

ACTS OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

By Theresa Lormand

The purpose of this article is to understand by way of the bible the gospel that Paul preached; that is, the gospel of Jesus and the Resurrection. As soon as the Lord stopped him on the road to Damascus, his purpose was clear: “...to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” Ac 9:15 (KJV)

Introduction

I had always understood that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. He called himself that in many places of the bible. But if he was the apostle to the Gentiles, why did he go to the Jews first? Did he start out preaching the gospel of the kingdom and then at some point switch over to the gospel of the grace of God? If that was the case, what did he preach to each group? All through his letters, it seems that some parts are written to one group and some to another, all with different messages. It all sounds rather confusing!

But Paul himself said, “*But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*” Gal 1:8-9 (NIV). It seems by this passage that Paul only preached one gospel.

In this article, we will go through the Acts of Paul, from the day he was converted to the end of the book of Acts. I hope to learn exactly what Paul was preaching and to whom he was preaching to, who believed it and who denied it. I am putting forth the way I understand it, but please don't take my word for it. The bible is the ultimate word of God. Be like the noble Bereans, “...for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” Acts 17:11 (NIV)

In about 34AD¹, there was a devout Jew named Saul who followed Moses' law to the letter. He was born in a Roman city, so not only was he Jewish, but he was also a Roman citizen². He was raised in the strictest sect of the Jewish faith, as a Pharisee.³ All through the gospels we see that the Pharisees often denounced Christ⁴, and Saul was very proud to do his best to wipe out this new cult.

One day, Saul was on his way to Damascus to arrest the Jews who followed Jesus⁵. While on the road, Jesus stopped Saul in his tracks. He blinded Saul and told him to continue on to Damascus, where he would be told what to do.⁶ After being blind for three days, not eating or drinking anything, Ananias, sent by God, came to the house where Saul was staying and laid his hands on him. Immediately his eyesight was restored, and after he was baptized he ate some food to regain his strength. Saul immediately went into Arabia and received, directly from God, the message that he would be bringing to the Gentiles⁷. He then returned to Damascus and began preaching the word of God, to the Jew first and then to the Gentile.⁸

The Conversion and Earliest Journeys of Saul (Paul) of Tarsus (c AD34-45)

Ac 9:15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel."⁹

God didn't say that Saul would carry different messages to each of these groups...He said Saul was chosen to "carry His name" to the Gentiles, kings and the people of Israel.¹⁰ According to his letter to the Galatians, after he received his sight and was baptized, he ate a bit and regained his strength, and as we saw before, he went down to Arabia to receive what God would teach him before returning to Damascus.

Once he returned to Damascus, he began preaching Jesus in all the synagogues.¹¹ He preached that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah, or Chosen One. The Jews became upset because they recognized Saul as the one who persecuted those who called upon the name of Jesus.¹² After a number of days, the Jews decided that they would kill him. Saul found out, however, and one night his followers snuck him out of the city by lowering him in a basket through an opening in the wall so that he could flee to Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, with the help of Barnabas, he convinced the Twelve¹³ that he was sent from God and preached boldly the name of the Lord Jesus throughout Jerusalem.¹⁴ When he tried to debate

¹ All dates in this article, unless otherwise noted, were obtained from New Testament Story Outlined In Maps, Part 2 of 3 – The Story of the Early Church. <http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm>

² Acts 22:3

³ Php 3:4-6

⁴ Matt 12:14; 16:6; 22:15; 23:13-15; Mark 3:6; 8:11; Luke 6:7; 11:53; 16:14; John 9:16

⁵ Acts 22:4-5

⁶ Acts 9:3-6; 22:6-10

⁷ Gal 1:15-17

⁸ Acts 13:46

⁹ All scriptural passages are from the New International Version (NIV) of the bible unless otherwise noted.

¹⁰ Acts 9:15

¹¹ Acts 9:20, 22

¹² Acts 9:21

¹³ The twelve Apostles

¹⁴ Acts 9:27

with the Greek speaking Jews, they wanted nothing of it and tried to kill him. When the brothers found out about this, they sent him to Tarsus.

