



***“We proclaim Christ!
We warn everyone we meet, and we teach everyone we can,
all that we know about Him, so that, if possible,
we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ Jesus.
This is what I am working at all the time,
with all the strength that God gives me.”***
-- The Apostle Paul
Colossians 1:28-29 Phillips

CALLED BY CHRIST
Paul's Conversion
A.D. 35

FREEDOM IN CHRIST
Galatians
A.D. 49

LIVING IN CHRIST
Ephesians
A.D. 60 – 62

JOY IN CHRIST
Philippians
A.D. 60 - 62

COMPLETE IN CHRIST
Colossians
A.D. 60 – 62

POURED OUT FOR CHRIST
2 Timothy
A.D. 67

Introduction

Paul opened his eyes and, for a moment, tried to remember where he was. The room was bare and simple, familiar only in the way that it looked the same as any other to this road weary traveler. Salt air and the bustling noise of a nearby harbor cleared the last bit of slumber away. He was in Miletus, a sleepy port on the jagged shores of the Mediterranean. This was just a stopover. Jerusalem was his destination.

In three missionary trips spanning just over a decade, Paul had logged more than 6,000 miles by land and sea. (Not to mention countless miles covered during his early years as a Christian.) For this traveling minister, home wasn't defined so much by a place as it was by a passion. He felt most at home preaching the gospel *wherever* that might be.

Heading to Jerusalem, Paul could see clouds gathering. He was no stranger to hardship but walking into a storm is never easy. Even his travel companions (a handful of friends including Luke) were feeling apprehensive. Paul arranged passage for them on a ship bound from Troas; but he intended to make the first leg of the journey alone, by foot. Saying he would meet them at the next port, Paul climbed the coastal path up to the road that followed the rugged shoreline. It was a twenty mile walk with the sapphire blue sea to his right, sun-drenched hills to his left, and undisturbed time to settle his heart. Only God and Paul know what they talked about that day. After Paul boarded the ship in Assos, Luke tells us they sailed by day, made port each night, and arrived in Miletus three days later.

Paul sent word to the church leaders in Ephesus, some thirty miles away. Could they come to Miletus? If they made good time, they could be there by morning. Paul's urgent summons was quickly answered. Let the scene play out in your mind. A messenger leads the men to a rented room where Paul and his companions are staying. Greetings are exchanged; Paul asks his friends to sit down; Luke reaches for his pen. All eyes quietly search the face of their old friend, waiting for him to speak. Paul says what he's been rehearsing in his thoughts and prayers all night. His words sink in slowly at first, but then his meaning comes clear...he's *saying goodbye*. Where clouds gather, rain is bound to fall and the tears flowed freely in that room. They got down on their knees, wept and prayed together, then walked Paul and his companions to the ship. It was a difficult send-off. "We tore ourselves away from them," Luke wrote.

Similar scenes played out in city after city as friends begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Luke even admits that he feared for Paul's safety and pleaded with him not to continue. Strained with emotion, Paul finally exclaimed that their weeping and constant pleading was breaking his heart! But he was resolved. *I'm willing to suffer, even die, for my Lord Jesus*. Paul meant what he said and eventually he died for his faith in Jesus; but not before showing Christians how to *live* by faith in Jesus.

Let's begin this study by acknowledging the obvious: the apostle Paul was an extraordinary man called by God to fulfill a unique role in Christian history. No one will be filling his shoes. Tracing his steps is no small order either, but it's worth every bit of energy and effort we can muster. Why? Because you can't follow Paul's tracks very far before discovering that God has a plan for your life too. Jesus died to give you eternal life *starting now*. How will you live it? Consider Paul's answer on that stopover in Miletus when he said, *My life is worth nothing to me unless I spend it doing what Jesus called me to do, telling others about the good news of God's grace*.

Do you want to know Jesus more and experience the power of His presence in your daily life? If you mean business, dig in. Read these letters like you've never read them before. Don't think of them as chapters in a textbook—that's not how Paul wrote them! Let them come alive and speak to you with all the Spirit-breathed life and passion that Paul poured into them.

CALLED BY CHRIST

Paul's Conversion

Acts 8:1-3, Acts 9:1-31
Inductive Discovery Lesson 1



Born: In Tarsus, an important city in the province of Cilicia. Because of its location on a major route connecting Asia Minor to the East, Tarsus was a prosperous trade center. The Taurus Mountains curved around the city like a natural fortress, making it a strategic military post. The Cydnus River flowed through the middle of Tarsus and out into a manmade harbor that was the boast of the ancient world. Some forty years before Paul's birth, Marc Antony proudly watched Cleopatra's extravagant armada sail into this harbor to meet him. Tarsus was also a city of culture and learning, a "university town" known for its study of philosophy.

Family: Paul came from a family of Diaspora Jews, meaning they were Jews who lived outside of Palestine. In Paul's day, Jews were living in every major city of the world, including the region known as Syria-Cilicia. But while Paul was born into a Gentile world, he lived in a strict Jewish home. His parents were devoutly committed to raising their son according to the sacred Law of Moses, shielding him as much as possible from the contamination of Gentile ways.

