



Paul, Principles from His Life up to the Jerusalem Vow

It is possible for a religious type to be saved as indicated by the conversion of Saul in Acts 9:1-7. When a person is newly born again, they need council and information. A new believer should not get involved in serving Jesus immediately. Paul went to Arabia for a long tenure of study via revelation from God. Acts 9:8; Gal. 1.

"Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one." (Acts 9:1-7, NASB)

"Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus." (Acts 9:8, NASB)

After a time of preparation, Paul then returned to Damascus and had a ministry to various people there. This was Paul's first secondary ministry. We will find that Paul had several ministries before his main one. Acts 9:20-22; Gal. 1:17.

"and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ." (Acts 9:20-22, NASB)

"nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus." (Galatians 1:17, NASB)

When Paul went to Jerusalem the first time others were skeptical about him, but God provided Barnabas who seemed to take him under his wing. Acts 9:26-28.

"When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord." (Acts 9:26-28, NASB)

In one's early ministry, God often protects a man from those who would do him harm by removing him from their midst. Paul went to Tarsus. The church at Jerusalem felt it necessary to send someone to Antioch to help stabilize the Antioch church. Barnabas went. The early churches often had the experience and personnel to help another church that is getting grounded. Acts 9:29-30; Acts 11:22-23.

"And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death. But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus." (Acts 9:29-30, NASB)



“The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;” (Acts 11:22-23, NASB)

Obedience to the immediate plan of God enables the plan of God to develop and others to become incorporated into it. By Barnabas coming to Antioch, he then was available to go and bring Paul back and thus Paul was incorporated into the ministry of the Antioch church from which his other main ministries would develop.

Paul’s year-long ministry at Antioch expressed the doctrine of the secondary ministry. Wherever you are, as long as you are in God’s plan, you are in your right niche for that time. God has brought you there, so you are exactly where God wants you. When He is ready to move you, He will. Up to this point, Paul’s ministry was in several segments, in several places, and in several types of settings. In Damascus, Paul was in the synagogues. In Jerusalem, Paul was throughout the city. In Antioch, Paul ministered largely in the local church.

After Paul had ministered for the year in Antioch, he was given his first assignment. Was it to hold a 30-day crusade in the Roman Empire in the amphitheater? No! He was to accompany Barnabas to Jerusalem and the Judea area with an offering. Here is the great apostle as a delivery boy. You often begin your ministry by doing the insignificant and mundane things. Paul and Barnabas, however, were faithful in the little things. Acts 11:30.

“And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.” (Acts 11:30, NASB)

Before the Antioch church sent Paul and Barnabas on the first stage of Paul’s main ministry, several things had to be true and they were. Paul had proved himself in the one year ministry at the Antioch church. Paul had proved himself and his message in the Jewish synagogue. Paul and Barnabas both had proved themselves faithful in the small issues of the ministry such as offering delivery. The Holy Spirit had made it perfectly clear to the congregation that there should be someone sent out and Paul and Barnabas were the two to go.

When Paul and Barnabas were appointed by the church to go forth on the missionary journey, there were several things that they did not do. They did not check with Jerusalem for approval. They did not challenge the leadership of the Antioch church in sending them out. When Paul and Barnabas went out on their first journey, they knew exactly how to do their ministry, first to the Jews, secondly to the Gentiles. This is borne out in Acts 13:5, Acts 13:14, Acts 13:42-45, and Acts 14:1.

“When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.” (Acts 13:5, NASB)

“But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.” (Acts 13:14, NASB)

“As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God. The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.” (Acts 13:42-45, NASB)

“In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.” (Acts 14:1, NASB)



Hate campaigns came early in Paul's ministry. Grecians sought to slay Paul at Jerusalem early in his ministry. Jews at Damascus sought to slay Paul. Elymas the sorcerer sought to trick Paul and Barnabas. Acts 9:29; Acts 9:22-23; Acts 13:10.

"And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death." (Acts 9:29, NASB)

"But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ. When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him," (Acts 9:22-23, NASB)

"and said, 'You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?' (Acts 13:10, NASB)

Jews were filled with envy and badmouthed Paul at Antioch of Pisidia. The Jews stirred up others and raised persecution against Paul. Acts 13:45; Acts 13:50.

"But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming." (Acts 13:45, NASB)

"But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district." (Acts 13:50, NASB)

In Iconium, the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles. People who hate you often follow you around. In Lystra, Jews from Antioch and Iconium came out to stone Paul. Acts 14:2; Acts 14:19.