Ac 9:31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

These places had peace because Saul was sent back to Tarsus and they could once again have peace. Saul must have been preaching something other than what Peter and the Apostles were preaching, otherwise why would anyone want to kill him? Notice that these people were encouraged by the Holy Spirit and grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord. It is apparent that these are Jewish believers whose hope was to enter the millennial kingdom.

After some time, Saul started out on his missionary journeys. During his first journey, his name was changed to Paul. He had three missionary journeys, and in each one he preached first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. His messages always started out with showing the people, through the scriptures (Old Testament), about Jesus and the Resurrection.¹⁵

*1Co 2:2-5 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except **Jesus Christ and him crucified**. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.*

At some point later on, he explained to the new believers the mystery, as we shall see later on.¹⁶ Also take note of what he told the Romans:

Ro 15:20-21 It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."

This went on at every city Paul preached at, because first he had to give the message to the Jews.¹⁷

Paul's First Missionary Journey (c AD46-48)

Paul departed on his first missionary journey between 45 and 50 A.D. (probably 47-48) and it lasted nearly two years¹⁸. He traveled approximately 1,250 miles.

After Saul arrived at Tarsus, he preached in Cilicia and Syria.¹⁹ He remained in that area until Barnabas went there to bring him to Antioch. There they preached to the church, teaching a great number of people. These believers that Paul and Barnabas taught were the first ones who were

¹⁵ Acts 13:15-48

¹⁶ Acts 13:44-46; Rom 12:5; 1Cor 6:15; 12:12; Gal 3:25-28; Eph 1:15-23; 2:5-9; 4:4; Col 1:24-27; 3:1-3 (some of these scriptural passages are selected from Things That Differ by C.R. Stam - Basic Differences Between Prophecy and the Mystery, pages 64-66)

¹⁷ Deut 32:21; Acts 13:46; 18:6; 22:18,21; 26:17-18; 28:28; Rom 1:16; 2:9; 10:19; 11:11

¹⁸ According to www.bible-history.com

¹⁹ Ga 1:21

called Christians.²⁰ During this period, there was a severe famine, and the Christians donated money via Paul and Barnabas to their Jewish brothers in Jerusalem. After delivering the money, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch. From there they were sent to Seleucia and then sailed to Cyprus. In the town of Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues with John (whose surname is Mark) as their helper. When they made their way to the other side of the island to Paphos, they came across Bar-Jesus the false prophet. This is one of the first major examples where the Jew is blinded so the Gentile could see.²¹ It is also at this time that Saul's name is changed to Paul.

Paul, Barnabas and John then leave the island and go to Perga where John leaves them to go back to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas continue to the Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath, they went into the synagogue, and after the reading from the Law and the Prophets, Paul addressed the Jews and the Gentiles who feared God. He begins by going through the Jewish history and shows them that Jesus is the Messiah, He was crucified and raised from the dead.²² He ends his sermon with a warning:

Ac 13:40-41 Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you."

Here are two passages²³ that Paul is probably referring to:

*Isa 29:10-15 The LORD has brought over you a deep sleep: He has sealed your eyes (the prophets); he has covered your heads (the seers). For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read, and say to him, "Read this, please," he will answer, "I can't; it is sealed." Or if you give the scroll to someone who cannot read, and say, "Read this, please," he will answer, "I don't know how to read." The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men. **Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish.**" Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, "Who sees us? Who will know?"*

*Hab 1:2-11 How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted. **"Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own. They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor. Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like a vulture***

²⁰ Acts 11:25-26

²¹ Acts 13:6-12

²² Acts 13:17-41

²³ from PowerBible cross-references for Acts 13:40

swooping to devour; they all come bent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand. They deride kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; they build earthen ramps and capture them. Then they sweep past like the wind and go on—guilty men, whose own strength is their god.”

The Gentiles asked for this same sermon on the next Sabbath, wherein the Jews became extremely jealous. Paul then told them that it was necessary to preach first to the Jews, but now that they rejected it, Paul will turn to the Gentiles.

