

**Bible Study on**

**St. Paul's Life, Teaching and Mission**

**(From the book of the Acts and his 13 Letters)**

**Place:** St. Barnabas Church, Long Beach

**Teacher:** Fr. Bernard Santiago (Associate Pastor)

**Assisted by:** Fr. Antony Gaspar (Pastor) and the Office Staff

**Day and Time:** Every Thursday from 7 -9 pm for 12 weeks (Sep - Dec 2020)

**Study materials:** Every Tuesday each participant will receive an email with an attachment of the material for the Thursday Bible Study session and everyone is expected to print their own material beforehand and read through beforehand for better participation. Besides the class material, 10 chapters from the letters of St. Paul will be assigned for personal reading. There are 87 chapters altogether from thirteen books. All the 13 letters of St. Paul will be read and the important themes in those letters will be treated in detail with biblical, historical and theological background to cull out the main teachings of St. Paul in the apostolic times.

**Purpose of the Study:** The study will make an attempt to understand the mind of Christ in the writings, preachings and teachings of St. Paul and how we can apply his teachings to our spiritual growth in our life of prayer and worship. A special emphasis will be shown on St. Paul's gentile mission In the context of new evangelization to reach out our frozen brethren.

**Study Method:** Due to safety concerns of the Covid19, we will again continue the virtual Bible study, live streamed through zoom link, from St. Barnabas Church Rectory.

**Participation Certificate:** At the end of the course, the participants will be awarded with a certificate of participation and excellence. Hence, interest, passion, regularity and continuity are very expected of the participants. Anyone from any parish who desires to learn the Bible is welcome.

**Clarification:** The last fifteen minutes will be dedicated for clarification.

**Lectio Divina:** The bible study will conclude with the Lectio Divina of the following Sunday readings for a meaningful participation of the Sunday Mass.

**Zoom application meeting ID:** 99174147604 Password: 3955

The bible study email is **biblestudy@stbarnabaslb.org** Moving forward, Lesson materials and other informations related to the bible study will be sent through this email.

**Opening prayer for the Bible Study:** God our Loving Father, We thank you, praise you and bless you for gathering this evening from our homes and communities to nourish our mind, heart and soul with your life giving words in the Holy Bible. You called Patriarchs, Leaders, Judges, Kings and Prophets to carry your message of love, mercy and compassion to your chosen people of Israel and in the fulness of time, You demonstrated your immense love by sending Jesus your only begotten Son as our Lord and Savior to save us from sin and lead us to eternal life. He is our Way, Truth and Life to reach you. In order to carry the good news of Jesus our Divine Savior to every nook and corner, you called the persecutor Saul and transformed him as Paul, the most zealous Apostle of our Lord Jesus. As a chosen instrument, St. Paul proved his love and loyalty to Jesus and his mystical body the church by being a faithful apostle joyfully enduring prison, scourging, stoning, shipwreck and finally shedding the last drop of his blood for our Lord Jesus. As we dedicate this time to read, study and meditate his letters to know his love, loyalty, commitment and sacrifice for Christ, obtain for us the grace to labor strenuously like St. Paul to bring the live faith to our brothers and sisters and to accept any trials and tribulations that may come our way. Help us to be inspired by his letters and to partake of his indomitable love for Jesus, so that we may praise and glorify you and bear witness to our Lord Jesus by our life now and always. (Our Father and Glory to the Father)

**Concluding Prayer for the Bible Study and Lectio Divina:** Lord Jesus, Thank you for this evening and the time to be with our spiritual family. Your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. May the things that you have revealed in our Bible study and the thoughts that we have shared in the Lectio Divina dwell in our hearts and stir us to action in the days to come. Help us to share your love with everyone that we encounter this week. May we lavish your abounding goodness upon our families, friends and colleagues. May we be your hands and feet to the needy and homeless, source of comfort and encouragement to the oppressed and the lonely. Give us serene and restful sleep. (Hail Mary/ Blessing)

## 12 WEEKS LESSON PLAN FOR THE BIBLE STUDY WITH THE THEMES AND DATES

1. Who is St. Paul? Life, Conversion and Mission of St. Paul ( (Sep 17)
2. How many Missionary Journeys he made and the letters he wrote? (Sep 24)
3. We are Justified by faith in Jesus and not by laws and rituals (Oct 1)
4. What is the Mystery of the Cross according to Paul? (Oct 8)
5. What is the meaning of the Church? and why Unity in the Church matters? (Oct 15)
6. How to responsibly use our spiritual gifts and talents in the Church and for the church? (Oct 22)
7. What are the hallmarks of Christian life according to St. Paul? (Oct 29)
8. Why St. Paul is called “an Apostle to the Gentiles”? Clarion call to the universal and local church (Nov 5)
9. What is Theology of the body? What does it matter to our culture of hedonism and self gratification? (Nov 12)
10. What and When is the Second Coming of Jesus according to St. Paul? His warnings about false teachers and their heresies. (Nov 19)
11. How did St. Paul suffer and die as a martyr? (Nov 26)
12. Who is St. Paul to me and what did I learn from his life and teaching? A personal sharing (Dec 3)

## **First lesson: Who is St. Paul? His Life and Conversion**

**Who is Paul?** No person apart from Jesus himself, shaped the history of Christianity like the apostle Paul. He preached for Christ throughout Roman Empire on three missionary journeys. He wrote letters to various churches which became part of the NT. Born in Tarsus but became a world traveler for Christ. He was a trained Pharisee, learned the trade of tent making and served as a missionary.

