

**The Life and Ministry of Saul (Paul) of Tarsus
The Apostle of Grace**

Summary:

- ca. 5-15 AD: Saul was born in Tarsus, Cilicia, a Roman colony, into a devout Jewish family where he spent his earliest years.
 - ca. 15-31AD: He resided in Jerusalem, perhaps with his family, where he studied under Gamaliel, the rabban, and became a devout, zealous Pharisee.
 - ca. 32-35: As a devout Pharisee, he became host to the witness of Jesus and John the Baptist, particularly the formers claim that was the Messiah. With the birth of the church on 24 May 33 AD his obstinacy boiled over into outright persecution.
 - ca. 35: In an act of divine grace, Jesus appeared to him. he believed in Jesus and was called to proclaim the message he sought to destroy.
 - ca. 35-37: The embryonic apostle went immediately into seclusion somewhere in Arabia where he studied his Scriptures and sought to discern what had transpired in his life.
 - ca. 37: He returned to Damascus, joined the Christian community, and fearlessly proclaimed that Jesus is the Messiah until he was force out by religious opposition.
 - ca. 37-38: Saul returned to Jerusalem, the first time after his conversion, and was initially treated with rejection by the fearful believers until Barnabas, a leader among the believers, witnessed to his conversion. As in Damascus, Saul boldly proclaimed that Jesus is the Son of God/Messiah until threats on his life cause the church to send him to Tarsus.
 - ca. 38-43: Saul proclaimed Jesus in the town of his upbringing, Tarsus. "Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21)."
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ca. 44-46: Saul ministered in the church at Antioch, Syria, the growing Christian community.

**"Now those who had been scattered by the persecution
in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia,
Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews.
Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene,
went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also,
telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.
The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed
and turned to the Lord (Acts 11:19-21)."**

**"News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem,
and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.
When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God,
he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.
He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith,**

and a great number of people were brought to the Lord (Acts 11:19-25)."

**"Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,
and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch.
So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church
and taught great numbers of people Acts 11:25-26a). "**

The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts 11:22)."

What can we learn?

1. What appears tragic, at times, may bring blessing of great delight and purpose.
2. Barnabas had a wonderful walk as a believer ("a good man, full of the Holy spirit and faith"). See Acts 4:36-37.
3. The Jerusalem church cared for the safety and growth of other churches.
4. When we have a load bigger than we can carry, we should get trustworthy help.
5. Barnabas was no autocrat; he knew the power of sharing in the work, as well as exceptional people to help in the work.

ca. 46: Barnabas and Saul in Jerusalem, the famine visit.

**"During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.
One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted
that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world.
(This happened during the reign of Claudius [41-54]).
The disciples, each according to his ability,
decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.
This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:27-30)."**

What can we learn?

1. Christian faith causes charity to be a priority, especially in the family of God. They did so according to their abilities to do. It is not the amount; it is about care and sensitivity.
2. Barnabas was the leader in the emerging team.
3. It seems that I cannot find an example of a person acting in a responsible office as a loner. They grasped the concept of responsibility, accountability, the maintenance of integrity (here in money matters, later conveying an important letter).

ca. 46-48: The first missionary journey.

**"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said,
"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."
So after they had fasted and prayed,
they placed their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:2-3)."**

**"The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit,
went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.**

**When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues.
John [Mark] was with them as their helper.
They traveled through the whole until they came to Paphos
(Acts 13:4-6, Bar-Jesus and Sergius Paulus).**

**“From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia,
where John [Mark] left them to return to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13).”**

**“Where then is the sense of blessing you had? For I testify about you,
If possible you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me (Gal.4:15).”**

**“As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue [in Antioch Pisidia],
the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath.
When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews
and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas,
who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God (Acts 13:42-43).”**

**“At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue.
There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.
But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles
and poisoned their minds against the brothers (Acts 14:1-2).”**

**“Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium (to Lystra)
and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city,
thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him,
he got up and went back into the city (Acts 14:19-20a:
a healing, an elevation [Hermes and Zeus, a talker and his son], a stoning).”**

**“The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.
They preached the good news in that city
and won a large number of disciples (Acts 14:20b-21a).”**

**“... they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (Pisidia),
strengthening the souls of the disciples,
encouraging them to continue in the faith... they...
appointed elders for them... they entrusted them to the Lord
in whom they believed (Acts 14:21b-23).”**

**“From there (Attalia) they sailed to Antioch....
When they arrived, they gathered the church together...
they began their report... (Acts 14:24-27).”**

“And they spent a long time with the disciples (Acts 14:28).”

What can we learn?

1. Barnabas and Paul were under the authority of the church that sent them, reporting to them (accountability).
2. John Mark deserted, but it was not his final chapter. We all need the grace of God's restoring mercies.
3. Could Paul have suffered from malaria, something that caused the impairment of his sight? Could this have been his thorn in the flesh (II Cor.12:7)?
4. Suffering for the message of Jesus is not uncommon.
5. Paul and Barnabas had great care for those that believed, visiting them as well as organizing the churches with proven leadership.
6. It was during the mission of Paul and Barnabas on Cyprus that the former's name appears first, though it is reversed from the perspective of the Jerusalem leadership.
7. Bravery and self-sacrifice is only understand then what we value is greater than ourselves.

ca. 49: The Jerusalem Council: The affirmation of Paul's message.

"Some came down from Jerusalem...teaching.... 'Unless you are circumcised, you cannot be saved (Acts 15:1).'"

"... Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question (Acts 15:2)."

"Then after fourteen years I went up again with Barnabas, taking Titus [a convert of Paul, Titus 1:4] along also... and recognizing the grace given to me,

James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that We might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised (Gal 2:1, 9)."

"Therefore my (James) judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God... [though they should be sensitive to Jewish sensitivities] (Acts 15:19)."

"... the apostles and the elders, with the whole church... with Paul and Barnabas.... They sent Judas, called Barsabbas, and Silas with the following letter... (Acts 15:22-23a)."

"... it seemed good to us, having come to one accord to send men to them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15:25)."

What can we learn?

1. People who know the Word can distort the message they are to proclaim due to the blinders of cultural and religious prejudice. Here the issue is that progressive revelation was discounted as a possibility. I take it that these are believers, but they have blundered with blinders.

2. When what you believe is challenged, it is wise to go to trusted knowledgeable people for advice and perspective..
3. The leadership in Jerusalem addressed the issue by listening to the delegates, listening to Peter and James, and conforming it in a letter send by delegates from Jerusalem as well as the returnees from Antioch. This is the “multiple witness rule.”
4. While the gospel is not composed of our cultural prejudices, we must be aware of the power of our past experiences and react with sensitivity toward others.
5. The church in Jerusalem was led by elders though they had the presence of some Apostles. James, the brother of our Lord, seems to have been the leader. This seems exceptional.

ca. 49 The conflict with Peter in Antioch

**“...when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face....
I said to Cephas in the presence of all, ‘If you being a Jew,
live like the Gentiles, and not like the Jews,
how it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews’ (Gal 2:11, 14).”**

What can we learn?

1. Sometimes people who know better do not act according to what they know.
2. Paul understood Peter’s conduct as destroying the message they both accented to in Jerusalem.
3. There are times that a person needs confronting, especially when conduct is contrary to the gospel.
4. This incident tells us that Paul understood that works and grace are antithetical in the gospel message and in sanctification (when it is the motive for action).