The same thing happened when Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium. They preached boldly and miraculous gifts were poured out.²⁴ The city was divided; some siding with the Jews and others with the apostles (Paul and Barnabas). The Jews then plotted to stone the apostles, so they fled to Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia. In Lystra they healed a man and the whole town wanted to sacrifice and worship them, which angered Paul. He told them that God once turned away from the Gentiles to let them do what they wanted but now God has shown kindness on them. Of course the Jews came over from Iconium and got the people on their side, and they all stoned Paul. They dragged him out of the city and left him for dead. When his disciples gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. He and Barnabas left for Derbe the next day.²⁵

They continued to preach in Derbe, winning a large number of disciples. After that, they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, encouraging and strengthening the disciples to remain true to the faith. Paul also told them that in being true to the faith, they will suffer tribulation²⁶. After he appointed elders for each of the churches, they went to Perga and Attalia preaching the word. Finally, they sailed back to Antioch (in Syria). They gathered the church together and told them about everything that God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.²⁷

They stayed in Antioch for quite a while. While there, some men came down from Judea and were trying to teach the brothers that they should be circumcised according to the customs of Moses to be saved.²⁸ Paul and Barnabas argued with them. They took some believers and went to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about it, who, after much discussion, sent them back²⁹ with instructions only to abstain from sexual immorality and from foods offered to idols including blood and meat from strangled animals (which still contained blood).³⁰

In Gal 2:1-9, Paul tells about this particular trip to the Galatians and we see that the gospel he preaches has apparently always been different from that of Peter's, because why would Paul go to the leaders in private if he were preaching the same thing? Some may say that he went to get Peter's approval, but that would still make it evident that he was preaching something different, because of course Peter would surely approve if Paul preached baptism and repentance as well as allowing the Gentiles to become circumcised.

²⁴ These miraculous gifts poured out on the early church were a sign for the Jews to show them that the message preached to the Gentiles was from God. Mt 12:38; 16:1; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16; Jn 4:48; 1Co 1:22

²⁵ Acts 14:1-20

²⁶ See also: Rom 5:3; 8:17; Phil 1:29-30; 1Th 3:2-4; 2Ti 2:11-12; 3:10-13

²⁷ Acts 14:27

²⁸ Peter never stopped teaching circumcision in his message to the Jews. Jesus himself considered it part of what the Jews had to do. John 7:22,23

²⁹ Gal 2:9

³⁰ Acts 15:1-35

Later on, Peter came to Antioch, and Paul chewed him out for the way he was acting.

Ga 2:15-16 “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Paul had to have been teaching the gospel of grace and not the gospel of the kingdom. It is certain that both gospels begin with Christ, because He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. But Peter taught an earthly hope to the Jews whereas Paul taught a heavenly hope for the Body, were there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free.³¹ Ephesians 2:14-16 tells us that Christ abolished the law at the cross so that we might be reconciled to God in one body.³²

Paul’s Second Missionary Journey (c AD49-52)

The date of their departure was about 51 A.D. and it lasted nearly three years³³.

Paul and Barnabas split up at this point, and Paul (with Silas) heads off to strengthen the churches he started earlier. When he gets to Lystra, he finds Timothy who is half Jew, half Greek. Paul wanted to bring Timothy with him, but because his father was Greek and there were so many Jews in the area, Paul circumcised him.³⁴ As they went from town to town, they delivered the decrees that the apostles and elders gave. The churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

They traveled on through Phrygia and **Galatia**³⁵, but the Holy Spirit prevented them from speaking God’s message in Asia. They tried to enter Bithynia on the border of Mysia, but the Spirit would not allow them there either so they continued on to Troas where Paul had a vision. A Macedonian man was begging him to come to Macedonia and help them.

