



Imperial Academy Bible Lessons



The Life of Paul, Part 1

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God can work in your life in unexpected ways. God used a young, enslaved Israelite to save Egypt from a famine. He used a Hebrew, raised as an Egyptian prince, to free God's people from slavery. He chose a shepherd boy to become the king of Israel. He gave the responsibilities of the Prophet Elijah to a farmer. He chose Galilean fishermen to become disciples to the Son of God.

Whatever your current situation is, God wants to use you. And He can use you in powerful ways!

Over the next few lessons, you will study how God selected a man no one would have expected and used him in a dramatic way. His name was Saul.

SAUL THE PHARISEE

Saul was born to a wealthy Jewish family around A.D. 2. They lived in the town of Tarsus, in the southern portion of modern Turkey. Because his father was a citizen of the Roman Empire, Saul was also a Roman (Acts 22:27-28).

Saul's parents recognized that he had an unusual intelligence and ability to learn. He was a bright young student, who studied at excellent educational institutions. He learned four languages—Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek and Latin—studied the Greek philosophers and poets, and received a well-rounded education. But the subject that interested him most was the Bible.

As a teenager, Saul went to Jerusalem to study the law of Moses. He began training to become a Pharisee. The Pharisees were the largest group of Jewish religious leaders. As Saul continued to show zeal and drive in his religious education, a respected teacher of religious law named Gamaliel noticed him and began to tutor him in more advanced aspects of the Jewish religion (Acts 22:3). By the time Saul was a young man, he was a prominent religious leader.

When he was in his late 20s, news began to swirl through the Jewish nation. A new religious group had arisen among them: It was based on the teachings of a man named Jesus from the town of Nazareth. Its followers believed this man was also the Messiah, the Savior, the Christ who had been prophesied in the scriptures of the Old Testament. But the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes had opposed Him so violently that they had recently caused Him to be crucified and killed. Three days later, His body disappeared from the tomb. The Jews claimed that the Roman guards at the tomb had all fallen asleep and Jesus's disciples had taken His body. But Jesus's disciples said that He had been resurrected by God.

Nearly two months after Jesus was killed, the Jews kept the holy day of Pentecost in the year A.D. 31. This group of Jesus's followers (the Jews called them "Nazarenes") also kept Pentecost in the capital city of Jerusalem. News spread through Jerusalem that



Trained as a Pharisee, Saul was well versed in the Torah, but he lacked understanding of the spirit of the law.

the Nazarenes were miraculously speaking different known languages that each of them did not even personally know (Acts 2). (Actually, the miracle was not in their speaking but in the hearing of those listening to Jesus's disciples.) Jews from Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Libya, Arabia and many other places were stunned by this miracle and amazed by the preaching of Jesus's chief follower, a man known as Simon Peter. On that day, 3,000 new members joined the followers of Jesus of Nazareth! In the following days, they were joined by thousands more.

This group of Jesus's followers was called the Church of God, and it was growing rapidly.

Saul and other Jewish religious leaders wanted to put a stop to this. They viewed the "Nazarenes" as a dangerous group of heretics.

As with his education and his religious leadership, Saul took zealous action. He tried to stamp out these "heretics" before their religion strengthened and spread further (Acts 8:3). He powerfully preached against their teachings and used his authority to criticize Jesus and His followers. He personally participated in arresting people who believed Jesus was the Son of God. He even involved himself in situations where God's people were being stoned to death.

PAUL THE CHRISTIAN

One specific persecution of a "Nazarene" is recorded in Acts 7. The victim was a man named Stephen. In response to his attackers, Stephen defended his beliefs by recounting Bible history. He said that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews had executed, was the "Just One" who had fulfilled the prophecies of the Bible. At the end of his narrative, he exclaimed that he was seeing a vision of Christ standing in heaven beside God. Enraged, the Jews grabbed Stephen, hauled him out of the city, and stoned him to death.

