

A Short Outline of the Life of Paul the Apostle

I. Early Life and Background (Acts 7:54—8:8, 18:3, 21:39, 22:3-4, 26:4-5; 2 Cor. 11:16-33; Gal. 1:11-14; Phil. 3:2-6)

A Roman citizen; raised in Tarsus, a city of the Jewish Diaspora; of the tribe of Benjamin; named “Saul” after Benjamin’s most famous son; trained as a Pharisee in Jerusalem by the famous rabbi Gamaliel (cf. Acts 5:33-40); a tent-maker by trade; zealous for the Law; complicit in the stoning of Stephen; persecuted early believers; set out for Damascus with letters for their arrest.

II. Conversion and Early Ministry (Acts 9:1-32, 11:19-30, 12:25, 22:4-21, 26:9-21; Gal. 1:15-24)

Meets the risen Christ on the road to Damascus and receives the filling of the Holy Spirit in the city; three years in Arabia and Damascus witnessing in the synagogues; escapes the wrath of the Jews in a basket over the city walls; stays in Jerusalem 15 days with Peter, meeting the disciples, and witnessing to the Jews; commanded by Jesus in a vision to leave the city and go to the Gentiles; sent by the Jerusalem church to Caesarea, then Tarsus; Barnabus brings Saul to Syrian Antioch where the pair teach for one year; Saul and Barnabus bring famine relief money from Antioch to Judea. Christ-followers called “Christians” for the first time in Antioch.

III. First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1—14:28)

Saul and Barnabus chosen by the Holy Spirit for missionary service (See map); they take along John Mark; minister to Jews in the synagogues before turning to the Gentiles; Proconsul Sergius Paulus comes to faith at Cyprus; John Mark leaves them and returns to Jerusalem; Paul (13:9) and Barnabus mistaken for gods at Lystra, then stoned. (See map for further details)

IV. The Jerusalem Council, A. D. 49 (Acts 15:1-35; Gal. 2:1-10)

Men from Judea come to Syrian Antioch and preach circumcision; Paul and Barnabus attend the Jerusalem Council to decide the issue; bring back letters of encouragement.

V. Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36—18:22)

Paul and Barnabus to visit church-plants from first journey but disagree over leaving John Mark behind; Paul and Silas set out & Timothy joins them; Paul receives call to Macedonia in a dream; Lydia is first convert in Europe; visit Athens; speech at the Areopagus. (See map for more details)

VI. Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23—21:16)

In Ephesus for 2 years teaching at the School of Tyrannus; builds up previous church-plants; meets some of John the Baptist’s disciples; to Jerusalem for Pentacost.

VII. Imprisonment and Journey to Rome (Acts 21:17—28:31; Phil. 1:12-13, 18-26,)

Riot breaks out in Jerusalem at Paul’s preaching; arrested and speaks before Felix and Festus; demands to have his case heard by the Emperor; shipwrecked in Malta; placed under house arrest in Rome; the gospel heard by the Emperor’s bodyguards; assumed released after 2-year statute of limitations expired.

VIII. Fourth Missionary Journey (?) (Romans 15:24 & 28; Titus 1:5 & 3:12; 2 Timothy 1:15, 4:9-21; Philemon 22; Philippians 2:23-24; and additional accounts given by the early church historians Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria)

IX. Second Roman Imprisonment and Martyrdom (2 Timothy 1:3-12, 4:6-12)