



# bb-TBC-53

📅 Due Date	@May 5, 2022
Σ days to go	1
☰ Status	<span>Ready!!</span> <span>Scheduled</span>
☰ Working Title	Paul, a bond-servant AND an apostle
↗ Project Home	
☰ Priority	
☰ Context	<span>Bible Study</span> <span>Deliverable</span> <span>NLR</span> <span>Preaching</span>
☑ DELIVERED	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Saul, who is also Paul.

A chosen man

Getting a grip on the truth

Truth let loose

## Saul, who is also Paul.

Last time we closed with a reference to a man who witnessed the death of the first Christian martyr and who became the arch-persecutor of the church in Jerusalem. His name is given as 'Saul', and the record of the Acts uses this when it records the time of his hostility to the early Christians but from Acts 13 the record gives us another name.

In a conflict with a local sorcerer it states...

Then Saul, who also *is called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, *you* son of the devil, *you* enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? (Acts 13:9–10 NKJV)

Literally, 'who is also Paul...'

And those about Paul having set sail from Paphos, came to Perga of Pamphylia, and John having departed from them, did turn back to Jerusalem, (Acts 13:13 YNG)

c AD 57 Paul introduced himself to his readers in Rome with this brief explanation;

▼ Rom 1:1-2

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ,  
called to be an apostle,  
separated to the gospel of God Rom 1:1-2 NKJV.

It is a very revealing self-description. 25 years have passed since he was 'arrested' on the road to Damascus by the Risen Christ and the self-assertive, confident rising star of Judaism has become a bond-slave to the man he persecuted most of all; Jesus Christ.

As an individual he has relinquished all his rights to self-development and prospects. His life is now at the beck and call of a new master. In Roman culture bond-slaves had no rights. They were, according to one philosopher, to be regarded as a tool, used, and when worn out, discarded.

But this 'tool' is also an 'apostle', an emissary and herald of a king and a man whose word is as though the king himself had spoken. It is this combination of personal self-humbling and the sense of enormous and authoritative responsibility that explains this man in all his moods and actions. For himself he would not raise a finger in self-defence, for his mission he would take on the might of Rome if need be.

A single moment had separated him forever from the ordinary and the mundane and given him a commission that absorbed his whole life.

## A chosen man

Paul was different from the others; of that there was no doubt. The original apostles were judged to be 'unlearned and uneducated' and men wondered at their understanding and power of expression. Paul, on the other hand, was once rebuked by a senior representative of Rome with the words 'your great learning has made you mad'. The others were, in the main, ordinary working men and they came from an area of heavy immigrant domination, Galilee of the Gentiles. Speaking of their master the question was once asked; 'can anything good come out of Nazareth?'

Paul, on the other hand, came from a privileged background. His father was a Roman citizen which points to the fact that he had either bought that honour at a high price or had provided some significant service for Rome and had been rewarded with citizenship. He almost certainly came from a wealthy family.

He was also highly educated, having spent some years as a pupil of one of Israel's greatest rabbis, Gamaliel. He was a front-runner in his personal piety and had outstripped all his contemporaries in his devotion to his faith.

His pedigree was exemplary. He was not a Hellenistic Jew with a Greek mind-set but a 'Hebrew of the Hebrews'; Hebrew speaking, Hebrew thinking. He traced his genealogy back to the family of Israel's first legitimate king. Perhaps that is where he got his name. As regards the keeping of the law he lived in good conscience and was surely on target for blessing and influence and high regard... until the day he took the road to Damascus.

In a single encounter with the risen Christ his whole life tumbled in on him. Later he testified that he regarded all of these natural qualifications as of no value; 'offal' was the word he used. He also testified that not only did he not put any value on any of these qualities and achievements but that he had actually 'suffered/experienced the loss' of them.

#### ▼ Philippians 3:4–11

...though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

But **what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.**

Yet indeed **I also count all things loss** for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, **for whom I have suffered the loss of all things**, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in

Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

(Philippians 3:4–11 NKJV)

It seems that Paul's conversion 'cost him' his family, his wealth and his high standing in the community, perhaps even his wife.



When I was in India some years ago I met a man who reminded me of Paul. He was a Brahmin, the highest, priestly caste in the Indian Caste system. He came from a wealthy Brahmin family and he had married into a wealthy Brahmin family and had two sons, if I remember rightly. When he came to Christ we was bold in in witness and his families systematically cut him of. His own family disowned and disinherited him. His wife returned to her own family and took his two sons with her. He not only 'counted all things loss', he 'suffered the loss of all things'.

Paul had been trained as a rabbi and all rabbis were required to have a physical trade. The idea was that it taught them the dignity of labour and kept them 'down to earth'. Paul, or Saul, as he was known at that time, was a cloth-worker or tent-maker and this trade was something he took up again on occasion.