Paul at once headed out to sea, believing that God called them to preach the gospel there. They ended up in **Philippi** and stayed there for several days. There they met Lydia, who believed and was baptized³⁶. While they were there, a girl with a spirit of clairvoyance followed them around wherever they went, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved!” (This was a slave girl who made a lot of money for her master for telling the future). She kept this up for several days until Paul had had enough. He commanded the spirit to come out of her in the name of Jesus Christ, and the spirit left her. When the owners of the girl realized that their money maker was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and brought them before the magistrates, accusing them that they are causing an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for the Romans to accept or practice. The whole crowd joined in, and it was

³¹ Gal 3:27-28; 1Cor 12:13; Eph 2:14-16; Col 3:11

³² 2Cor 5:17; Ga 6:15; Eph 4:24

³³ According to www.bible-history.com

³⁴ Acts 16:1-3 (This was done as a sign for the Jews. See also footnote #24)

³⁵ Cities in **bold** type denote cities or provinces that Paul wrote letters to.

³⁶ Baptism and the spiritual gifts were required in the early church as a sign to the Jews that what they received was from God. See also footnote #24.

ordered that Paul and Silas were to be stripped and beaten. They were then thrown into prison and guarded carefully.³⁷

About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God with the other prisoners listening. A giant earthquake shook the doors open and all the prisoners chains loosened. The jailer woke and thought everyone escaped and would have killed himself, but Paul stopped him and proved they were all still there. The jailer was convicted in his heart and asked what he needed to do to be saved. Paul told him to believe in the Lord Jesus and he would be saved, with his household. After tending to their wounds, the jailer and his family were all baptized.³⁸

In the morning they were released, and the jailer sent them off in peace, but Paul refused. Proclaiming his Roman citizenship, he told the soldiers that they were wrongly beaten and thrown into prison without a trial. He demanded an escort out of the city rather than to be sent away quietly. When the officers found out that Paul was Roman, they were worried. They came personally and apologized to them, and asked them to leave the city. So after Paul and Silas went to Lydia's house and encouraged the brothers, they left.³⁹

They traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to **Thessalonica**, entering first the synagogue. There, Paul preached that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and tells the people that Jesus is the Christ. Some Jews were persuaded, as were a large number of Gentiles (men and women). But as usual, the rest of the Jews were jealous and started a riot. They couldn't find Paul and Silas, so they harassed Jason and a few other Christians for harboring them. When it was night, the brethren sent Paul and Silas away to Berea.⁴⁰

They first preached at the synagogue in Berea. Because the Jews there were nobler than Jews of other cities, they searched the scriptures to see if Paul was telling the truth. Because of this, many believed, as well as a good number of Gentile men and women. The Thessalonian Jews heard about it, and went to Berea, stirring up the crowds. The brethren then sent Paul to Athens, but Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea with instructions to join Paul as soon as possible. While Paul waited for Silas and Timothy in Athens, he was greatly distressed because of the idolatry that was so rampant. He proclaimed the "Unknown God" who they unknowingly worshipped to the people, preaching from the scriptures.⁴¹

Paul then traveled to **Corinth**, where he met Aquila and Priscilla and stayed and worked with them (they were tentmakers like Paul)⁴². They were ordered to leave **Rome** (as were all the Jews).

In Corinth he went first to the synagogue, as was his custom. When Timothy and Silas finally arrived, Paul was totally involved in preaching to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. Of course the Jews argued and blasphemed, and Paul gave up on them, stating he would from then on go only to the Gentiles.⁴³

³⁷ Acts 16:16-24

³⁸ Acts 25-34

³⁹ Acts 16:35-40

⁴⁰ Acts 17:1-10

⁴¹ Acts 17:10-34

⁴² Acts 18:1-3

⁴³ Acts 18:6

He left the synagogue and went to Justus' house next door. It is mentioned that Crispus, who ruled the synagogue, and his entire household believed in the Lord and many Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized. The Lord came to Paul in a vision and told him to keep preaching, and Paul did, for a year and a half.⁴⁴

Finally Paul sailed for Syria with Priscilla and Aquila, cutting off his hair because of a vow, and went to **Ephesus** (where Priscilla and Aquila remained). Paul went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews, and when they asked him to stay he declined, but promised that he would come back if it was God's will. He then sailed to Caesarea, paid a visit to the church in Jerusalem, and then went down to Antioch, where he spent some time before going off on his third missionary journey.⁴⁵