We can't say much with certainty about Paul's family. His mother may have died while Paul was still a young child. His father was a prosperous tentmaker, a free Roman citizen, and a strict Pharisee. He had at least one sibling, a sister mentioned in Acts 23:16.

Education: For devout Jews, social and religious life revolved around the synagogue. As a child, Paul learned to read the Scriptures, repeating every phrase until the rabbi deemed it precisely correct. He was taught to read and write in Aramaic and Greek. By the education standards of the day, Paul excelled in Jewish history, poetry, and the prophets by the age of thirteen. He was sent to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel, a famous rabbi who not only saturated his students in Hebrew scripture, but exposed them to Greek learning as well.

Young Adult: Paul was trained as a rabbi (part teacher, preacher, lawyer) who aspired to a seat on the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court of his day. Whether he actually achieved that goal is uncertain, but he was clearly pursuing it when we first meet him in the Book of Acts.

Paul may, or may not, have been married. Jews rarely chose to remain single, and candidates for the Sanhedrin were required to be married and have children. Paul never mentions a wife, but his teaching indicates he had personal knowledge of the blessings and pressures that come with marriage and raising a family. It is commonly thought that Paul lost his wife and chose to remain single the rest of his life.

Occupation: Paul was a tentmaker, like his father before him. It was a lucrative occupation, especially in his hometown. Tarsus was famous for its black tents, made with an expensive fabric (called cilicium) woven from black goat's hair. Paul's skill as a tentmaker gave him the freedom to pursue his ministry without becoming financially dependent upon others.

Working Text for Acts 8:1-3 and Acts 9:1-31
New American Standard Version (NAS)

8:1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. **2** Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. **3** But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.



9:1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, **2** 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. **3** As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; **4** and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” **5** And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, **6** but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.” **7** The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. **8** 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. **9** And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” **11** And the Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, **12** and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.” **13** But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints in Jerusalem; **14** and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” **15** But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles

and kings and the sons of Israel; **16** for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." **17** So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." **18** And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; **19** and he took food and was strengthened.

20 Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, **20** and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." **21** 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?" **22** But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

23 When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, **24** but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; **25** but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.

26 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. **27** 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. **28** And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. **29** And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death. **30** But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus. **31** So the church throughout Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.



OBSERVATION

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you specifically find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Briefly describe, *in your own words*, what it says.

Use the second column to record information you gather from other sources such as a dictionary, concordance, maps, etc. You can also use this section to jot down **your thoughts, impressions or questions that come to mind.** *Do your best to follow Paul's train of thought.* Does he emphasize a particular topic? Are his words urgent? Encouraging? Commanding? What issues or problems does he address? What questions does he ask?

Acts 8:1-3

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

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Acts 9:1-9

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

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Acts 9:10-22

Facts from the passage:

This image shows a full page of primary-ruled paper. It consists of multiple sets of three horizontal dashed lines, which are commonly used in elementary school notebooks to guide handwriting practice. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the entire width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

My Research and Personal Observations:

[illegible]

Acts 9:23-31

Facts from the passage:

[illegible]

My Research and Personal Observations:

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary-ruled notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Tracing Paul's Steps: *The Early Years*

- Saul has a life-changing encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:3)
- From Damascus, Saul goes to Arabia (unknown period of time). Returns to Damascus. (Galatians 1:17)
- Jews in Damascus plot to kill Saul; he escapes in a basket let down over the city wall. (Acts 9:25)
- Saul goes to Jerusalem 3 years after his conversion; meets Peter & James. (Acts 9:26-27; Gal. 1:18-19)
- His life in danger, Saul is compelled to leave Jerusalem after only 15 days. (Acts 9:29; Acts 22:17-21; Galatians 1:18)
- Saul boards a ship in Caesarea; returns to Tarsus and the "regions of Syria and Cilicia" for an unknown period of time. (Acts 9:30; Galatians 1:21)
- News of Gentile converts in Antioch reaches Jerusalem; Barnabas is sent to investigate. Barnabas goes to Tarsus and brings Saul back with him to Antioch, where they minister for a year. (Acts 11:19-26)
- The church of Antioch sends Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem with famine relief. (Acts 11:27-30)
- Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch, bringing John Mark with them. (Acts 12:25)





INTERPRETATION — *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as: “Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? Is there an example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**

APPLICATION — *How does it apply to me?*

We don’t study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to ***put it into action***.

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new insight for me, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Acts 8:1-3

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

?

Acts 9:1-9

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

?

Acts 9:10-22

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

?

Acts 9:23-31

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

?

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the passage is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.



Take a Closer Look

**“So the church...enjoyed peace,
being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord
and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”
Acts 9:31 NAS**

Memorize God’s Word

Choose the translation you prefer to memorize from and re-write the verse here.

Meditate on God’s Word

Look up. What does this verse teach you about God? (For example, look for signs of His character, His attributes, His works, His promises.)

