bloody ribbons with Roman rods. They’re tossed in prison. Imagine, hanging from the stocks in a cold, damp prison – pain ricocheting through your body. If I were Paul, I would’ve been discouraged. I’d be indulging in an enormous pity party.

But I’m not Paul. Look at verse 25, “at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” In the midst of searing pain, Paul and Silas praise the Lord. Charles Spurgeon said, “Any fool can sing in the day... Songs in the night come only from God...”

An earthquake rocks the prison – bars swing open – chains drop off. The jailer assumes the jailbirds have flown the coup. He knows he’ll be executed, so why not do the job himself? He’s about to fall on his sword when he hears Paul shout, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.”

The jailer rushes in and asks Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul’s answer is in verse 31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household...” There are people who read this verse and teach household salvation—that the head of the house can act on behalf of his whole family.

But don’t stop reading in verse 31. If that’s the case, why are we told in verse 32, “Then they spoke the Word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house”? Each family member needed to hear, because each person needed to believe. Salvation is a personal decision each individual has to make on their own.

Devotion Box - Right Side Up

In Acts 17:6, the Thessalonians call Paul and Silas, “these who have turned the world upside down...” They were impacting their world! What about you and me? Are we shaking up sinners, and challenging saints?

What they should’ve said was, “These who have turned the world right side up.” The world we live in is already upside down. What the world values is the opposite of what God values. We need to turn the world right side up!

PAUL AMONG THE PHILOSOPHERS

Athens was a spectacular city – culturally, intellectually, and architecturally. But what caught Paul’s attention was the rampant idolatry. Archeologists guess there were 3000 pagan altars in the city. It was said, “In Athens it’s easier to find a god than a man.” I’m sure Paul thought, “How can smart people be so dumb?”

Paul started out sharing the Gospel in the synagogue and the marketplace. Soon some of the philosophers who had come to hear him brought him to the “Aeropagus,” or “Mars Hill,” where the supreme council debated philosophical and religious matters.

Paul mentions an altar he saw dedicated to “THE UNKNOWN GOD.” The philosophers were more agnostics than idolaters. They thought, even if there was a God, how could they know Him? But Paul says, “the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I declare to you...” Paul knows the one true God that they desire to know.

The true God created the world and everything in it – He’s sovereign and self-existent – he expects us to seek Him – He is not far from us. Paul speaks of God’s omnipresence in verse 28. He quotes a Greek philosopher, Epimenides, “for in Him we live and move and have our being...” Paul quotes another philosopher, Aratus, in verse 28. “For we are also His offspring.” He points out, we come from God, and one day we’ll have to answer to Him. This is why God raised Jesus from the dead...to judge the world in righteousness.

But the moment Paul mentioned the resurrection, the party broke up. The Greeks viewed the body as evil – the prison for the soul. Why would it be resurrected? It’s been said, “An agnostic is a person who says he knows nothing about God, and, when you agree with him, he becomes angry.” Paul tried to explain to them the unknown God they sensed existed, but didn’t know. They refused to listen.

In Athens, some of the people scoffed at Paul. Others put him off for another day. A few of the folks believed. It’s interesting, these are the same three ways people react to the Gospel today...

Bible Scan - Acts 13-19

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - Baptism, between morning services, Sunday, March 17th
Men's Raft Trip, Sunday, May 19th—Monday, May 20th
Middle School Retreat, Monday, June 17th - Friday, June 21st
Kid's Camp: 1-2nd grade, Tues, 7/16—Thurs 7/18; 3rd—5th grade, Thurs, 7/18—Sun, 7/21

Next Bible Scan - March 17, 2002 - Acts 21-28

"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." - Acts 17:11

Bible Scan
Memory
Verse

VIVA LAS VEGAS

Paul's next stop was sin city - *viva Las Vegas* - the capitol of carnality - Corinth.

At the heart of the city of Corinth was a temple dedicated to the Greek fertility goddess, Aphrodite. At night, 1000 priestesses flooded the streets and played the prostitute in the name of religion.

Corinth was a perverted place, but it turned out to be fertile ground for the good news of Jesus. Paul stayed and preached in Corinth for 18 months.

Ironically, the wise and mighty Athenians laughed off the Gospel - while the foolish and weak Corinthians accepted it and embraced it. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:26, "you see your calling brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish thing of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty."

HEALING AND HANKIES

Acts 19:11 says Paul's work-cloths, used to wipe away his sweat, were given to the sick and many were healed. Once, Jimi Hendrix' sweat bands were sold for \$7000. I imagine some sucker thought the sweat he absorbed might rub off on his wrists, and help him play the guitar like Jimi. Fat chance! But you wonder, "Isn't this the same kind of superstition going on with Paul's bandanas? I've seen these gimmicks on TBN. Televangelists send out healing hankies for a contribution."

With Paul this was not about *perspiration* or *exploitation* - but *expectation*. There wasn't anything supernatural about Paul's sweat, or his handkerchiefs - but their association with Paul in the people's minds triggered their faith. And God does miracles where there is faith!

THE EMPHASIS AT EPHEBUS

In Acts 19 we catch up with Paul on his third missionary journey ...in progress. He's traveled through Galatia, Asia, and ended up at Ephesus.

Remember, who'd just ministered in Ephesus? *Apollos*. This was the man who knew nothing of the baptism of the Spirit. It's no surprise, his followers are equally ill-informed. The Holy Spirit who lives in them, needs to come upon them.

In verse 2, Paul asks, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answer, "We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Spirit." Paul knows, as a baptized believer, they should've heard of the Holy Spirit. According to Matthew 28:19, when a believer is baptized it should be done "in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." If you're baptized as a believer in Jesus you will have, at the very least, heard of the Holy Spirit.

The Ephesians reveal to Paul they were only baptized into John's baptism. In verse 5, Paul re-baptizes these Ephesians as believers in Jesus - and according to verse 6 when he laid hands on them... "the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied."

Keep in mind, Paul never questioned if they were true believers. He assumes the Spirit is "in" them - but they need the Spirit "upon" them.

It reminds of a New Year's Day at the Tournament of Roses parade. One of the gorgeous floats sputtered and choked out. It was out of gas. But the irony was the float was sponsored by the Standard Oil Company. Its owners had all the gas they needed at their disposal, but had forgotten to fill the tank. This is true of many Christians. We have all the power we need for any challenge we face, but have we filled the tank?

Devotion Box - Cutting Into The Profits Of Sin

Ephesus was home of the idol Diana. Pagan pilgrims flocked to her temple, and took back silver trinkets as souvenirs. This was big business. But the Jesus movement was cutting into profits. Idol makers were idle. Sales were down because salvation was up. A silversmith named Demetrius starts a riot. Oh, that our Christian witness and ministry could cut into the sale of sin - not with pickets and boycotts - but as with Paul, by changing lives with the Gospel.