

Lesson 3: St. Paul's Missionary Journeys

Focus: Third Missionary Journey

Now that we have studied how the early church witnessed to Christ since His ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit by spreading the word to Jerusalem and beyond, let us take a deeper look into one of the main witnesses of Jesus Christ, St Paul.

Introduction to St. Paul's Missionary Journeys (Acts 13-28)

- St. Paul embarked on **three missionary journeys** across the ancient world in Asia Minor and Europe to proclaim the name of Christ to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.
 - St. Paul's journeys of witnessing played a crucial role in the formation and development of the early Christian church.
- The purpose of the missionary journeys was to spread the gospel of Christ. This is highlighted in the book of Acts when the Lord Spoke to Paul (Then Saul) and said:

"I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26: 16-18).

- The word gospel in Greek is εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion) which means **the good news** or the **good tidings**. The good tidings are that God sent His only begotten Son into the world.
- With his Jewish and Greek knowledge, St. Paul was prepared to minister to both Jews and Gentiles throughout the ancient world.
 - St. Paul was able to preach to both the Jews and the Gentiles due to his Jewish upbringing and immense knowledge of Greek philosophy.
 - He was sent to Jerusalem to study the law and there he became a student taught by **Gamaliel**, the best teacher of the law of his time.
 - During his time in Tarsus, St. Paul was also enriched with the knowledge of Greek culture and philosophy. The city of Tarsus offered a wide variety of learning opportunities for the students in philosophy and liberal arts.

About the Missionary Journeys

- St. Paul traveled more than 10,000 miles throughout all his missionary journeys.
- St. Paul established at least **14 churches** and wrote his pastoral epistles to many of the communities he encountered on his missionary journeys.
- St. Paul spent most of his ministry in the following countries: Syria, Turkey, Greece, and Italy.
- According to Acts 18, St. Paul by occupation was a tentmaker. We know of St. Paul's work as it is mentioned that he shared the same trade as Aquila and Priscilla.
- Antioch was always the start and end point of his trips.
- St. Paul and his companions often endured persecution during their travels, including being beaten, jailed, or expelled from particular cities.
- St. Paul often faced multiple hardships in his missionary journeys. In 2nd Corinthians 11: 25 – 27, St. Paul describes some of the dangers of traveling:

“Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” (Corinthians 11: 25-27)

St Ephrem the Syrian has a beautiful contemplation on this passage:

“The East has grown luminous with the saints, with them the West has become brilliant, the North is raised up by them, from them the South has learned. They have ascended to the firmament and opened it, they have gone down to the sea and explored it.”

What does this have to do with the Gospel?

In going through the hardships and tribulations there is an action of witnessing to Christ. St Paul could have avoided that disgrace as a Roman. However, he refused to claim his privilege that he might have an opportunity to convert the people around him by spreading the word in every place. St Paul, St Ephrem the Syrian and the early church clearly saw that suffering and hardships are a form of witnessing to Christ and a chance to grow deeper in your relationship with Him.



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Epistles Written on The Missionary Journeys

Epistle	Place of Writing	Time of Writing	Remarks
1st Thessalonians	Corinth	52-53 AD	Second Missionary Trip
2nd Thessalonians	Corinth	52-53 AD	Second Missionary Trip
1st Corinthians	Ephesus	57 AD	Third Missionary Trip
2nd Corinthians	Macedonia	57 AD	Third Missionary Trip
Galatians	Corinth	58 AD	Third Missionary Trip
Romans	Corinth	58 AD	Third Missionary Trip



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St. Paul's First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:4-14:28 in the period 45-50 AD)



- The first journey begins with: St. Paul, Barnabas, and St. Mark leaving Antioch for Seleucia, then sailing to Cyprus, visiting Salamis and Paphos, where St. Paul encounters Bar-Jesus the sorcerer.
- They proceed to Perga in Pamphylia (now southern Turkey), where St. Mark returns to Jerusalem. In Antioch in Pisidia, St. Paul and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles.
- The journey includes stops in Iconium, Lystra, where St. Paul is stoned but survives, and Derbe before retracing their steps back through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia.
- St. Paul and Barnabas then travel through Pisidia and Pamphylia to Perga, Attalia, and sail back to Antioch in Syria, ending their first journey.
- The timeline for events from 50-60 AD can be determined by counting backward from Felix's succession by Porcius Festus in 60 AD.
- Around 50 AD, 14 years after St. Paul's conversion, St. Paul and Barnabas attended the council in Jerusalem. Afterward, they returned to Antioch in Syria with Judas and Silas.

