

Introduction

1. Last week I taught an introduction to our *Doctrine of Paul* and his conversion experience. We are now ready to study his post conversion activities.

2. Post-Conversion Activities

2.1 Following the conversion experience, Paul's life can be divided into several general periods:

- the relatively silent years, probably extending over ten to 12 years;
- the work at Antioch Syria;



- the missionary journeys;
- the imprisonments.

2.1.1 The silent years: information about this period is scant.

2.1.2 What little is known comes from Acts 9:19-25 (together with the parallels in Acts chapter 22 and chapter 26), Gal 1:15-24 and 2Co 11:32-33.

Acts 9:19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Acts 9:20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

Acts 9:21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

Acts 9:22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

Acts 9:23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

Acts 9:24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

Acts 9:25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

Gal 1:15 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased

Gal 1:16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man,

Gal 1:17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

Gal 1:18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days.

Gal 1:19 I saw none of the other apostles--only James, the Lord's brother.

Gal 1:20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

Gal 1:21 Later I went to Syria and Cilicia.

Gal 1:22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

Gal 1:23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."

Gal 1:24 And they praised God because of me.

2Co 11:32 In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me.

2Co 11:33 But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

2.1.3 An outline of the period would include at least the following points:

- Briefly preaching in Damascus.

Acts 9:20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

Acts 9:21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

Acts 9:22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

- Journey into Arabia,

Gal 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

- Return to Damascus and the flight to Jerusalem,

Gal 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

2Co 11:32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

2Co 11:33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

Acts 9:25 Then the disciples took him by night and let him down by the wall in a basket.

Acts 9:26 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.

- The first meeting with Peter and James in Jerusalem,

Gal 1:18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days.

Gal 1:19 I saw none of the other apostles--only James, the Lord's brother.

- Return to Syria and Cilicia (Tarsus).

Gal 1:21 Later I went to Syria and Cilicia.

Gal 1:22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

Gal 1:23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."

Gal 1:24 And they praised God because of me.

Acts 9:30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

2.1.4 The scant nature of the data has left many questions unanswered.

2.1.5 Where was "Arabia?" And, what did he do there?

2.1.6 Why was Aretas the ethnarch desirous of taking Paul prisoner in Damascus?

2.1.7 What was the purpose and nature of his visit with Peter and James?

2.1.8 Why did he drop out of sight for so many years before beginning his public ministry?

2.1.9 And, further, why was he continually on the run?

2.2 One is impressed with the energy of the man. He was indeed zealous (literally, "bubbling" or "boiling") in whatever he undertook.

2.3 For this reason alone one might suppose that the silent years were not years of inactivity or repose.

2.4 What we do know of Paul would certainly indicate there were no years of inactivity.

2.4.1 He began "immediately" to preach Jesus as the Son of God.

Acts 9:19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Acts 9:20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

2.4.2 He went "immediately" into Arabia; (Gal 1:16-17)

2.4.3 His preaching in Jerusalem aroused the fury of some (Acts 9:28-29); and reports filtered back to Judea that in Syria and Cilicia he "is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." (Gal 1:21-23)

2.5 The work at Antioch: While Paul was in Tarsus (and other places in Syria and Cilicia); the gospel had been spread from Jerusalem to Syrian Antioch.

Acts 11:19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews.

Acts 11:20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.

Acts 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

2.5.1 Barnabas had been sent to see what had happened there and was instrumental in enlarging the number of converts.

2.5.2 But when the work grew too large for him, "he left for Tarsus to look for Saul."

Acts 11:25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,

2.5.3 Together the two worked in Antioch "for an entire year."

2.5.4 This was a crucial point in the life of Paul, for it may well have been here that his vision of taking the gospel to the Gentile world crystallized.

2.5.5 At any rate, it was while he was active in Antioch that "the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

2.6 Thus were launched the missionary travels of the apostle Paul. The missionary journeys covered a period of about ten years.

3. The Missionary Journeys

3.1 It was while he was active in Antioch that "the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" (Acts 13:2)

3.2 Thus were launched the missionary travels of the apostle Paul. The missionary journeys covered a period of about ten years.

3.3 Paul's work was chiefly in four provinces of the Roman Empire: Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia.

3.4 In each of these he concentrated on the key cities, the centers of population.

3.4.1 Once his work was begun, he reached out into the surrounding countryside, usually by employing the native converts.

Col 1:7 You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,

Col 1:8 and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

3.5 Paul's methods of founding and establishing churches assumed a fairly regular pattern, at least where conditions permitted.

3.5.1 A summary is stated in Acts 14:21-23:

Acts 14:21 They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch,

Acts 14:22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

- preaching the gospel (evangelism);
- strengthening and encouraging believers (edification);
- appointing elders in every church organization.

3.6 The first journey was made by Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 13:1-14:28)



3.6.1 Like each of Paul's journeys, the point of departure was Antioch (in Syria), a place which had assumed the role of the center of Christianity.

3.6.2 Sailing from the port of Seleucia, Paul and his companions landed on Cyprus at its eastern end. From Salamis they traversed the entire length of the island, preaching first in the synagogues of the Jews.

3.6.3 Indeed, this was their point of contacts with Gentiles, some of whom were adherents to Judaism, others merely curious onlookers.

3.6.4 The first meeting with Roman officialdom occurred in Paphos, the capital city and residence of the proconsul Sergius Paulus.

3.6.5 Despite opposition from his Jewish magician, the proconsul believed the message of Paul.

Acts 13:6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus ...

Acts 13:8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

Acts 13:9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him

Acts 13:10 And said, O full of all subtlety 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?

Acts 13:11 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.

Acts 13:12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

3.6.6 Putting out to sea, the party next came to Perga in Pamphylia.

3.6.7 Up to this point Barnabas had been the leader, Paul the main speaker, and John Mark (the cousin of Barnabas) the apostles' helper. But leaving Cyprus Paul assumed leadership, whereupon Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem.

Acts 13:13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

3.6.8 The timing seems hardly accidental. Was he jealous? or offended? or just homesick?

3.6.9 Moving northward, the pair entered the province of Galatia, and their visits extended to four cities: Antioch (in Pisidia), Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. The events may be briefly summarized:

3.6.10 In Antioch, Paul preached in the synagogue, discoursing on the history of Israel and the fulfillment of God's promises in the coming of the Savior, Jesus.

3.6.11 His closing emphasis was upon forgiveness of sins and justification through faith in Christ, a note sounded again later on in the Epistle to the Galatians.

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