The man in charge of the stoning was Saul (verse 58).

Despite intense, severe persecution by the Jews, the followers of Jesus continued to cling to their beliefs. In fact, the group grew even stronger. Their teachings continued to impact the people, and more and more Jews began to believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.

Saul continued to zealously fight this religion. He continued raiding the homes of these people, who the Jews viewed as heretics. He hauled them out and locked them in prison. He caused chaos in their group,

and they fled in every direction. Yet even as they fled their homes, they continued to spread their beliefs.

Saul was decimating the "Nazarenes" in Jerusalem, but he was not content. He wanted to capture those who were fleeing to other cities and even other countries.

Saul boldly approached the leader of the Jewish people, the high priest. Saul said that though he was a Pharisee and the high priest was a Sadducee, both of them could agree that the Nazarene heretics had to be stopped and killed if necessary (Acts 9:1-2). He convinced the high priest to authorize him to locate, restrain and extradite any men or women who followed the teachings of Jesus. Saul was allowed to arrest these people and bring them out of Syria into Judea, and all the way to Jerusalem.

Saul and his men traveled north, winding their way up the road through the rough hills. It was about noon, and they were nearing the end of their five-day journey from Jerusalem. Damascus, the capital city of Syria, would soon be in view.

Suddenly a brilliant flash like lightning glared on him from above. Saul fell to the ground, shielding his eyes with his arm. His men cringed and turned away in fear (Acts 22:9).

"Saul, Saul, _____
_____?" (Acts 9:4.)

It was God Himself, speaking directly to Saul!

After a moment, Saul responded: "Who are you, Lord?"

The answer shocked him and rocked his work, his religion and his entire belief of what was true. "And the Lord said, _____
_____ ..." (verse 5).

Jesus? The God speaking to Saul was *Jesus*. This meant Jesus is the Christ! His followers truly were followers of God! And Saul had been opposing, denouncing, persecuting, disrupting, arresting and even killing them!

Saul meekly asked God—Jesus the Christ—what he should do. He instructed him to complete his journey and enter Damascus, where God would give him further instruction (verse 6).

God had suddenly, overpoweringly intervened and called the greatest enemy of His Church *into* His Church.

Saul and his men stood up. The others had heard a voice, but they did not understand what God had said to Saul. To them, it was indistinguishable.



God wants us to forget offenses and love the brethren, despite individual sins and shortcomings.

When Saul opened his eyes, he discovered he was blind. Confused by what had happened, his men led him into Damascus.

For three days, Saul ate no food or water. He was still blind (verse 9). Once a rising star in the Jewish nation, he was now humbled; he could not even make his way around a room without help.

After three days, the Lord appeared to one of the members of the Church in Damascus. In a vision, He told a man named Ananias to go to Saul and to put his hand on him so that he would regain his sight (verses 11-12). Ananias was shocked. He knew Saul had been persecuting God's people in Jerusalem. It was frightening to learn that he was in Damascus. Yet God was not telling Ananias to flee this hostile enemy of God's Church, but to go to Saul and help him!

God knew Ananias was afraid. He told him: " _____: for he is a _____ unto me, to _____ my name before the _____, and _____, and the _____ of _____" (verse 15).

Ananias obeyed God and went to Saul, laying his hands on him and praying that God would remove his blindness. God miraculously gave Saul his sight again, and he received the Holy Spirit and was baptized (verses 17-18).

God had looked on Saul's heart, and even though he was guilty of persecuting Jesus Christ's followers, He knew that he was a zealous, hardworking man. He also saw that Saul had come to know he was wrong in his crusade, that he was sinning against God.

After he was miraculously stopped, corrected and converted into a member of God's Church, Saul became known as Paul.

TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

When Paul became a member of God's Church, the other true Christians were confused and afraid. Some were worried that he was deceiving them and trying to destroy the Church from the inside. But God had given him His Holy Spirit, and he zealously began to bear the fruits of the Spirit.