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St. Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18 :22 in the period 51-54 AD)



- The second journey begins with St. Paul and Silas traveling through Syria and Cilicia, then to Derbe and Lystra where Timothy joins them.
- They travel through Phrygia and Galatia but are forbidden to enter Asia or Bithynia. Eventually, they reach Troas, Samothracia, Neapolis, and then Philippi in Macedonia, where Lydia and the Philippian jailer are converted.
- The journey continues through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, Berea, and then southward to Athens and Corinth, where St. Paul stays for a year and a half from the spring of 52 AD to fall of 53 AD.
- In Corinth, St. Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla and writes 1st Thessalonians and later 2nd Thessalonians with Silas.
- St. Paul leaves Corinth by boat with Aquila and Priscilla, stopping in Ephesus (where Aquila and Priscilla stay) before sailing to Caesarea and returning to Antioch in Syria, ending the second journey in the winter of 53-54 AD.

St. Paul's third missionary Journey (Acts 18:23-21:16 in the period 54-58 AD)



The Start of the 3rd Missionary Journey:

- The third journey begins with Galatia (central region of Turkey), possibly in the spring of 54 AD, and then Phrygia (Acts 18:23).
- St. Paul started the journey alone, but Luke and Silas joined him in different parts of the journey.
- St. Paul spends three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31), a prominent city in Asia known for the Temple of Artemis, a great commercial metropolis of Asia Minor (Acts 19:27).

During this time, he found disciples who were only familiar with John the Baptist's teachings and baptism (Acts 19:1-3). Handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from Paul's body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them (Acts 19:11-12).

Apollos' Ministry:

- Apollos, an eloquent Jew from Alexandria, comes to Ephesus. Although knowledgeable about the Scriptures and a follower of John the Baptist's teachings, he only knew about the baptism of John the Baptist.
- Apollos receives further instruction from Aquila and Priscilla, who explain the way of God more accurately to him (Acts 18:24-26). Apollos then travels to Achaia and preaches that Jesus is the Christ, aiding the believers there (Acts 18:24-28)
- Here we see the humility of Apollos as he willingly accepted Aquila and Priscilla to expound more perfectly on the teachings of the church. On the other hand, we see the church acting through Aquila and Priscilla who did not reject Apollos, but instead witnessed his zeal and guided him towards a more perfect understanding.

Division in Corinth:

- Apollos's success in Corinth lead to divisions among the believers, with some claiming allegiance to St. Paul, St. Peter (Cephas), or Apollos.
- This prompts St. Paul to address the issue of division in his first letter to the Corinthians, urging unity in Christ.

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:11-13)

St. Paul's Ministry:

St. Paul's preaching became widely known throughout Ephesus and almost all of Asia.

- He ministered in the synagogue for three months and then in the school of Tyrannus for two years, allowing all in Asia to hear the Lord's word (Acts 19:8-10).
- Miracles, including healings and exorcisms, were performed through items touched by St. Paul (Acts 19:11-12).

Seven Sons of Sceva:

Jewish exorcists attempt to use Jesus's name to cast out demons but are attacked by the demon-possessed man, highlighting their lack of authority compared to St. Paul's genuine power in Christ.

“And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.” (Acts 19:15-17)

Riot by Demetrius (Acts 19:23-41):

In Ephesus, the local trade of crafting silver shrines for Diana (Artemis) is threatened by Christianity's spread, leading Demetrius and other craftsmen to incite a riot against St. Paul and his companions, claiming economic loss as the main reason and dishonor to their goddess.

St. Paul's Impact on the Ephesians:

	Before St. Paul	After St. Paul
Source of Spiritual Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Belief in the power of magic and magical arts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognition that true spiritual power rested with the Lord Jesus Christ.
Repentance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement in magical practices without remorse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genuine repentance shown by burning magic books and confessing deeds.
Idolatry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Idolatry was widespread with a thriving industry supporting it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• St. Paul's ministry crushed idolatry, turning many to Christianity.

Ministry in Macedonia and Corinth:

- St. Paul intended to return to Syria directly, traveling by sea, but because of a plot arranged by the Jews, he returned traveling by land through Macedonia accompanied by several of his disciples.
- In Macedonia, St. Paul stopped in several cities and wrote 2nd Corinthians.
- After going through Macedonia (northern Greece), St. Paul came to Achaia (southern Greece), where he stayed 3 months (Acts 20:2-3), making a third visit to Corinth.
- He then spent most of the three months in Corinth and its region and wrote his epistle to the Galatians in the spring of 58 AD.
- During the same period, he also wrote his epistle to the Romans, in which he was troubled by the unrighteousness of men that prevailed in Corinth, as fornication was practiced as one of the rituals to please the idols. This is where he spent the winter of 57-58 AD (1 Corinthians 16:5-8).
- Going back to Macedonia (Acts 20:1), they were at Philippi (northeastern Greece) in the spring of 58 AD in the “days of unleavened bread” (Acts 20:6).