Look around. What does this verse teach you about the world and people in general?

Look within. What does this verse teach you about yourself?

Look ahead. Does this verse give you reason to hope? Briefly share your thoughts.

Look alive! Given the opportunity, how would you express the truth found in this verse to someone who needs to hear it?

Make God's Word Your Prayer

As you memorize and meditate on this verse, pray it back to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit examine your heart, increase your understanding, and help you to pray. Ask Him for faith and strength to *act* on the truth of God's Word.



Something to Think About . . .

It was a time of “peace” for the churches, but not a time of complacency, for they grew both spiritually and numerically. They seized the opportunity to repair and strengthen their sails before the next storm began to blow! ¹

-Warren Wiersbe

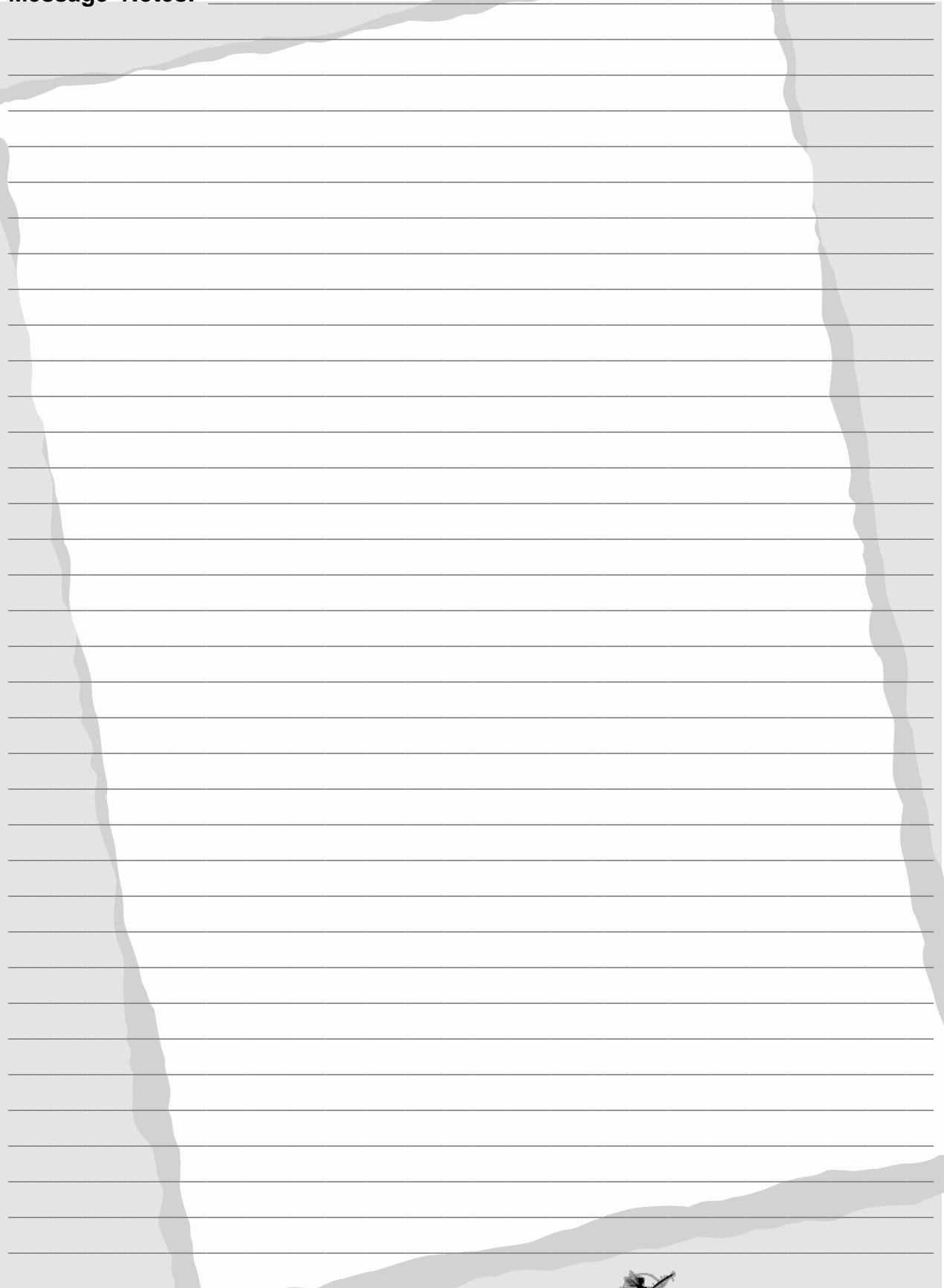


God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you, personally, what has been the most important lesson from this study?
How will you put what God has shown you into practice?

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary*, pg. 442

Message Notes:

A large rectangular area with a torn paper border and horizontal lines for writing. The border is irregular and jagged, resembling torn paper. The interior is filled with horizontal lines, providing space for notes.

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