

## The Life and Theology of Paul: Apostle and Missionary

### Review

- “Saul” entered the story of Acts during Stephen’s martyrdom and its aftermath (Acts 7.54-8.3).
- Confronted by Jesus en route to Damascus (Acts 9.1-20), Saul came to see that Jesus is the fulfillment of both Temple and the Law: “Allegiance to a person... displaced devotion to a code.” His Jewish faith did not *stop*; rather, it found shocking and surprising *fulfillment* in Christ.
- After his conversion (~AD 33), he “went away into Arabia” (Gal. 1.17) – possibly to Mount Sinai. 3 years after his conversion, he made his 1<sup>st</sup> visit to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 9.23-30). In the wake of threats, the church in Jerusalem sent him to his hometown in Tarsus (Acts 9.30). For the next ~10 years (Gal. 2.1), Saul remained “off camera” from the narrative of Acts.
- ~AD 46, Barnabas recruited Saul to help him copastor the church in Antioch (Acts 11.25-26). The next year, the Antioch church sent them with diaconal aid to Jerusalem (Acts 11.27-30). There, the Jerusalem apostles recognized their apostolic calling to the Gentiles (Gen. 2.1-10).

### Apostle to the Gentiles

- When did Saul himself first know that he was commissioned as an apostle to the Gentiles?
- Acts 26.9-18: When Jesus first confronts Saul, he said that he is sending Saul to the Gentiles.
- Acts 22.17-21: On his 1<sup>st</sup> post-conversion trip to Jerusalem, the Lord confirmed this calling.

### How Many Apostles?

- The root of the word ‘apostle’ (*apostolos*) is the Greek verb *apostellō* (“send”).
- The original 12 apostles were special ambassadors, personally chosen by Jesus (Mk. 3.13-19).
- This choice of 12 corresponds to the 12 tribes of Israel (cf. Rev. 21.12-14). However:
  - In OT Israel, the ‘tribe’ of Joseph formed two separate ‘tribes’: Ephraim and Manasseh.
  - In a similar way, there were more than 12 apostles of Jesus Christ, strictly speaking:
    - After Judas’ suicide, Matthias was chosen to be “numbered with the eleven,” (Acts 1.26).
    - James the half-brother of Jesus is also referred to as one of “the apostles” (Gal. 1.19). When this happened is unknown, except that it was before Paul met Jesus (1 Cor. 15.7). Perhaps this second James replaced the original James, who was murdered (Acts 12.2).
    - Finally – “last of all,” Jesus appeared to Paul (1 Cor. 15.8-9).
- The core responsibility of an apostle of Jesus was as a “witness to his resurrection,” (Acts 1.22):
  - No man could be an apostle who had not personally seen the risen Christ (Acts 1.22).
  - Paul affirms this of James the half-brother of Jesus (1 Cor. 15.7), and also of himself – and he says he was the “last of all” and “least of the apostles” (1 Cor. 15.8-9).
- Beyond this restricted use of the word ‘apostle,’ the NT also shows us that the term was used to refer to men sent out by the churches on specific missionary tasks:
  - After being sent out by the church in Antioch, Barnabas is called an ‘apostle’ (Acts 14.4, 14).
  - Speaking of his missionary partners in 2 Corinthians 8.23, Paul writes: “And as for our brothers, they are messengers [lit. *apostles*] of the churches, the glory of Christ.”
- Sum: there are “capital A” and “lowercase A” apostles in the NT:
  - “Capital A” apostles are men sent directly by Jesus with special authority.
  - “Lowercase A” apostles are men sent by the church for special missionary service.