Paul's Third Missionary Journey (c AD53-58)

On his third journey, Paul headed back to Ephesus via Galatia and Phrygia. There he found about twelve disciples who did not receive the Holy Spirit. They told Paul that they hadn't heard that there was a Holy Spirit. Paul asked them what baptism they received and they said John's baptism. Paul explains that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance and that he told the people to believe in the one coming after him, which was Jesus. When the people heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.⁴⁶ After telling this to the twelve believers, Paul then laid his hands on them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and prophesying.⁴⁷

He spoke in the synagogues for about three months, arguing and persuading the kingdom of God⁴⁸, but they were obstinate and spoke evil against it, so Paul took the disciples and continued daily discussions in Tyrannus' lecture hall. He continued this for about 2 years,⁴⁹ and both Jews and Greeks who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus. There were many miracles done by Paul, even handkerchiefs and aprons that touched him were brought to the sick to heal them.⁵⁰

Paul then decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia, and wanted to visit Rome also. So he sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia while he stayed in Asia a little longer. But Demetrius, a local idol maker, started a ruckus because Paul was ruining his business. Soon, the whole city was in an uproar. They caught Gaius and Aristarchus, who traveled with Paul from Macedonia, and they all rushed as one into the amphitheater. Paul tried to appear before the crowd but the disciples wouldn't let him. The crowd was confused, shouting different things, with some not even knowing why they were there. The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, but when the crowd found out he was a Jew they shouted "Great is Diana of the

⁴⁴ It is around this time that he wrote two letters to the Thessalonians (c AD52).

⁴⁵ Acts 18:18-23

⁴⁶ The Greek does not use punctuation marks. Some translations will put quotation marks at the end of Acts 19:4, but then that would suggest that the Twelve would have been re-baptized as well as all the followers of Christ who were baptized with John's baptism. I would think it more accurate that the quotations belong at the end of Acts 19:5, and after Paul said all this, he then laid his hands on these believers and they received the Holy Spirit. (gleaned from Dave Rodabaugh's tapes on Bible Study posted on www.savedandsecure.com/listen.htm)

⁴⁷ Acts 19:1-7

⁴⁸ The kingdom of God includes everything in God's kingdom. It is not limited to the kingdom that will be set up on earth during the millennial reign of Christ.

⁴⁹ It is thought that Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth was written while Paul was in Ephesus (c AD56-57). See Acts 19:10; 1Co 16:5, 7-8, 19.

⁵⁰ Acts 19:8-12 (See also footnote #24)

Ephesians!” for about two hours straight. Finally the city clerk quieted the crowd, explaining the legalities of the situation, and then dismissed them.⁵¹ After the uproar had ceased, Paul encouraged the disciples and said goodbye, heading to Macedonia.⁵²

He made his way to Greece, where he stayed for three months.⁵³ He was about to sail to Syria, but the Jews were plotting, so instead he went back through Macedonia. Sopater, who was the son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia all accompanied Paul and went on ahead to Troas and waited for Paul there. Paul sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread and five days later joined the rest in Troas, where they stayed for a week.

On the first day of the week, the people gathered together. Paul talked to them all night because he was leaving the next day. Eutychus was listening, but fell asleep while sitting on the third story window and fell to the ground, dying from the fall. Paul went down and threw himself on the young man, wrapping his arms around him. “Don’t worry, he’s alive!” he said, and they went back upstairs. The young man ate, they talked until daylight, and Paul left, walking to Assos and the people were very happy that Eutychus was still alive.⁵⁴

Luke sailed to Assos and picked up Paul, and they went past Ephesus (he didn’t want to spend much time in Asia) to Miletus, stopping at Mitylene, Kios and Samos. From there he sent for the Elders of the church in Ephesus. When they arrived, Paul told them they wouldn’t see him again and instructed them to keep watch over the flock.⁵⁵ He committed them to God, reminded them that he proclaimed to them the whole will of God and never coveted their property and riches, working for himself and his companions. He prayed with them and they were very grieved, and then they accompanied him to the ship.⁵⁶

