Paul's Work and His First Missionary Journeys

Background Reading

Acts 7:58; 8:3; 22:3; 23:16;
2 Corinthians 11:22; 25-26;
Philippians 3:5

Devotional Reading

Acts 9:1-31

Central Verse

"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my sake."
Acts 9:15, KJV

"But the Lord said, 'Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentile and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel."
Acts 9:15, NLT

Key Terms

Advocacy—The act or process of supporting a cause or proposal: the act or process of advocating for something.
Chosen Vessel—A chosen vessel is not self-selected but is chosen by God for His purposes, as seen in Acts 9:15, where God says of Paul, "He is a chosen vessel unto me".
Hellenistic—Of or relating to the widespread Greek-based culture that developed after the conquests of Alexander the Great.

Introduction

Saul of Tarsus was born in the cultural city of Tarsus, located in the province of Cilicia (modern-day Türkiye), and raised as a Jew in a primarily Hellenistic environment. Saul was a Roman citizen, a status that provided him with legal privileges. This unique combination of Jewish heritage, Greek cultural

exposure, and Roman citizenship shaped his perspective and equipped him to travel widely throughout the Roman Empire.

The scripture also mentions his sister and a nephew (Acts 23:16), which allows readers of the Bible to know that he was connected to his family. He was a member of the Tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5) and was trained under the renowned rabbi Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). He was blessed to be well-connected in both his private and public life. The instruction under Gamaliel helped to firmly root him in the traditions of the Pharisees, a Jewish sect known for its strict adherence to the Law of Moses and the oral traditions passed down through generations. It was said that at one time, he must have been married, because marriage was one of the requirements of being a member of the Sanhedrin Courts. Saul was so passionate about the purity of his faith that it drove him to pursue the followers of Jesus with great zeal. Whom he viewed as a threat to traditional Judaism. Saul had a firm conviction about his religion, but he was convinced about the wrong thing. His conviction led him to the authorities, allowing him to obtain the proper credentials. With them, he sought for every man and woman that he could find calling on the name of Jesus and persecuting them.

Discussion

Saul was on the Damascus Road, en route seeking to arrest followers of Jesus, when he encountered Jesus. It was an experience of a lifetime. Jesus appeared in a voice and spoke to him. He recognized that the voice was the voice of the Lord (Acts 9:4). He was knocked off his beast and went completely blind for a few days. When a person really meets Jesus, they are never the same again. From this encounter with Jesus, he received instructions on where to go and whom to see. Saul went to Straight Street, to the house of Ananias, where he received prayer. He received instructions, his sight, the Holy Ghost, was baptized, and he began to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He spent time in Damascus with the disciples preaching in the synagogues.

After being there for a while preaching about Jesus, the Jews took counsel to kill him. They watched the gates day and night, waiting to kill him. But the disciples let him down at night in a basket over the wall of the city, where he was able to escape to Jerusalem. The same Jesus whom he was against and had sought to kill all those he could find who had embraced Him; after his conversion became a champion of His Gospel. The believers no longer

had to run and hide; they had peace. His conversion ended his persecution of the church and marked the beginning of his advocacy of the message he once opposed.

While many of the prophets and teachers were at Antioch fasting and praying, the Holy Ghost spoke and said, "Separate me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them." The disciples fasted and prayed, laid hands on them, and sent them on their way.

Acts chapter 13 is an example for any church to model if they desire to be a missionary-sending church. Number one: Any missionary activity must be initiated by the leading of the Holy Ghost through spirit-led leaders, who are devoted to God and His kingdom through fasting and prayer. Number two: The church must be sensitive to the guidance and prophetic ministry and activity of the holy Spirit. Number three: Missionaries who go to the nation must go with the empowering presence, endorsement, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Number four: By prayer and fasting, seeking to be in alignment with the Holy Spirit's will, the church confirms those who are set apart for going to the nations. The goal is always to send those that the Holy Spirit has set apart. Number five: Through the laying on of hands and the sending out of missionaries, the church demonstrates its commitment to support and encourage those who go to the nations. The responsibility of the sending church includes sending the missionaries on their way with love and in a manner worthy of God. Praying for them and providing financial support, including offering love in return for their support. Missionaries are the extension of the purpose, concern, and mission of the sending church. Number six: Those who go out as missionaries must be willing to risk their lives for the name of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Paul became one of the greatest missionaries that this world has ever known. He wrote most of the books that are used in the New Testament. His missionary commitment led him to be involved in what seemed to be "no-win" situations. God always had an answer to bring him out as a winner in every situation. His life was a life filled with sacrifices, rejections, loneliness, conflicts, peril, sword, hurts, and anything else that the devil tried to do to his life. Yet his declaration "that he would not allow anything to separate him from the love of God," held him fast to God's unchanging Hand.

Questions

1. What was Paul's work?
2. Why did he want to kill christian men and women?
3. How did he meet Jesus?
4. What happened to Saul after he met Jesus?
5. How can the guideline in this lesson help other missionaries?
6. What was Paul's first missionary journey?
7. How can the guideline in this lesson help other missionaries?
8. What was Paul's first missionary journey?

Essential Thought

An unchangeable God can change any human situation.