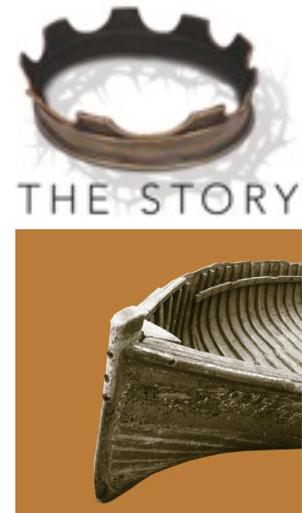


# THE STORY

FINDING YOUR STORY IN GOD'S STORY.

## *Synopsis & Context – Session #29: Paul's Mission*

Saul began his career as a Hellenistic Jewish scholar who, in addition to being zealous in his faith was so convinced the Christians were wrong that he had sought to have them imprisoned...or worse. After an encounter with the resurrected Jesus he, himself, became a disciple. Saul became Paul (his Greek name) who proclaimed Christ to the Jews and also to the Gentiles. Led by the Holy Spirit, the believers in their home base of Antioch in Syria commissioned Paul and Barnabas and sent them out as missionaries to spread the news that Jesus is the Messiah and is raised from the dead. Their first missionary journey took them to the island of Cyprus where they encountered a Jewish sorcerer who opposed them and a Roman proconsul who embraced the gospel. They set sail for the region of Galatia (present south-central Turkey). They were invited to preach in the synagogue in Antioch and, after an initial favorable reception, they faced persecution so they turned their sights toward the Gentiles.



Paul was joined by Timothy, Silas, and eventually Luke for his second missionary journey. They visited many cities in Macedonia, including Philippi where a church was begun in Lydia's home. The evangelists were beaten and thrown in jail where their faith convicted not only their jailer, but apparently the other prisoners as well. Many Jews and Greeks from Thessalonica believed before Paul and Silas were sent away for their own protection. Paul then met Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth where he was again opposed by the Jews. But Gentiles believed, so Paul stayed and ministered there for about a year and a half. He also wrote letters to these churches to teach and encourage them. He wrote the Thessalonians to encourage them to continue to be the model of Christianity that they had become in expectation of the Lord's return.

After returning to his base of operations in Antioch, Paul set out on his third journey. As he strengthened the churches in the Galatian region, Apollos showed up in Ephesus where he met Priscilla and Aquila. Apollos was a powerful speaker and strong disciple, but needed further teaching. Paul arrived in Ephesus, a hotbed of pagan idolatry, and as he began teaching in the synagogue, most Jews rejected his message. He stayed more than two years teaching both Jews and Greeks. Many people from the region came to hear him as the word spread. Some of the Ephesians believed and left their idols and witchcraft in exchange for a new life in Christ. This did not set well with the idol artisans who staged a riot to drive Paul out of town. While in Ephesus, he penned letters to churches in Corinth, Galatia, and Rome, though he had not yet visited Rome (would not except as a prisoner).

The Corinthian church had enjoyed a who's who of early church leaders. This privilege should have prodded them onto Christian maturity but instead they chose sides like children on a playground. Paul chastised them for their divisiveness, corrected their immorality, and answered questions that they had about spiritual gifts. They needed to better understand and even more, practice agape love for one another. Some were even denying the resurrection so Paul gave them a remedial lesson on the essentials of the gospel and the hope of a future resurrection. The Galatian churches were confused by Jewish Christians who insisted they practice the Jewish ceremonial rites. Paul's letter is a masterpiece on Christian liberty as he defended justification by faith alone. Paul's pastoral desire to minister to the believers in Rome prompted him to write a letter to convey the foundations of the Christian faith. In spite of opposition, the word of God clearly could not be contained, and so Paul and others took the gospel "*even to the ends of the earth.*"

**Chapter #29: Paul's Mission is 'woven' from selections from *The Book of Acts*, as well as from among his letters: *Romans*, *1 Corinthians*, *Galatians*, and *1 Thessalonians***

Acts 13–14; 16–20; Romans 1; 3–6; 8; 12; 15; 1 Corinthians 1; 3; 5–6; 10; 12–13; 15–16; Galatians 1; 3; 5–6; 1 Thessalonians 1–5

*Plot Points for Chapter #29: Paul's Mission*

The early church exhibited a vibrant prayer life and dependence on the Holy Spirit's guidance. The church spread by forming disciples, people who were capable of forming other disciples. The church spread through the Roman world like wildfire in a forest.

In this chapter we begin to see exactly why the Lord chose Paul to be his ambassador to the nations. Not only did Paul possess a brilliant theological mind, but he had an evangelist's zeal and a pastor's heart. Paul kept a near-frenetic pace, constantly traveling throughout the Mediterranean world. When he was not preaching or making tents, Paul was writing letters and forming disciples.

*Cf. Barr, Adam Exploring the Story: A Reference Companion (Story, The). Zondervan.*

Paul's Undisputed Letters: Aprox. Date (or depicted)

1 Thessalonians	50-51 C.E.
Philippians	54-55 C.E.
Philemon	54-55 C.E.
Galatians	50-56 C.E.
1 Corinthians	54 C.E.
2 Corinthians	55-56 C.E.
Romans	56-57 C.E.

Deutero-Pauline Letters – Those attributed to him:

2 Thessalonians	50-51 C.E. (if authentic)
Colossians	57-61 C.E. (if authentic)
Ephesians	80-95 C.E.
1 Timothy	90-110 C.E.
2 Timothy	90-110 C.E.
Titus	90-110 C.E.

**God's Story – YOUR story!**

- What is your biggest surprise about Paul?
- How would you describe the balance between being “led by the Spirit” and being “led by good sense” in Paul's ministry? How do you suppose one would tell the difference?
- How was Paul's ministry similar to the ministry of Jesus? In what ways are they different?
- Do you agree that the human body serves as an effective metaphor to describe the Church? How well do you think this metaphor relates to understanding spiritual gifts?
- What do recall as being the root of the divisions and quarrels for the Church in Corinth? Are there lessons to be learned for the Church today from this?