Even though Paul had spent years studying the Bible and receiving religious training, even though he was hardworking and zealous, and even though he had forsaken everything he had and truly committed to the true Church, he was not immediately ordained a minister. Later in life, he would instruct that newly converted members should not be ordained as ministers (1 Timothy 3:6). Likewise, Paul needed to gain experience and training before he could fulfill the commission God had for him.

Herbert W. Armstrong taught that the "Bible is like a jigsaw puzzle—thousands of pieces that need putting together" (*Mystery of the Ages*). Much of the Bible is not written in chronological order; therefore, you have to piece together the history from different scattered verses (Isaiah 28:9-10, 13). This principle applies to understanding the life of Paul.

For instance, there was an interval of several years between Acts 9:22 and verse 23. Paul later described some of the events from those years in a letter to Church members in Galatia.

Paul wrote that after he was healed and received the Holy Spirit in Damascus, he "immediately ... conferred not with flesh and blood" but went into the region of Arabia for "many days" (Galatians 1:16-17; Acts 9:23). Whom did he confer with?

Use 1 Corinthians 9:1 and 15:8 to find out who Paul met in Arabia: _____

“But I certify you, brethren, that the _____ which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of _____” (Galatians 1:11-12).

Putting the scriptures together shows that the one who personally taught Paul in Arabia was Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul’s letter to the Galatians indicates that he was trained by Christ for three years (verse 18).

As a student of the Jewish religion, Paul had received a strong understanding of the Old Testament. He was well versed in the law, but he did not understand the spirit of the law. He also did not learn the hope of the gospel that Jesus taught, the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. Prior to his training with Jesus Christ, Paul did not believe that the man his fellow religious leaders had caused to be crucified was the Christ. But Jesus taught Paul all of these things and much more in a deeply powerful way. After years of dedicated and zealous study of the Bible, Paul was learning the real meaning of the Word of

God. Religious people can study the Bible from cover to cover, but they cannot understand it fully without God’s revealed knowledge.

Christ instructed Paul in such a personal and intimate way because He had a special commission for him.

From Arabia, Paul returned to Damascus. The Jews there had discovered that he had forsaken the Jewish religion and become a “Nazarene”—a Christian. The Jews had once considered him as a champion of their religion. Now they looked on him as a traitor. They waited outside the place where he was staying day and night, waiting for him to leave the security of the house.

Describe how Paul escaped their trap (Acts 9:25):

After escaping from Damascus, Paul journeyed to Jerusalem. He stayed there for 15 days. Members of God’s Church remembered how terribly he had persecuted them and had difficulty believing that he was now a disciple of God (verse 26).



We study Paul’s life through the different accounts in the Bible.

A disciple named Barnabas came to Paul's aid. *Barnabas* means "son of comfort" or "encouragement." He was known for encouraging others.

Barnabas took Paul to meet some of Christ's apostles. He met James, who was Jesus's brother. James began to believe that Jesus was the Christ only after He died and was resurrected. James became the pastor to the headquarters congregation in Jerusalem. Paul also met the Apostle Peter. Paul explained to the apostles the process of his conversion and intimate training under Jesus Christ.

For a couple weeks, Paul traveled with the apostles to congregations surrounding Jerusalem. During this time, his training continued. He began speaking at Sabbath services and boldly delivered the gospel message in the Jewish synagogues. But the stronger his message became, the stronger the Jews persecuted him. Jews and even Gentiles worked to discredit him; they even tried to kill him (verse 29).

Paul needed deliverance from this precarious situation—and God knew it was even more dangerous than Paul realized. In a vision, God instructed Paul to "make haste" to get out of Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-18).

The Christians were fearful that the Jews would kill Paul, and they urged him to return to his hometown of Tarsus (Acts 9:30). In Tarsus, Paul continued his training. After his departure, God's Word thrived throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria (verse 31). More and more members were added to God's Church every day.