All that Paul was, suffered a fatal blow on the road to Damascus. The account is so well known that even unbelievers will use the language of 'a Damascus Road experience' to signify a radical change of mind and direction. The account is punctuated by two simple questions that Paul asked.

The first "who are you Lord?"  
and the second might well have become his lifetime's motto;  
"Lord, what do you want me to do?"

From that time he became a 'bond-slave of Jesus Christ'; Paul's whole life was based on the simple theme that Jesus Christ was his lord and master and Paul's life was dedicated to ascertaining his master's will and doing it with all of his considerable energy.

It was in that encounter, even before he had received the Holy Spirit, that Paul received his commission. He was to go wherever he was sent as a personal

representative of his master. From this time forward his days could never be divided into secular and holy, his whole life became 'separated to the gospel of God'.

As a king's representative he will stand before kings. He will take The King's proclamations into market place and synagogues. His mission and commission were burned into his being;

▼ 1 Cor 9:16

"woe unto me", he said, "if I do not preach the gospel". (1 Cor 9:16)

## Getting a grip on the truth

With his extensive knowledge and traditional understanding of the Jewish Scriptures it is inevitable that Paul would need to consider, very deeply, the implications of what had happened to him. His theology had been turned up-side-down in a matter of moments and Paul was the kind of man who would have to try to understand what had happened.

When he started his journey to Damascus all the parts were neatly labelled and sitting in their boxes, by the time he arrived in Damascus his theology was a shambles.

In the first flush of his experience he kept his appointment with the synagogues in Damascus but his agenda had changed. He had been commissioned by the religious authorities to chase the heretics as far as they could be found. As a high-profile opponent of the Nazarenes, as the early Christians were known, and their teaching his visit would be awaited with anticipation in Damascus.

The expectant listeners were stunned by his messages;

▼ Acts 9:20-21 NKJV

Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" Acts 9:20-21 NKJV.

By combining the accounts in the Acts and in Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia we can put together an outline of his next movements. He spent 2 years in apparent solitude in 'Arabia', most likely the Trans-Jordanian desert and then seems to have returned to Damascus. His visit caused a furore among the people in Damascus

who were so incensed that they determined to assassinate him and he had to be smuggled out of the city over the wall in a donkey pannier.

He then made a brief visit to Jerusalem where he met up with a few of the leaders of the Nazarenes but his presence there aroused suspicion among the believers and violent opposition among the Jews and he was put on a boat en route for Asia Minor and finally arrived in his old home city of Tarsus.

He next surfaces, in our records, over 10 years later when Barnabas finds him and brings him to the church in Antioch.

Paul is the kind of high profile, highly intelligent and energetic person that many contemporary Christians would love to see converted. "What an impact" they say, "this famous individual would have if he were converted". His name would be on all the banners and his preaching tours would take him far and wide. God's strategy with Paul was somewhat different. Other than for brief appearances he vanishes from the public gaze for about 14 years. The Public Relations gurus had missed their moment. He was no longer a 'hot item'. In fact, after 14 years many people may well have been saying..."Who is Paul?"

But those 'hidden years' have not been wasted. As he worked at his cloth Paul opened his heart and his mind to God and sought to understand the implications of what had happened to him.

We need to re-emphasise something. By natural ability and position Paul was perfectly placed to be the 'systematic theologian' of the new movement. His knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures and Jewish tradition would have been almost encyclopaedic. He was a trained theologian, well versed in the language and culture of the original documents. If anyone was going to 'work it all out' Paul would have been the man, but there is a persistent element in Paul's testimony that says this is not how it happened. Paul claimed to have 'received' truth and frequently used the word 'revelation'.

His mind and heart were open and he was not afraid to think but the truth he preached was not the consequence of his own logical digestion, it was revelation.

## Truth let loose

A revelation is an unveiling, the drawing aside of a curtain to un-veil, or re-veal, what has been hidden. Paul did not invent the theology; it was unveiled to him. The other apostles were aware of this extra dimension in the life and ministry of Paul. Peter

comments of the occasional difficulty of understanding Paul's writing but he is in no doubt as to where Paul's insights have come from;

▼ 2 Pet 3:15-16

and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 2 Pet 3:15-16 NKJV.

In this strong recommendation Peter states that Paul's writings were the result of 'wisdom given to him' and then goes on to equate Paul's writing with 'the rest of the Scriptures', a clear statement that Peter regarded Paul's letters themselves as 'scripture'. When we consider how a Jew regarded the authenticity and sacredness of the ancient Scriptures this statement from Peter that Paul's epistles have equal authenticity and sacredness is remarkable. Can we recreate Paul's thinking process and the revelation that brought it all together? Not really, but we can consider some possibilities.

And, God willing, next time we will try to recreate Paul's revelation and the manner in which God revealed these things to him...

Bailey, Ron. *The Better Covenant* (pp. 187-193). Kindle Edition.