### The Missionary Call

- After his 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to Jerusalem, Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch. They brought with them “John, whose other name was Mark,” (Acts 12.25). John’s mother was Mary, whose home in Jerusalem was one of the meeting places for the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12.12).
- Acts 13.1-3: By this point, the church in Antioch appears to have 5 pastors: Barnabas is listed first, Saul is listed last. But at some point in this joint ministry, the Holy Spirit calls them to “set apart” Barnabas and Saul for missions. However hard, the church obeyed and ‘released’ them.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Destination: Cyprus

### Acts 13.4-12

- The 1<sup>st</sup> destination for Barnabas and Saul was Cyprus, Barnabas's home country (Acts 4.36).
- Upon landing, "they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues" (13.5).  
Though sent to the Gentiles, they would start in the synagogues whenever possible. Why?
  - 1<sup>st</sup> century synagogues contained not only Jews, but God-fearing Gentile "seekers."
  - Although he was not opposed to preaching to the Jews (cf. Rom. 1.16), "Paul looked on the God-fearers... as a providentially prepared bridgehead into the wider Gentile world.... Only by visiting the synagogue could Paul establish contact with these God-fearers," (Bruce).
- Traveling across the island, they were eventually summoned before the governor (13.7).  
During this encounter, there were two notable incidents:
  - Saul inflicts upon a Jewish false prophet the same punishment he had once received (13.11).
  - It is from this point forward that Saul goes by his Roman name, 'Paul' (13.9). Why?
    - Like any Roman citizen, Saul/Paul would have had more than one name.
    - Prior to Acts 13.9, Saul/Paul is never listed before Barnabas when together (cf. 13.1).  
After Acts 13.9, the phrase "Paul and Barnabas" occurs 7x (13.43, 46, 50; 15.2x2, 22, 35).
    - It seems, then, that the change in use of name corresponds to a change in stature:  
"Up to this point Saul has been, it seems, the junior partner, himself a protégé of Barnabas. But now he steps forward with a new kind of energy," (Wright).

## Church-Planting in Galatia

### *Antioch in Pisidia: Acts 13.13-52*

- From the west coast of Cyprus, "Paul and his companions" sailed to southern Turkey (13.13).
- Upon landing, John Mark "left them and returned to Jerusalem" (13.14; cf. 15.36-41).
- From the coast, they traveled north to Pisidian Antioch – a home to army veteran, senators, and other high-ranking Romans, and also a center of the "imperial cult" (worship of the Caesars).
- What Luke records of Paul's sermon (13.16-41) is probably not the "full manuscript," but rather an annotated "sermon outline." Several emphases stand out:
  - Jesus is the long-promised Savior of the line of Israel's greatest king, David (vv. 16-25),
  - As the prophets foretold, Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead (vv. 26-37),
  - Jesus offers a forgiveness and freedom not available through the law of Moses (vv. 38-39),
  - This offer is a warning to scoffers (v. 40) and a promise "to the ends of the earth," (v. 47).
- After this 1<sup>st</sup> sermon, the God-fearing Gentiles must have told all of their friends, because "the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord," (v. 44). Though we might rejoice at such an event, it ended up creating a conflict that led to persecution (vv. 45-50).
- Forced to move on, the apostles nevertheless left behind an infant church (vv. 51-52).

### *Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe: Acts 14.1-23*

- Luke gives us just enough detail about Iconium to let us see it as a repeat episode (vv. 1-7).
- In Lystra, things began not in a synagogue, but with a public healing (vv. 8-10).
- Convinced that the apostles were gods, the Lycaonians attempted to offer sacrifice (vv. 11-13).
- When they realized what was happening, the apostles grieved and pled for it to stop: vv. 14-18.
- Though they succeed (barely), they probably also sowed seeds of resentment – for when "Jews came from Antioch and Iconium," they were able to stir up the crowds to stone Paul (v. 19).
- Paul survives, and "the next day"(!) he and Barnabas move on and preach in Derbe (v. 20).

## The Shadow of the Cross

- After Derbe, the apostles backtrack along their route and return to Antioch by sea (vv. 21-28).
- Altogether, they planted churches in 4 Galatian cities – an earned scars to prove it (note v. 22).
- In all this, Paul was learning "how much he must suffer for the sake of my name," (Acts 9.16).