

causes them to be freed. In all this, as often shown in the gospels, there is a **conversion**, this time being the guard and his household. Don't miss the idea of the banquet being served afterwards. Faith does this to us. Also while in Philippi, a patron of Jewish worship, a woman named **Lydia** converted as did her entire household, yet another example of entire families, slaves, etc., coming to the faith. She cared for Paul, Timothy and Silas as well as providing support for this new Christian community. Caring for the poor is seen as important. It is also tied with the above dinner and celebration with the prison guard.

**Athens** is the site of a great battle — Christianity against the cults of polytheistic pagans with their many gods and forms of worship. Paul's principle points of argument include conversion from idolatry, resurrection faith, and judgment/rule of the world by the Resurrected. Here Paul uses Greek thought to emphasize the divine control of all of the creation (world) and the entire cosmos. The results of Paul's efforts are divided indeed, but a success according to the Divine plan.

**Eighteen months** are spent in Corinth, a hub of trade and commerce in the Roman Empire. It is large with a lifestyle as immoral as one could possibly conceive. Aquila and his wife Priscilla are Christians supportive of the already established local church. It is here that Paul is strong in separating himself from the Jewish people while he, Silas and Timothy (who did not journey to Athens) now rejoin him.

### Notes

- We need to constantly remind ourselves that the message is the critical element — of Paul and of Luke, the writer of Acts of the Apostles. Names of individuals are meant to support the message. Luke is not so concerned with accurate times as we might desire.
- Luke wrote his gospel with a focus on the Gentile. He placed women prominently in key accounts, such as the resurrection and as the first to have seen the Resurrected. They are also prominent in Acts, and in Paul's ministry.
- The showing of Paul, Silas, Timothy, and the early Church struggling is important to the reader of Luke since this (as was the gospel) was written well after Paul's journey and martyrdom.
- The early Church, even with its one thought of making known the resurrection and eternal life won by Jesus

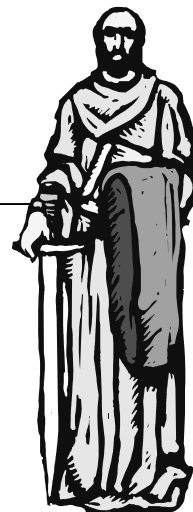
Christ, is shown having its difficulties. Personalities and thoughts of individuals are not always going to match and conflict will occur.

- The role of the Holy Spirit is shown more and more in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the life of Paul. It is this same Spirit that directed so much action in the Gospel. Along with this are the Gifts of the Spirit starting to be identified, named, and encouraged.
- Resurrection, and the absolute kingship of the Resurrected (Jesus Christ), eternal life, and the unity of the Church and its members with God are of utmost importance.
- Paul confronts people from every front — moral issues and practices/sanctity of life, intellectual foundations and thought; and religious/theological beliefs.

### Personal Accounting

1. Paul must challenge the Corinthians to live Christian lives that stand in sharp contrast to the immorality displayed in a cosmopolitan city filled with few people of faith. How does society today compare? Is it easier to live a truly Christian life? How? Why/why not?
2. Luke shows celebrations following the conversion of the household of the prison guard as well as Lydia's household. Do we take the time to stop and congratulate, celebrate with those born to sacramental life? Do we take time to build up the Church?
3. The Church of today calls for collaborative ministry — people setting aside their preferences and working for the common good, a shared goal to assist all the members. What is my understanding of collaborative ministry?
4. Priscilla and Aquila demonstrate what it means to go the full distance in sharing faith? Do I see this in our own community of faith? How far do I go for God?
5. How do I recognize and discern the Spirit in my life?

# The Year of St. Paul



St. Paul's first missionary journey basically ended in success, although it was not without struggle, and placing his life on the line, being stoned once and being driven from a number of the cities.

By this time, he and Peter, in separate encounters with Gentile converts, had realized that the Jewish laws could not be applied well to Gentile converts to belief in Jesus Christ. After the first apostolic council in Jerusalem, presided over by James, it was determined that they would not be required to abstain from meat in most circumstances, and that circumcision was no longer required for belief in Jesus Christ. Basically, the Christian faith was becoming separated from the Jewish practice of faith, and ultimately from worship in the Jewish synagogue.

All of the First Missionary Journey was completed with the apostle Barnabas while they were briefly joined by others, namely John (later to be known as Mark who is believed to be the evangelist).

## The Second Missionary Journey Paul (AD 50-52)

This Second Missionary Journey is heard about in the Acts of the Apostles (15:36-18:22).

As this journey is to begin, a dispute between Paul and Barnabas developed as to who should also accompany them. Barnabas wanted John. Paul refused to have him since John had left them midway through the first journey. It was finally decided that Mark would go along with Barnabas and Paul have Silas as a companion for this next journey. Timothy would become a second companion when Paul visited Lystra early on.

This is what is referred to as Paul's European Mission, being directed as it seems by the Spirit no less than five times in dreams. It is hardly what we consider Europe in modern day, advancing to Greece to the west and Turkey and the Slavic nations to the east.

The Itinerary included Antioch in Syria, moving north and west to Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium (all cities visited on his first journey), then north to Phrygia and Galatia in Asia Minor before heading west through Troas. Entering Europe, this band of missionaries' stops of importance included Nicaopolis, Philippi. Amplapolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth before moving back through Ephesus and Asia Minor to Jerusalem, finally resting in Antioch.

By looking at the travel guide we can readily see that an extensive amount of traveling was done in less than three years. This was hardly a sightseeing journey and the message had to have been pronounced quickly, efficiently, and without much of what we'd today call "fluff." Sugarcoating was not part of the message.

## Points to Ponder

The circumcision of Timothy after Paul had successfully debated that Gentiles should be free of this Jewish tradition is actually debated by scholars. If it were done, it would be for the sake of Paul's own need to strictly follow Jewish tradition, which was often used to Paul's advantage when confronting Jewish believers. Jesus was the fulfillment of all they sought and believed. Timothy was a Gentile with a Jewish mother.

Luke's inclusion of the "dreams at night" are no match to the fuller explanation given by Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians. Nevertheless, they are meant to connect Paul with the great leaders throughout history who also claimed encounters with God in dreams / visions.

"We" narratives are areas of the Acts of the Apostles and of later letters which provide us a great understanding that Paul wishes to convey. PAUL WAS A COLLABORATOR! It is important that this "WE" is seen as it provides the reader with proof — witnesses. This also allows us to realize that much of Paul's writing was also done with those he was with along the way. His is not the only hand involved. We see Paul working with many communities already established before his arrival.

The **Philippians** seem to be special to Paul, and it could be for good reason. It is here that Paul, Silas and Timothy are harassed by a woman who was a soothsayer at one of the many local temples (possessed with a demon). Showing his frustration, Paul suddenly turns and demands the demon to leave the woman, which it does after crying out and acknowledging the truth of salvation and its own defeat. This **exorcism** causes trouble for the three as she was making money for local leaders, who mad-as-hornets, had them beaten and chained in prison. An earthquake

## GOD FIRST

*Year Three, Part 3*

*August 17, 2008*