Paul and his group then sailed to Tyre, stopping at or passing several cities. There they stayed with the disciples for seven days. Through the Spirit, the disciples urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem, which was not the first warning Paul had received.⁵⁷ After prayers and good-byes, they continued their journey. They stayed a day with the brothers in Ptolemais, and then went to Caesarea where they stayed with Philip the evangelist who had four virgin daughters who prophesied. They were there for several days when Agabus came down from Judea, prophesying that Paul would become a prisoner in Jerusalem. Paul tells the group that he is ready to be bound as well as to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus; the Lord’s will be done.⁵⁸

In Jerusalem, they were received warmly by the brethren. When they went before James and the elders, Paul reported what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. They praised God. They then told Paul about how many thousands of Jews, who were zealous for the law, believed, and these Jews have been informed that Paul was teaching the Jews who live among

⁵¹ Acts 19:21-41

⁵² Paul Probably wrote his second letter to the Corinthians before going to Macedonia (c AD57). *2Co 2:13 I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-by to them and went on to Macedonia.*

⁵³ It is believed that Paul wrote to Rome while in Corinth toward the end of his third journey, around AD57 or 58. Compare Acts 20:1-22 with Romans 15:25-28

⁵⁴ Acts 20:2-13

⁵⁵ Acts 20:28

⁵⁶ Acts 20:18-38

⁵⁷ Acts 20:23

⁵⁸ Acts 21:4-14

the Gentiles to turn away from Moses and their customs.⁵⁹ The elders were worried about what to do because the Jews will find out that Paul is now in the city.⁶⁰

They suggested that Paul would take four men who have made a vow (of the Nazarenes) and join in their purification rites so that everyone will know there is no truth in the reports and that Paul was indeed living in obedience to the law.⁶¹ They also told Paul that they wrote to the Gentile believers, telling them to abstain from food sacrificed to idols (from blood and strangled meat) and from sexual immorality.⁶² Paul took the four and did the purification ceremony with them.⁶³ When the 7 days were almost finished, some Jews from Asia recognized Paul and stirred up the crowd with accusations against him. They began beating him, and then soldiers took him into custody. Paul let them know that he was a Jew and asked to address the crowd where he gave his defense and told them about his conversion.⁶⁴

When Paul told them that God would send him to the Gentiles, the crowd began to riot again. The soldiers took him into the barracks and were going to flog him to find out the truth, but then Paul told them he was a Roman citizen. He explained his history and that he was a Pharisee. There was a violent dispute, and Paul was taken away. The next night the Lord stood near Paul and told him that he was to testify about the Lord in Rome.⁶⁵

In the meantime, 40 Jews made a vow to kill Paul, and when the commander found out about it, he sent Paul with a letter to Governor Felix explaining the situation.⁶⁶ Paul pleaded his case to Felix, who told him that when Lysias the commander comes he would send for him. Several days later, Felix sent for Paul, and he and his wife listened to Paul as he spoke about faith in Jesus Christ. When Paul spoke about righteousness, self-control and the judgement to come, Felix became afraid and sent Paul away, telling him that he would be sent for at the governor's convenience. Every time Felix sent for Paul, he was hoping for a bribe, so he left Paul in prison, sending for him often to talk with him.⁶⁷ After two years, Festus replaced Felix as governor, but Felix left Paul in prison because he wanted to do the Jews a favor.

