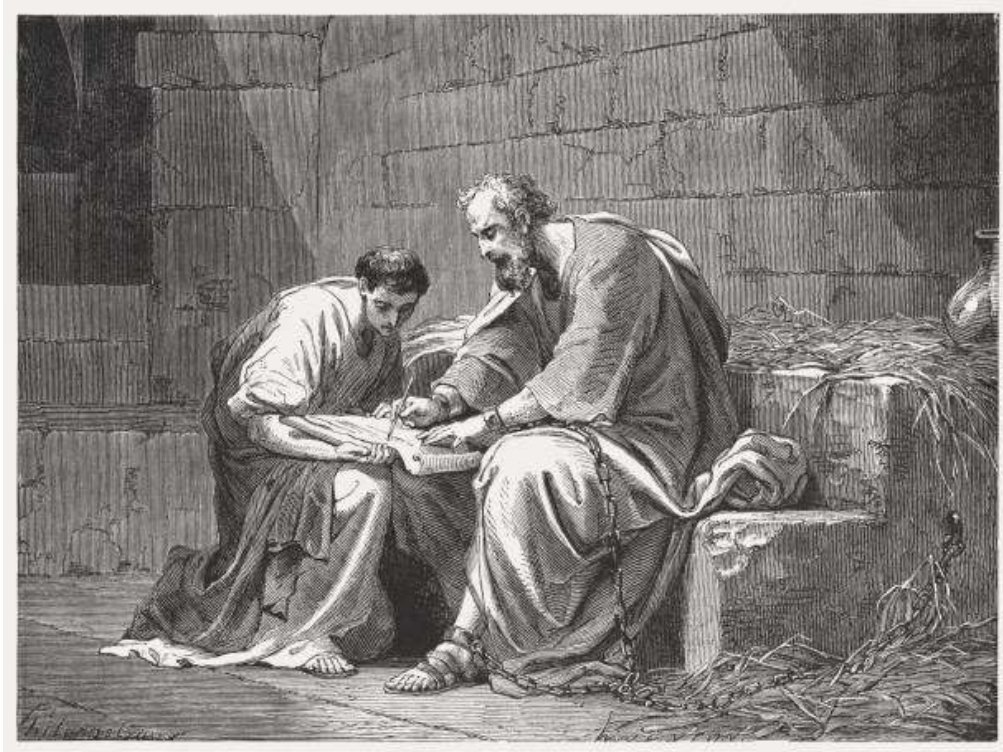


THE APOSTLE PAUL



A study of the person and life of the Apostle Paul can be a most rewarding and humbling experience. I can think of no one in the history of the church, that poured out their lives, for the cause of Christ, as the Apostle Paul did. His dedication and self-sacrifice continues to be an inspiration for Christians everywhere, throughout the ages. In this study we will look at his life and message. Let's begin our study by looking at his background.

Day 1: Paul's Background

Read Acts 22:1-4, and Philippians 3:4-6

From these verses, what were some of Paul's credentials?

Saul was a very religious person. Why did Saul hate Christians so much?

Day 2: Paul's Conversion

As you read Acts 9:1-30, highlight the following:

Saul / Paul and his pronouns

Lord, Jesus

Places and locations

Acts 9:1-30 NIV

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed

around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

5 “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. 6 “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered.

11 The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

13 “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. 20 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. 21 All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?” 22 Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

23 After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, 24 but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. 25 But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

26 When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. 28 So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. 30 When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. 31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

Saul's blindness was real but also symbolic. What do you think he learned about himself and the Lord during his period of blindness?

How was your life different before and after meeting the Lord?

Day 3: Paul's Persecutions

Read 1 Corinthians 4:8-13, and 2 Corinthians 6:3-10

How does Paul portray the life of an apostle?

How do you think you would feel toward God if he allowed you to be homeless, hungry and thirsty, and brutally treated?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Like Paul, we often assume that God's power is best displayed by him removing our weaknesses.

Why does the Lord sometimes refuse to remove our "thorns"?

Prayer

Father God,

You are the author and sustainer of my soul. Help us when we go through trials and persecutions. Lord, I thank You for the strength that You give. You embolden me with courage and cause me to stand upright. I am so grateful for Your presence in my life. I thank You in the name of the Son. Amen.

Day 4: Paul's Teaching

Let's look a selection of Paul's writings. As you read the following, highlight the following:

Mystery / hidden / secret

God / Jesus Christ

Holy Spirit

Understood / revealed

Ephesians 3:8-11

8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord

Colossians 1:24-29

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

I Corinthians 2:7-10

7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

In your own words, what would you say was central to Paul’s message and writings?

What does it mean that Christ in us is the hope of glory? (Col 1:27)

Day 5: Paul's Mission

After praying, spend some time reading over the following verses.

Philippians 3:7-8

“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.”

Colossians 1:28 -29

28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

What would you say was central to Paul's aim and mission for his life?

Paul's total dedication to the service of God following his conversion is inspiring for all Christians. How could his example have meaning in your life?

What do you think your personal role is in God's missionary work?