"But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren." (Acts 14:2, NASB)

"But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead." (Acts 14:19, NASB)

Early in the ministry of Paul, there arose a controversy. You cannot be a fence rider. You must decide this once and for all. You cannot avoid controversy especially with false doctrine. Circumcision was a background heritage type of problem. Here, Paul faced squarely a challenge from his very own background. One of the things that sometimes gives the minister the very first real challenge has to do with a test involving something in his background. This was the matter of legalism as expressed in Jews desiring believers to be circumcised along with faith in Christ.

Christianity as a Movement

One of the areas of doctrine that comes out in the book of Acts is that Christianity was a movement. We can learn many things good and bad from the life of Paul and the Book of Acts on how a movement operates, develops, has problems, tendencies and many other things. The following are several factors that we can learn about a movement from the Book of Acts.

A movement usually starts around a person or particular belief. A movement has a definite center of influence and those with authority. A movement will usually always prosper from publicity whether good or bad. A movement will often look to its mother headquarters for information and decisions far after that mother headquarters has fulfilled its mission.

A movement will change its thrust as it changes its geographical headquarters. This is indicated by the stage of ministry of the Antioch church as compared to the ministry of the Jerusalem church. Within a movement, there is always communication. The original headquarters will always seem to keep a partial



knowledge of what is going on in the movement and vice versa. There will always be people in any movement who will move around within the movement and stir up problems.

Within a movement there is always the tendency and danger to set up a hierarchy that is not based on spiritual gifts. The coming and going between the Jerusalem church and the Antioch church was in part due to the presence of the apostles who had authority over more than one church. This was quite bona fide at that time. A movement must always keep the truth foremost and recognize the independence of its various parts. The Jerusalem church after the Jerusalem council recognized that the Antioch church had its own ministry and who were they to superimpose regulations upon Antioch contrary to Bible doctrine.

In any movement, people have to be responsible for their actions and if they cause problems in someone's location, it is up to them to straighten it out. When one part of a movement causes problems in another part, then it is fair to clear it up personally. The Jerusalem church realized that its members had caused problems at Antioch, so they took measures by letters and dispatched the right people to go in person and straighten it out.

One of the very clear policies of Paul and Barnabas was the practice of putting someone with a spiritual gift of communication in charge of each church that they established before they moved on. It's a tragedy to bring believers into the cruel world and then go off and leave them to the unbelieving and believing hordes. Acts 14:23.

"When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." (Acts 14:23, NASB)

One of the occasions which teaches us many doctrines about the local church is the Jerusalem council. Following are some of the specific things that we can learn from the happenings of the Jerusalem council. From this event in Acts, we learn that there are some things that should be discussed in a congregation and some things that should be reserved to private closed door meeting of the proper leadership of a local church. Decisions of belief and policy are to be reserved for the private meeting of leadership whereas statement of beliefs, practices, conclusions, verdicts and judgments should be made before all.

In the private meeting of the leadership, there was equal say of all the members, Paul, Barnabas, Peter, James, John and apparently others who entered the discussion, but when it came to a congregational pronouncement at the Jerusalem church, it was their own pastor, James, who made the pulpit announcement. It was James who took the responsibility for the actions of some of his sheep that had gone to Antioch and caused the legalism problem. As the responsible pastor, James took the necessary action for the conduct of his sheep and sent the letter to Antioch with personal carriers.

Another thing that we can learn from the council at Jerusalem is that church councils and their pronouncements can only declare a doctrinal position. They cannot insure that the problem will not happen again. As the continued account of Acts and history shows, in spite of the declaration condemning circumcision as binding upon believers, legalism of this type developed in Galatian churches and was later at Jerusalem in large measure when Paul went there later for the feast of Pentecost and got involved with the vow in the temple.

Following the Jerusalem council, Silas stayed behind at Antioch after delivering the message of the Jerusalem church. This again was God's provision in advance for Paul as God knew of the division that would occur with Paul and Barnabas over John Mark. One of the points of doctrine that we can learn from both the second and third missionary journeys of Paul is the extreme necessity of revisiting the



ones ministered to and the whole issue of confirming and grounding them. This is obvious in the repeat visits to the cities where they had been before.

The third missionary journey had several other doctrinal lessons for us, the following being a few. There comes a time when two men who are working together find it pertinent to separate because of some type of clash. Just having a spiritual gift does not mean that all problems are solved. In this case, separation from each other was not the end of the world, but rather the beginning of new things. This was the case as related to Paul and Barnabas.

