

The Life and Achievements of Paul

His Greatness

•“...it was Paul more than any other single person who ensured that the new movement stemming from Jesus would become a truly international and truly intellectually coherent religion” (James Dunn).

•Paul’s mission was “unique in the ancient world” and “an unprecedented happening in terms both of the history of religion in antiquity and of later church history” and that as a result of what he did Paul “has remained unparalleled over the subsequent 1900 years.” (Martin Hengel).

•Paul was “a first class intellectual” who had “a brilliant philosophical mind. (Anthony Flew).

Named after Paul: whole cities, great cathedrals, university colleges

His Critics (who loved Jesus, hated Paul)

Paul hijacked Jesus, made him a dying and resurrected redeemer.

William Wrede (1906) followed by Gandhi, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Bultmann.

G.B. Shaw blamed Paul for “Crosstianity”.

Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ* — book, movie.

However: Jesus said his death *a ransom* — i.e., redemptive (Mark 10:45).

The ‘received tradition’ — Christ died *for (hyper)* our sins (1 Cor. 15:3).

— ‘my body [broken] for *(hyper)* you (1 Cor. 11:23).

Dates

Born c. AD 5 in Tarsus died by execution (beheading?) in Rome c. AD 65.

I. The pre-Christian Paul (AD 5–34):

Tarsus (AD 5–17)

•Strict Jewish family; Saul exposed to Greek version of Old Testament (LXX).

•By birth Saul a Roman citizen; also, a citizen of Tarsus. Wealth and privilege.

Jerusalem (AD 17–34)

•Star pupil of Gamaliel 1; further exposure to Greek Old Testament.

•Hatchet man of high priest in attacks on Christians; then to Damascus.

Damascus

II. The Christian Paul (AD 34–65)

•Damascus and Arabia (AD 34-37)

•Paul in Jerusalem (AD 37)

•Paul back in Syria-Cilicia (AD 37–47)

•Mission in Cyprus, Pisidia, Lycaonia (AD 48)

•Mission in Macedonia, Achaia (AD 50–52)

•Mission in Asia, Macedonia (AD 53–56)

•Prison in Palestine and Rome (AD 57–62)

•Release, reimprisonment, execution (AD 63–65)

Galatians

1 & 2 Thessalonians

1 & 2 Corinthian, Ephesians,

Colossians, Philemon, Romans

Philippians

1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy

Strategy

- Selected cross-roads cities (Antioch in Pisidia), port cities (Corinth, Ephesus).
- Chose capable lieutenants — Timothy, Titus, Luke, Silvanus, Priscilla/Aquila.
- Creation of daughter churches out of nodal centres. Example: Epaphras.
- Pioneered the Pastoral Letter to reinforce “Traditions” from a distance; also new issues.

Paul’s Message (as evangelist and pastor)

Committed to Jesus as the Christ, Son of God, Lord, Saviour.

Focused on crucifixion of the Son of God for the forgiveness of sins, responded to by faith.

Message to Jews: Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God, who fulfilled the Law and the prophets.

Message to Gentiles: Turn from idols to serve the Living God, await his Son from heaven.

Paul, a man of prayer and an encourager of prayer.

Blessed by the Spirit of God; much teaching on the Spirit of God.

Loyalty and love from his mission lieutenants.

Delivered “traditions” to churches he founded (countercultural):

- “Received traditions” — Lord’s Supper “tradition”, Easter “tradition”.
- His ‘traditions’:
 - marriage and family life (“house tables”)
 - sexuality
 - work (his own example)
 - alcohol
 - respect for “powers that be [i.e., Emperor]”.

Keys to OT: Genesis 15:6 (“A. believed God...righteousness”) not Genesis 17.

Also Genesis 12:1–3 “In you all families of the earth blessed” (faith not works).

Importance of *membership*, exercise of “gifts” for up-building of members:
centrality of others-centred behaviour (“love”)

Faith-in-Christ expressed in love and humility, the imitation-of-Christ.

(...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death” — Philippians 2:8)

Ultimate re-inclusion of the Jews: Romans 11:

with the vision of inclusion of Jews, Gentiles, Barbarians — humanity.

Opposed *triumphalism* (humility), *elitism* (service), *legalism* (freedom).

The Christian mind (“...whatever is true...honorable...just...pure...lovely...commendable, if there is any excellence...anything worthy of praise, think about these things” — Phil. 4:8)

Achievements

Planted seeds of Christianity that grew into the Christianity of the Eastern Empire.

Dignity of individual, implied rejection of slavery,
separation of church and state,
importance of marriage and family,
work-ethic,
endorsement of role of women

Corpus of remarkable literature; the most widely heard voice from Graeco-Roman antiquity.

Paul not the ‘inventor’ of Christianity but innovative applier of

(a) the *apokalypsis* from Jesus, and (b) the *paradosis* from the apostles before him.