Three days after Festus arrived in the province, he went to Jerusalem. The chief priests and Jewish leaders once again presented charges against Paul. As a favor, they asked Festus to transfer Paul back to Jerusalem. Festus told them that Paul was held in Caesarea where he would soon be going. So he brought some of the Jewish leaders and went back to Caesarea where Paul was in prison and once more Paul had to give his defense. Festus tried to talk Paul into going to Jerusalem, but Paul appealed to Caesar. There was nothing else Festus could do, so he sent him to Caesar. In the meantime, King Agrippa came and Festus told him about Paul and everything that has happened thus far. Agrippa told Festus he wanted to hear Paul, so the next day Paul was brought before Agrippa.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ These are apparently followers of Peter's teachings, members of the kingdom of heaven, who still follow Jewish customs that Paul denounces for the body of Christ. It is this group that God sets aside in temporary partial blindness. Rom 11:25

⁶⁰ Acts 21:15-22

⁶¹ Acts 16:3; 18:18; 1Cor 9:20

⁶² Acts 15:20,29; 21:25

⁶³ Num 6:1-21

⁶⁴ Acts 21:27-22:21

⁶⁵ Acts 22:22-23:11

⁶⁶ Acts 23:12-35

⁶⁷ Acts chapter 24

⁶⁸ Acts chapter 25

Paul tells the king about everything that has happened to him and what he had been doing, preaching from the scriptures, almost persuading the king himself to become a Christian⁶⁹ (or, in other translations, the king didn't give him enough time to persuade him). In the middle of Paul's defense, Festus interrupted him and called him insane⁷⁰. Paul assures him that everything he said was true, and that he didn't do anything in secret. When he was finished, the king left the room and told Festus that Paul didn't do anything deserving death or imprisonment. He said that Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar⁷¹.

So Paul, along with some other prisoners, was handed over to a centurion named Julius and they set sail for Italy⁷². The next day they landed at Sidon where Paul, because of the kindness of Julius, was allowed to go to his friends so they could take care of him⁷³. From there they set sail again, but the wind was against them, and eventually landed in Lycia where they boarded a different ship. Because of the wind, the voyage took longer than expected, and by the time they reached Fair Havens, near Lasea, the weather was turning dangerous⁷⁴.

Paul could foresee a disastrous end to ship and cargo as well as their lives and told this to the centurion, but he listened to the ship's pilot instead. They all decided that the harbor was not a great place to winter in and wanted to sail on to Phoenix, a harbor in Crete, and winter there. A gentle south wind began to blow and encouraged them, so they set sail for Crete⁷⁵. It wasn't long, however, when the gentle winds turned hurricane force and drove the ship along, out of control. They lowered the anchor to help prevent them from running aground on the sandbars. After a day of being battered by the storm, they started tossing the cargo overboard, and the day after that they threw over the ship's tackle. After several more days of this, they finally gave up all hope of being saved⁷⁶.

They had by now gone a long time without food, and Paul stood before them and told them they should have taken his advice. He then encouraged them to not lose hope because an angel of the God that he serves stood beside him the night before and told him not to be afraid. Paul must stand before Caesar, and God has graciously given him all the lives of the men who sailed with him. However, they will have to run aground⁷⁷.

Two weeks after the storm began, the ship was approaching land. They were afraid they would be dashed against the rocks and wanted to escape from the ship in the lifeboat. Paul warned them that if they left the ship they would die, so they cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it fall away. Just before dawn, Paul urged them to eat because they had gone without food for so long as they stressed about the storm. He promised them that they would all live and that they needed some nourishment to survive. He then took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of all of

⁶⁹ Acts 26:1-23

⁷⁰ Acts 26:24

⁷¹ Acts 26: 30-32

⁷² Acts 27:1-2

⁷³ Acts 27:3

⁷⁴ Acts 27:4-9

⁷⁵ Acts 27:10-13

⁷⁶ Acts 27:14-20

⁷⁷ Acts 27:21-26

them, broke it and began to eat. The men were encouraged and everyone ate as much as they wanted. When they were finished, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea⁷⁸.

When daylight came, they saw a bay with a sandy beach. They decided to run the ship aground if they could. They cut the anchors, untied the ropes that held the rudders, hoisted the foresail to the wind, and made for the beach. It ran aground on a sandbar where the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding surf. The soldiers planned to kill all the prisoners to prevent them from swimming away and escaping, but the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept the soldiers from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard and get to land. The rest were to use the pieces of wood from the ship to help them get to land. In this way, they all reached land safely⁷⁹.

