

Week 1 - Watching Paul Pursue Jesus' Mission

Overview: Who was the Apostle Paul? What do we know about his life before Christ? How did he fulfill his calling as the Apostle to the Gentiles? We will examine the life and ministry of Paul as he passionately pursued Jesus' expanding mission throughout the Roman Empire. Paul was a theologian, an orator, and a scholar; but primarily he was a missionary. Together we will learn from Paul's experiences and see how his life models gospel power, gospel passion, and gospel priorities for us. **Teachers:** Mark Vowels, Timothy Martin

Week 1: Who Was Paul and Why Should We Study Him?

Week 2: Paul's Pursuit of Righteousness (Phariseeism and Persecution)

Week 3: Paul's Conversion Experience

Week 4: Paul's Earliest Ministry

Week 5: Paul's First Missionary Journey (part 1)

Week 6: Paul's First Missionary Journey (part 2)

Week 7: Paul's Defense of Grace (the Jerusalem Council)

Week 8: Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Week 9: Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Week 10: Paul's Missionary Strategy

Week 11: Paul's Imprisonment and End

Week 12: Course Wrap Up

Who Was Paul and Why Should We Study Him?

Introduction: What makes Paul worthy of study?

The Christian movement...in 35 A.D....would have appeared to a superficial observer to be a Jewish sect. Thirty years later it was plainly a world religion. This establishment of Christianity as a world religion, to almost as great an extent as any great historical movement can be ascribed to one man, was the work of Paul.¹

Paul is one of the most perpetually significant men who have ever lived. Without the spiritual earthquake that he brought about, Christianity would probably never have survived at all. Yet his importance also extends very widely beyond and right outside the religious field. For he has also exercised a gigantic influence, for generation after generation, upon non-religious events and ways of thinking – upon politics and sociology and war and philosophy and that whole intangible area in which the thought-processes of successive epochs become formed. He has to be considered, therefore, not only as a religious figure of exceptional power, but as one of the outstanding makers of the history of mankind.²

I. Paul is Presented as the Model Christian

It is not overstating the case to assert that the Apostle Paul is the most influential Christian who ever lived. Every 'Paul scholar', sooner or later, expresses sincere admiration for the man and a deep appreciation of his unparalleled significance with respect to the theology and spread of the Christian faith.³

- A. No other follower of Christ is more fully examined in the New Testament than Paul
 - More than half of the book of Acts is devoted to Paul's life and ministry
 - Paul's epistles contain much biographical information
- B. Luke intends for us to see Paul as a model to be followed
 - He is *not* portrayed as perfect
 - He *is* portrayed as exemplary

II. Paul's Theology is Foundational

Paul's pre-eminent contribution to the world has been his presentation of the good news of free grace – as he himself would have put it (rightly), his re-presentation of the good news explicit in Jesus' teaching and embodied in his life and work. The free grace of God which Paul proclaimed is free grace in more senses than one – free in the sense that it is sovereign and unfettered, free in the sense that it is held forth to men and women for their acceptance by faith alone, and free in the sense that it is the source and principle of their liberation from all kinds of inward and spiritual bondage, including the bondage of legalism and the bondage of moral anarchy.⁴

- A. The relevance of the Kingdom is delineated by Paul
 - Christ revealed the nature of the Kingdom
 - Paul taught how the Kingdom functions
- B. The mystery of the church is explained by Paul

¹ J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, (reprint of 1925 edition; Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, n.d.)7-8.

² Michael Grant, *Saint Paul* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976). 1.

³ Robert L. Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, (Christian Focus Publications: Great Britain, 2000) 17.

⁴ F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1983) 18.

- Christianity is more than a reformation of Judaism
 - God moves among His people in community
- C. Various facets of salvation are uniquely explicated by Paul
- Justification
 - Redemption
 - Adoption
 - Sanctification
 - Glorification

III. Paul's Ministry Was Normative

*In little more than ten years St. Paul established the church in four provinces of the Empire, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia. Before A.D. 47 there were no Churches in these provinces; in A.D. 57 St. Paul could speak as if his work there was done, and could plan extensive tours into the far West without anxiety lest the Churches which he had founded might perish in his absence for want of his guidance and support.*⁵

- A. Paul's manner instructs us – 1 Corinthians 11:1
- He models biblical servanthood
 - He accomplishes biblical discipleship
- B. Paul's motives inspire us – Acts 20:24
- His abandonment of self challenges our entire life perspective
 - His singular commitment measures us
- C. Paul's methods guide us – Acts 14:21-22
- He demonstrates ministry priorities
 - He patterns ministry success

Conclusion: Every believer, in every time, in every culture, can take Paul's life as a paradigm and implement it into his or her own life experience. He or she can measure self against the standard Paul sets. No-one can claim that his or her life circumstances are so radically different from Paul's to nullify the effect of his teachings or example. We study Paul because we are intended to be like him.

⁵ R. Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (London, 1927), p. 3.