GENTILES CALLED

In that same vision instructing Paul to leave Jerusalem in haste, God gave Paul his specific commission: "Depart; for I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21; Revised Standard Version). (The word "Gentiles" means "the nations," and refers to everyone who is not descended from Jacob.)

The New Testament Church, which was then five years old, consisted mostly of people who were ethnically Jewish. Some people who were ethnically Gentile had converted to Judaism and had then been called by God into His Church. The Jews called these Gentile Church members "proselytes."

God never intended to limit access to His Church to only the Jews. He planned for all people, from every race and background, to have the opportunity to enter His Church.

God commissioned Paul to be the apostle who preached directly to the Gentiles. Through Paul, God would spread the true gospel message and call out thousands to become part of His Church. The others would be called after Christ's return.

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, but God began this work to the Gentiles through His chief apostle, Peter. In a vision, God revealed to Peter that it was time for the Gentiles to begin learning the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. Read Acts 10 where God revealed to Peter that He was going to begin calling Gentiles.

God used a vision of unclean meats to show the chief apostle that He had opened up the truth to the Gentiles. (This vision does not mean that His people could begin eating unclean meats.) God was showing Peter that the Jewish-born Christians should not regard Gentile-born people as "unclean" and deny them entrance into His Church (verse 28).

God created the races and wants to see all people come to Him and be a part of His Church and His Family. God teaches that all men are equal and one family "in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28-29). God is not excluding certain ethnic groups from His Church; He has called people from many nations. After Christ returns, He will call everyone into His Church (Revelation 7:9).

With the new revelation that God gave the Apostle Peter, it was now time for Paul to fulfill his commission and go to the Gentiles.

THE BEGINNING OF PAUL'S WORK

Seven or eight years after Paul was converted, his ministry began around A.D. 40. As with many other endeavors of God's Church over the centuries, this effort in the first-century Ephesus era of the Church began very small.

Centuries later, God's Church would begin very small in the Laodicean era. The Philadelphia remnant of God's Church began with 12 members, \$80 and one pickup truck. Herbert W. Armstrong College began in 2001, with only eight full-time students. Now the Church has grown to have congregations around the world, won a six-year battle for copyrights to books and booklets by Herbert W. Armstrong, built a magnificent 823-seat auditorium, opened a second campus in England, engages in archaeological excavations in Jerusalem, and purchased a corporate



Christ set the example of cooperation and teamwork among God's people to finish God's Work.

jet. But this work is small compared to what God will do for the whole world through His Church in the near future.

God starts things small to remind His servants that they must have faith and rely on Him to accomplish anything of value.

In the first-century Ephesus era, God's Church was growing rapidly. But taking God's message to the Gentiles started very small.

Paul stayed in his hometown of Tarsus for four years. Meanwhile, the Church sent Barnabas, the same "son of encouragement" who had taken Paul to the apostles in Jerusalem, to Antioch to minister to a congregation of new converts. The work in Antioch was so productive that Barnabas needed help. Barnabas traveled to Tarsus to recruit Paul's help in his ministry (Acts 11:25). At this point, Paul entered the full-time ministry. Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch for one year. Interestingly, this congregation is where the name "Christians" was first used to describe followers of Christ, the true Church of God (verse 26). This is the same name that has been used by God's people for almost 2,000 years.

While Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch, a prophet came from Jerusalem to deliver a warning. The office of a prophet is one that God used before His New

Testament Church was established and still uses in His Church (Ephesians 4:11-13). God uses prophets to deliver warnings and messages directly from Himself. In Antioch, the Prophet Agabus warned that there would be a famine throughout the whole world (Acts 11:27-28). This famine occurred on and off for around 30 years, affecting certain parts of the world more than others.

The famine was especially damaging in Jerusalem. Members of God's Church rallied together and sent food there to feed their fellow Christians. Paul and Barnabas delivered the food to Jerusalem, and while they were there, they arranged to take a young ministerial trainee, John Mark, back to Antioch with them. John Mark was Barnabas's nephew. He would later write the book of Mark, one of the four Gospel accounts of Jesus Christ's life.