Another factor in the third missionary journey was the surfacing of men in various localities. Timothy had become known in Acts 16:1-2. This raises the concept of doctrine of the recognition of spiritual gifts in a man by the congregation or people of his acquaintance. Others often spot your spiritual gift before you do. The Word makes it quite clear that a common commodity for a man going out in the ministry was in fact the recognition of his spiritual gift first by those who know him. This was true of the choosing of the deacons early in Acts, also sending Paul and Barnabas, and then the emerging of Timothy.

“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.” (Acts 16:1-2, NASB)

Another factor made clear by this journey as well as the other two is the fact that once the men entered their ministry and left the church, they conducted their mission as they were led of God with full freedom. The Antioch church did not direct Paul’s mission as space headquarters directed the astronauts flying around the moon.

Another factor that Paul made clear on his third journey was to make fully known the decrees and decisions of the council of Jerusalem. No punches were pulled. This is leveling with others who may know of a situation which existed but didn’t know the final outcome. This could be the former epistle that Paul refers to regarding the Corinthian believers. The Corinthian believers had troubles with questionable or doubtful things and the decree from Jerusalem had that as part of its content.

On the third missionary journey, we have a very definite lesson in the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to geographical ministry. In Acts 16, we have the case of the closed door to Asia and the closed door to Bithynia. When God closed off a potential ministry or a geographical location, He definitely has something else for you to do or a different place for you to go.

Secondly, regarding God closing doors, when God is ready to reveal His will, He will make it so clear that you will be certain of it. Thirdly, regarding the closed doors, God made known His will to the one in charge. The whole company did not see the vision, only Paul, but the leadership being on course gave security to the whole group. They all were assured. God leads the church through the pastor. God leads the home through the husband.

The third missionary journey makes clear the principle of using the men that God has put on your team. This is seen in many places, one being Acts 17:14. The missionary journeys of Paul and his company make it clear that they were all well prepared to minister to all types of persons, backgrounds, personalities, and under all kinds of conditions. The missionary journeys make clear that the company and Paul were able to hold up financially, physically, emotionally, and mentally to the task that was before them. They were equal to any opposition that came to them. They did not give the opposition any more opportunity to persecute them than necessary, but neither did they run from it.



“Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.” (Acts 17:14, NASB)

The third missionary journey makes very clear the example of a mature believer departing from the specific will of God, as shown by Paul’s desire to go to Jerusalem, and his taking the vow in the temple. Now, we will take a closer look at Paul’s whole attitude toward going to Jerusalem for Pentecost.

The Book of Romans was written on the third missionary journey at Corinth. Paul stated that he was definitely heading to Jerusalem and in Romans 15:26-27, gave one of his purposes for going as taking a relief offering to the saints there.

“For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.” (Romans 15:26-27, NASB)

Written before Romans, in 1 Corinthians 16:2-5, Paul referred to the fact that if it was proper or suitable for him to go to Jerusalem, he would be glad to do so. He wrote this from Ephesus at the outset of the third journey. In 1 Corinthians 16:8, Paul also mentions that the third missionary journey would probably climax by coming back to Ephesus and staying there till Pentecost, when he would then go on to Jerusalem and take it in.

“On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me. But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia;” (1 Corinthians 16:2-5, NASB)

“But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost;” (1 Corinthians 16:8, NASB)

In 2 Corinthians 8:16-20, Paul refers again to the offering that he and his men would administer for the suffering believers. In spite of repeated warnings, Paul was dead set on going to Jerusalem.

“But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord. We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches; and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness, taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;” (2 Corinthians 8:16-20, NASB)

The Holy Spirit had witnessed in every city that he should not go to Jerusalem. The disciples at Tyre made clear by the Holy Spirit to Paul that he should not go to Jerusalem. Acts 20:23; Acts 21:4.

“except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.” (Acts 20:23, NASB)

“After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.” (Acts 21:4, NASB)

The prophet Agabus, in Philip’s house, made clear that Paul would be bound at Jerusalem, that he definitely should not go. The company of Paul and his staff also told him that it would not be good for him to go to Jerusalem. Acts 21:10-11; Acts 21:12.



“As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'”” (Acts 21:10-11, NASB)

“When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem.” (Acts 21:12, NASB)

The Lord Himself appeared to Paul in the temple and told him to get out while he still could. In Acts 22:17-18, Paul gives an account here in retrospect referring back to the week he spent in the temple, and tells this to the Jews along with the Lord's response in Acts 22:21.

“"It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.'” (Acts 22:17-18, NASB)

“"And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'”” (Acts 22:21, NASB)