

UNION BAPTIST CHURCH
BIBLE STUDY – CHRISTIANITY 101

TUESDAY, September 23, 2025

Stan Campbell, *Bible to Go: Genesis to Revelation in One Hour*, (New York: Faith Words, 2006)

Paul – His Life and Ministry (As outlined in the Holy Scriptures)

Other than Jesus, Paul is perhaps the most significant figure in the New Testament. Although Peter, John, and other of Jesus' disciples went on to have influential and lasting ministries, Paul took the gospel of Jesus to a whole new realm: the Gentile nations.

Paul's Background

In Paul's first appearance in the Bible, he isn't seen as a good guy. While Stephen is being stoned to death, Paul is watching the coats of the stone throwers and giving assent to their actions (Acts 7:57-58; 8:1). At some point his name changes from Saul to Paul, but the change isn't explained (Acts 13:9). Perhaps he took a more Gentile-sounding name when he began a ministry to those outside the Jewish faith.

But Paul is certainly a good Jewish name. He was born in Tarsus, a city rich with Greek and Roman influences. Not only was his father a Pharisee, but Paul also had the honor of being born a Roman citizen, which gave him certain privileges (Acts 22:3). And he studied under a respected rabbi named Gamaliel (Acts 26:4-5). So, when the followers of Jesus attempt to introduce new teachings to the Jews that conflict with his beliefs, Paul does all he can to arrest, imprison, and put them to death (Acts 26:9-11).

Paul's Conversion

One day Saul (Paul) has gotten permission to go to Damascus (about 150 miles away) to seek out any believers in Jesus, planning to bring them back to Jerusalem as prisoners (Acts 9:1-2). But along the way, Paul is stopped in his tracks by a brilliant light from heaven. He falls to the ground and hears a voice ask, "*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*" Unable to see, Paul asks, "Who are you, Lord?" The voice replies, "*I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do*" (Acts 9:4-6).

The men with Paul hear something, but don't know what is going on. Clearly something has happened to Paul because he remains blind for three days (Acts 9:7-9). A brave and faithful disciple in Damascus named Ananias is instructed by God to restore Paul's sight and introduce him to the believers there. Ananias does as he is told, and Paul believed and is baptized (Acts 9:10-18). When the Jewish leaders discover that Paul has converted, they plot to kill him. Paul faces much persecution for the rest of his life.

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Paul's Mission

After his conversion, Paul quickly becomes just as passionate to spread the word about Jesus as he had previously been to persecute believers. He realized God has been preparing him for this transformation (Galatians 1:13-17). And indeed, the work of Paul is responsible for much of the New Testament. The book of Acts (written by Luke) records much about Paul's life and is followed by thirteen [Possibly 14, as the book of Hebrews has been disputed] epistles (letters) written by Paul to various people and churches.

Soon, he is called to travel with another disciple Barnabas and take the good news about Jesus to other places. This would be the first of three missionary journeys (**1st**, Acts chapters 13-14; **2nd**, Acts chapters 16-18; and **3rd**, chapters 19-21). Paul helps start churches, later revisiting or writing many of them in order to keep in touch. His teaching and instructions to the churches lay the groundwork for much of the doctrinal basis for Christianity.

Paul's Suffering

Paul considers suffering for his beliefs to be not only a reasonable expectation for a Christian but also a privilege because it connects him with the suffering of Jesus. When a group of pseudo-apostles attempt to usurp his authority, he gives a succinct description of some of the things he had been through as outlined in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28.

Paul, His Later Years

Paul didn't mind arrest and imprisonment because it enabled him to share his beliefs with influential people. Late in his life he was arrested and taken to Rome for trial, after which he was released (Chapters 26 -27 of Acts). But apparently, he was arrested again, and tradition says he was beheaded. Yet he lived his life in a state of contentment (Philippians 4:12-13) and was ready to die whenever the time came. Since he was living for the Lord, he would say with confidence, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21).

Next Week's Focus:

- **Paul – His Letters to the Churches**

Note: My prayer is that our study time will help each of us strengthen our knowledge of God's Word.