Last lesson we learned the role of an apostle and the commission God had for each of the 12 original apostles: to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the tribes of Israel. Both Barnabas and Paul were called to the office of apostle. But Paul was unique because he was the leading apostle sent to the Gentiles.

The beginning of Acts 13 shows us how these two men were anointed to that high office.

After delivering the food to the Church members at Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and



Commissioned to reach the Gentiles, Paul served his hometown of Tarsus for four years before he went to assist Barnabas in Antioch.

resumed attending to the needs of the congregation, along with other ministers and teachers in the Church. “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy [Spirit] said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2-3). These verses show us that Paul and Barnabas were set apart for a special work. They were “sent forth” (verse 4), meaning that they were given a special purpose: to go to the Gentiles.

During his ministry to the Gentiles, Paul took three journeys to various Gentile regions. Over the next few lessons, we will cover these journeys in detail.

PAUL'S FIRST JOURNEY

Paul began his first journey in A.D. 44. From Antioch, Paul, Barnabas and John Mark traveled to Seleucia, where they boarded a ship to the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea. When they arrived on Cyprus, they first stopped at the eastern port city of Salamis. There they preached in synagogues and then traveled on foot to the western side of the island, stopping in Paphos.

After arriving in Paphos, the details of what these foreign men were teaching quickly spread throughout the city. The Roman governor of the island requested that the apostles come to him and personally deliver their message. A sorcerer and false prophet named

Barjesus, however, tried to interfere. He did not want the governor to believe their message (Acts 13:6-8).

Briefly describe how Paul dealt with this false prophet (verse 11): _____

The governor was amazed at what he had just witnessed. Because of this miracle, he believed what Paul and Barnabas were teaching (verse 12).

From Paphos, the three men boarded a ship and sailed up to the city of Perga in southern Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Shortly after arriving, John Mark made a decision that teaches us a lesson. For unknown reasons—perhaps homesickness, lack of motivation, lack of health, or feelings of inadequacy—Mark decided to leave the group. Paul was unhappy with his decision.

When God gives you an opportunity, especially as a young person, even if it is something you are not comfortable with or something you feel you are unable to handle, take the opportunity and let God do the rest. John Mark had been traveling with God’s apostles, receiving firsthand training: This was an opportunity God expected him to take advantage of.

God’s ministers are human; they make mistakes, just like everyone else. Mark made a mistake, but he learned from it.

The situation caused disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. For Paul's second journey, Barnabas recommended bringing John Mark along. However, because John Mark failed to complete the first journey, Paul did not want to work with him. The dispute caused "sharp" contention, leading Paul and Barnabas to go their separate ways (Acts 15:36-40).

Eventually, Paul did work with John Mark again (2 Timothy 4:11). Recognizing the error of his youth, Mark repented and eventually became an evangelist in God's Church. Paul even said that Mark was "profitable" to him in the ministry. He forgave and forgot Mark's earlier mistake. That is something we all must be willing to do: When there is strife or conflict, we have to be willing to forgive and go forward, working together.

After John Mark's departure during the first journey, Paul and Barnabas made the 100-mile trip from Perga to Antioch in Pisidia. (This was a different city from Antioch in Syria, where Paul had begun his journey.) They entered the local synagogue and sat down among the men. The leaders in the synagogue acknowledged the strangers and asked Paul to speak (Acts 13:15). Paul delivered a powerful message to the Jews and Gentiles who were gathered together (read verses 16-41). Paul's message upset many of the Jews in the audience. But the Gentiles were stirred by his message. After the Jews left the synagogue, the Gentile audience asked Paul to speak again the next Sabbath (verse 42).