They eventually found out that the island was called Malta. The islanders were very kind to them. They built a fire to welcome them because it was cold and rainy. When Paul was adding brushwood to the fire, a viper latched onto his hand. The islanders saw what happened and assumed this man was a murderer, escaped from the sea but justice did not allow him to live. But Paul simply shook the snake off into the fire; the poison did not affect him at all. The people were waiting for him to have some kind of reaction to the poison, but when nothing happened to him they thought he was a god⁸⁰.

For three months they stayed on the island, and Paul prayed and healed all the sick that lived there including the father of the chief official of the island⁸¹. The people furnished a ship and supplies for them to finish their journey, and they headed for Rome, stopping at Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli⁸². When they reached Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself with a guard. He then gathered the leaders of the Jews together and told them of his ordeal⁸³. They told Paul that they haven't received any letters, good or bad, concerning Paul, but they wanted to hear what he was preaching. So they planned a day to meet Paul and a large group of people gathered to hear him. From morning until evening, Paul told them about the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. Some believed and others did not⁸⁴. In his final statement, he quoted Isaiah:

*Ac 28:26-28 "Go to this people and say, 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.' For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them." Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!*⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Acts 27:27-38

⁷⁹ Acts 27:39-44

⁸⁰ Acts 28:1-6

⁸¹ Acts 28:7-9

⁸² Acts 28:10-14

⁸³ Acts 28:15-20

⁸⁴ Acts 28:21-24

⁸⁵ Isa 6:9-10 He said, "Go and tell this people: "'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

After hearing this, the people disagreed among themselves and left. Paul stayed in his own rented house for two years, receiving all that came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching them everything concerning the Lord Jesus Christ⁸⁶.

Up until his stay in Rome, Paul had already written letters to the Thessalonians, the Corinthians and the Romans, as noted in the footnotes. He has also written to the Galatians sometime during his travels; however there is debate on when he actually wrote to them. Paul established churches in South Galatia around AD46-48 and the churches in North Galatia around AD49-53. If the letter was written to the southern churches, it would probably have been written around AD49 when he was on his way to the Council of Jerusalem. If the letter was written to the northern churches, then it would probably have been written around AD56 or 57 during his third journey. While he was in Rome he wrote to the Colossians; to his brother in Christ, Philemon; to the Ephesians; and to the Philippians. He writes his first letter to Timothy as well as his letter to Titus around AD66, then a few years later writes his second letter to Timothy.

As you read through the letters that Paul wrote throughout his missionary journeys, keep in mind the one thing he preached, and who he was writing the letters to. In each town he preached that Jesus Christ was crucified and rose again to sit on the throne as Lord. Paul showed the people how this fulfilled prophecy from the Old Testament. Those who didn't believe him did everything they could to stop him. Those who did believe continued to gather themselves together, and it was to these people that Paul wrote his letters to further their education. No longer were these believers called Jews and Gentiles, but believers in Christ and as you read the letters, you will find that they are indeed the body of Christ⁸⁷.

If you are a believer⁸⁸ then these letters will give you very good instructions on walking after the Spirit. Remember, however, that the earlier churches were given sign gifts to prove to the Jews that what they had was from the Lord. We don't need these gifts today⁸⁹, and should be wary of so-called "healing preachers" and other miraculous signs⁹⁰. May the Lord Jesus bless you as you study His holy word.

Apparent order of Paul's letters:

Galatians may either be the first, or close second depending on when it was written (either AD46-48 or AD49-53);

1st and 2nd Thessalonians (c AD52);

1st and 2nd Corinthians (c AD56-57);

Romans (c AD57 or 58);

Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians (c AD61-63);

1st Timothy (c AD66);

Titus (c AD66);

2nd Timothy (c AD67).

⁸⁶ Acts 28:30-31

⁸⁷ Rom 12:4-5; 1Co 6:12-20; 10:17; 12:20,27; Eph 4:12,15-16,25; 5:30; Col 3:15

⁸⁸ Rom 10:9-10

⁸⁹ 1Co 13:8-13

⁹⁰ 2Thes 2:9-10