Return Trip:

- St. Paul started the return trip in the spring of 58 AD, and after passing the region of Macedonia, he traveled by sea from Philippi to Troas (Acts 20:6).
- On his return, St. Paul passed through several cities, including Troas, where Eutychus, a young man, fell out of a window.
 - St. Paul raises him from the dead (Acts 20:9-12) and continues to Miletus. He avoids stopping in Ephesus to reach Jerusalem in time for the Day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

St. Paul's Farewell Message:

- From Miletus, St. Paul summons the Ephesian elders, delivering a heartfelt farewell message, expressing concern for the future of the church after his departure, and encouraging vigilance against false teachings (Acts 20:17-35).
- Ephesian elders felt sorrow at the thought of not seeing St. Paul again, indicating their warm admiration and attachment (Acts 20:37-38).

Journey to Jerusalem:

- A certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea and prophesied the tribulation that Paul was intended to go through at Jerusalem.
 - Then the brethren pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem, but **“Then Paul answered, “What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus”. (Acts 21:13).**
- Despite warnings about the hardships he would face in Jerusalem, he resolved to continue with his companions and went up to Jerusalem, ready to face imprisonment or death for Christ. This was the end of St. Paul's third missionary journey and the beginning of a period of imprisonment and trials that would eventually lead him to Rome.
- St. Paul was beaten by the Jews, preached to them (Acts 22:1-21), brought before the Sanhedrin, and Jesus Christ told him he would go to bear witness in Rome. The Jews seized him in Jerusalem and the commander sent him to Caesarea, where he spent two years in prison awaiting his trial.
- Governor Festus's reign began in 60 AD. St. Paul appeals to Caesar (Acts 25:11), and some days later, King Agrippa II hears St. Paul. He remained in Rome for two years in his own rented house, where he received all who came to him and preached to them the kingdom of God and all things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. When he was released from his confinement, he returned to his ministry.

Trials of St. Paul

Ruler	Title	Character	Trial	Verdict	Outcome
Felix the governor	Governor of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea	Felix the governor, is seen as corrupt and indecisive.	Paul was accused by Jewish leaders and had to defend his actions.	"Paul to be kept in custody and yet have some freedom." (Acts 24:23)	Felix postponed the decision, leaving Paul imprisoned, hoping for a bribe.
Festus the governor	Governor of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea	Festus the governor appeared to be trying to please the Jewish leaders but had to respect St. Paul's appeal to Caesar.	Festus, approached by Jewish leaders to have St. Paul transferred to Jerusalem for trial.	"He had committed nothing deserving death." (Acts 25:25)	Festus intended to transfer St. Paul to Jerusalem, but Paul appealed to Caesar, so Festus sent him to Rome.
King Agrippa	Tetrarch over Batanea, Trachonitis, Gaulonitis, and portions of Galilee	Agrippa wanted to hear St. Paul's side to understand the accusations against him.	King Agrippa showed curiosity and fairness but was bound by St. Paul's appeal to Caesar.	"This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment" (Acts 26:31)	Agrippa concluded St. Paul did nothing deserving death or imprisonment, but Paul was sent to Rome due to his appeal.
Nero	Emperor of Rome	Emperor of Rome is historically noted for his persecution of Christians.	St. Paul's charges included causing unrest and promoting Christianity, which was seen as a threat to the Roman state and its traditional gods.	St. Paul's final appeal as a Roman citizen brought him before Emperor Nero.	St. Paul was executed by beheading, as ordered by Nero, in 67 or 68 AD.

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St. Paul and St. Athanasius

	St. Paul	St. Athanasius
Preservation of Faith	Attended the Council of Jerusalem, with James and the Apostles to discuss the issue of what Gentiles should do when converting to Christianity.	Stood against the Arian heresy, which denied the divinity of Christ in Council of Nicaea.
Opposition to Heretics	Opposed Jewish Christian Zealots after they disagreed with the Council's decision, showing the dishonesty of the heretics.	Experienced a similar pattern with heretics accepting council decisions at first but later opposing them, demonstrating their dishonesty.
Hardships	Preserved faith during distress, trials, and hardships. Stood against numerous false teachers defending and teaching the true faith. Judged by many corrupt rulers.	Similarly, not afraid to stand for his steadfast faith over 17 years in five exiles ordered by four different Roman Emperors.
Writings	Wrote 14 epistles in the New Testament.	Spread his theological teachings and knowledge through many books.

Conclusion

From the life and teachings of St. Paul we learn:

1. The true example of his love for God. In our lives, we should imitate St. Paul in his great faith, patience, and works.
2. All our actions should glorify God just as St. Paul did throughout his service.
3. St. Paul served with genuine honesty and diligence in wanting to share the good news of the gospel with everyone he encountered on his journey.
4. Despite all the persecution, hardships, and tribulations that St. Paul faced, he never lost hope and remained faithful in his ministry, knowing that God will reward him for his toil.
5. Not afraid to stand up for his steadfast faith, believing that God can work and accomplish a lot through him.

“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Hebrews 6:10-12).