Crowds followed Paul and Barnabas, listening to them preach the gospel. When the next Sabbath arrived, the synagogue was filled with people because "almost the whole city [came] together to hear the word of God" (verse 44). Jews observed as more and more people entered the synagogue. They watched the expressions on people's faces; they could tell they were moved by what the apostles were saying. But they themselves rejected the message.

After Paul finished speaking, the Jews walked among the crowds, listening as the people fellowshiped about the message they had just heard. Gradually, the Jews grew jealous and bitter. They began to discredit Paul and Barnabas, contradicting their message.

The Jews were God's chosen people. God had been working with them in a special way since the time of Judah, one of the 12 sons of Jacob. Jesus had been a Jew, and the gospel message was first delivered to the

Jews, both during His ministry and after His death and resurrection. But the Jews were also the first to reject that message, as Paul was quickly learning.

In response to the Jews' disbelief and slander against the gospel, Paul boldly said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (verse 46). God was calling the Gentiles in that city, and many were baptized and made members of God's true Church. Paul's proclamation against the Jews only added to their anger. They banished the two apostles from the city and the region (verse 50).

However, Paul and Barnabas were encouraged and determined because of the success God had given them with the Gentiles at Antioch in Pisidia. They "shook off the dust of their feet" and continued moving forward toward Iconium in the east (verse 51). Iconium was one of three cities that Paul and Barnabas would visit in the Roman province of Galatia. The others were Lystra and Derbe.

Once again, the apostles spoke in a synagogue. Many of the Jews and Gentiles in the audience believed. But those who didn't believe worked to influence those who were turning toward the truth of God. A trend was emerging: Wherever Paul and Barnabas traveled, they faced persecution—not from the Gentiles, but from the Jews.

Paul and Barnabas stayed in Iconium for a "long while" and continued to boldly preach (Acts 14:3). Along with delivering the gospel message through Paul, God also performed miracles through him, confirming that he was an apostle and that his message was true. Over time, the city became divided: some believed the Jewish leaders who rejected Paul and Barnabas, and others believed their message. As the envy of the Jews grew, so did their desire to do away with God's apostles. They developed a plan to stone Paul and Barnabas (verse 5). But Paul and Barnabas discovered the threat and fled to Lystra.

As with all their other visits, after arriving in Lystra, Paul and Barnabas "_____ "

The gospel message was the foundation of everything that the first-century apostles taught. It was the same message that Jesus Christ had proclaimed (Mark 1:14). For that same reason, God's

Church today continues to proclaim the good news of the coming Kingdom of God.

From the beginning of human history, through Paul's lifetime and up to today, human beings have caused and suffered from selfishness, deceit, family breakdown, chaos, violence and war. Human beings are an amazing creation with unique qualities and abilities. They should be able to live happy lives, yet they don't. This quandary has existed throughout 6,000 years of human history. Today, it is often referred to as "the human condition."

Yet there is hope. Not in human beings, but in the intervention of God. God's people, including the first-century apostles, know that soon Jesus Christ will return. His people will meet Him in the air and will rule with Him from Jerusalem for 1,000 years (Daniel 7:14, 18, 27; Revelation 5:10; 20:4). People will finally have the missing pieces to human happiness: God's law and government.

The gospel message is the good news of that coming Kingdom.

That same commission of proclaiming the gospel of the good news to the world was given to Jesus Christ,

to Peter, to Paul, and later to Herbert W. Armstrong and to Gerald Flurry today.

In Lystra, Paul came upon a man who had been crippled since birth. The man listened intently while Paul spoke to the crowds. Paul perceived that the man had enough faith to be healed, and God worked a miracle through him and healed the man in front of everyone who was watching (Acts 14:8-10). Did the Lystrians give the credit for this miracle to God?

From Acts 14:11-13, describe the people's response to this miracle: _____

These people had just heard the gospel preached; they were taught about the coming Kingdom of God. And yet their immediate response to this miracle of healing was to conclude that Paul and Barnabas were pagan gods in human form. (The Gentile areas Paul visited, particularly Galatia, were heavily influenced by Roman and Greek mythology.) Paul and Barnabas



God commissioned the Church to proclaim the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, which will end all suffering, sickness and poverty.

were distressed that God's inspiring miracle was misunderstood to be an act of false pagan gods. Many people in the crowd wanted to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas. The apostles tore their clothes in distress.

Eventually, Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived on the scene. They worked to turn the people against the apostles. Soon, the same people who had been worshiping Paul and Barnabas turned violently against them as they believed what the visiting Jews told them. The Jews from Iconium and Antioch actually persuaded the people of Lystra to stone Paul (verse 19).

After stoning Paul, the people dragged his body outside of the city, leaving it there. But then another miracle occurred. Paul began to stir, and then he stood up (verse 20).

The day after Paul was stoned, he and Barnabas moved to Derbe, the next city in Galatia.

What did they do when they entered the city? "And when they had _____ _____ _____ to that city..." (verse 21).

Just as with all his visits, Paul taught the people about Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, filling them with hope. Not much information is recorded about Paul's visit to Derbe. It appears to have been less eventful than his time in Lystra. Later, Paul wrote a letter to Timothy and mentioned the locations where he suffered severe persecution (2 Timothy 3:11): Derbe is not on that list. Perhaps God gave Paul a more pleasant visit with less persecution, especially since he had just suffered a stoning and was left for dead.

After Paul and Barnabas had taught "many" disciples in Derbe, they traveled back through the cities they had just visited.

This was obviously dangerous. At most or all of these cities, the two apostles had suffered strong persecution and even life-threatening violence. Why did they risk facing danger again? Because they cared about the members of the Church. There were newly converted members in these cities who needed encouragement and strength, especially because they were probably being somewhat persecuted themselves.

Paul wanted to serve these members and encourage them to be strong in the faith and to withstand deception and persecution. He and Barnabas risked their safety and probably their lives, traveling back through these locations, giving God's people a long-

term vision and teaching them "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Later, Paul would write to the Galatians and encourage them to not grow weary in well doing (Galatians 6:9). You might face persecution for your beliefs: Perhaps your friends in school ignore you because you won't go out with them on Friday nights, your coach benches you a lot because you won't play on Saturdays, you can't participate in clubs and activities because you keep the Sabbath. But like the Galatians, you can be encouraged that these tribulations are for a purpose: You are persevering through tribulation to enter the Kingdom of God!

Paul and Barnabas ordained ministers in each congregation as they journeyed back through the cities toward Antioch in Syria. Paul knew that the people in these congregations needed proper government structure to be taught, corrected and encouraged and to survive and grow spiritually.

The two apostles arrived on the southern coast of Asia Minor in a town called Attalia, where they boarded a ship and sailed back to Antioch. Paul's first journey had lasted a little more than two years. In that time, God had laid the foundation of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles. After three years in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas would embark on a second journey.

In the next lesson, we will cover Paul's second journey, which, for the first time, takes him to the continent of Europe.

BIBLE MEMORY

Romans 8:38-39

Galatians 2:20

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Paul Word Search

G A L A T I A I W K I C Y P R U S S M S
A A S T S A U L C A P O S T L E C Y I A
P R M I B F T H S O E M A T Y W S R N N
T J I A A A A P A B N M I R S F Y I I A
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A B A R N A B A S N O Y G E N T I L E S

ANANIAS

ANTIOCH

APOSTLE

ARABIA

ASIA MINOR

BARNABAS

CHURCH

COMMISSION

CYPRUS

DAMASCUS

EPHESUS

FAMINE

GALATIA

GAMALIEL

GENTILES

HERETICS

ICONIUM

JERUSALEM

JOHN MARK

JUDEA

LYSTRA

MINISTRY

NAZARENES

PATHOS

PAUL

PHARISEE

SAUL

SYNAGOGUE

SYRIA

TARSUS