**Tent maker:** Like all Jewish boys Paul learned a trade. Jesus was a carpenter (Mk. 6:3) but Paul was a “tentmaker” (Acts 18:3). This is the only reference to tent makers in the Bible and refers to Paul, Aquila and Priscilla. Cicilia was known for its high quality cloth made from goats’ hair. On many occasions Paul used his skill as a tentmaker to support himself. Please prayerfully consider his words to the elders of the church in Ephesus: “I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:33-35)

**Student of Gamaliel:** He was Bilingual. He spoke Aramaic (Hebrew) and Greek. Possibly Latin too as He was a Roman citizen. Paul was very religious. His training under Gamaliel was a great stroke in his Jewishness. Gamaliel was a famous Jewish teacher who is only mentioned by name two times in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 5:34; 22:3). In Acts 5:33-40 we are told that Gamaliel was a teacher of the law, and honored by all the people. When the apostles were arrested he argued to the Sanhedrin that they should be left alone. If their work was not of God, it would come to nought. If it was, he didn’t want to be fighting against God. In Acts 22:3 we are told that Paul was brought up in Jerusalem under the teaching of Gamaliel. The fact that Gamaliel was his teacher was mentioned to explain why Paul was zealous for God. To the Galatians Paul wrote: “For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.” (Gal 1:13-14)

**Benjamin Tribe:** Paul belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, a smallest but a faithful tribe (Phil. 3:5; Rom. 11:1).

**Member of the Pharisees:** He was a Pharisee (“separated one”), Strictly adhering to Ritual Purity (food laws), He has a high esteem for “Traditions of the Elders” (Matt 15). He believed in both Predestination and Free-Will. He also believed in immortality of the Soul and Resurrection of the Dead

**Paul’s Relatives:** From the very beginning God has worked through families. This is why there are so many genealogies in the Bible. Remember the promise that God made to Abraham that in his seed, or family, all the families of the earth would be blessed. This means that Jesus Christ was going to be born in his family. Matthew’s Gospel begins with a list of 42 individuals who were the ancestors of Jesus Christ. The genealogy begins with Abraham and goes all the way to Jesus. The names are grouped into three groups of 14 so they could be more easily memorized. God works through families! Mary, the mother of Jesus was related to Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist (Lk. 1:36). The disciples of Jesus are identified in the Bible by references to their families. Simon Peter and Andrew were brothers and were sons of John.

Paul’s relatives are also mention several times in Scripture:

“Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.” (Rom 16:7)

“Timothy, my fellow-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.” (Rom 16:21)

“Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here. But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul.” (Acts 23:15-16) It seems obvious that Paul had relatives who were workers in the early church, some of whom were well known among the apostles and were in Christ before he was.

**Paul the Persecutor:**The first mention of Saul in the New Testament Scriptures is in Acts 7:58. Here we are told that the witnesses against Stephen laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. Saul was consenting to his death (Acts 8:1)

“Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.” (Acts 8:3).

“Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so

that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem." (Acts 9:1-2)

Paul said: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished." (Acts 22:3-5)

Paul also said: "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them. "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests." (Acts 26:9-12)

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life." (1 Tim 1:12-16)

**Conversion of Paul:** His intentions and efforts were sincere. He was a good Pharisee who knew the Bible and sincerely believed that this Christian movement was dangerous to Judaism. Thus Paul hated the Christian faith and persecuted Christians without mercy. Paul got permission to travel to Damascus to capture Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem. But God stopped him in his hurried tracks on the Damascus road. He personally met Jesus and afterwards his life was never the same again. Until Paul's conversion, little had been done about carrying the gospel to non Jews. The thorny issue of whether Gentile believers had to obey Jewish law before they could become Christians caused many problems in the early church. Paul worked hard

to convince the Jews that gentiles were acceptable to God. He spent even more time convincing the Gentiles that they were acceptable to God. God did not waste any part of Paul – his background, his training, his citizenship, his mind or even his weaknesses. We will never know how much and how well He can use us for His people if we allow Him to activate us. Saul (later called Paul) was zealous for his Jewish beliefs that he began a persecution campaign against anyone who believed in Christ.

**Damascus**, a commercial city, was located about 175 miles northeast of Jerusalem in the Roman province of Syria. The idea of stamping out Christianity in Damascus by Saul was to prevent the spread of Christianity to other places especially in Rome. This experience for Saul was the start of his new life in Christ (1 Cor 9:1/ 15:8 Gal 1:11-16) Paul did not see a vision; he saw the risen Christ himself Paul acknowledged Jesus as Lord and confessed his sin and surrendered his life to Christ and resolved to obey him. True conversion comes from a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and leads to new life in relationship with him. What followed after his encounter with Risen Christ was one of the most dramatic conversions in church history. Saul of Tarsus became the apostle Paul, an ardent missionary to an unbelieving world and a fine example of faithful service in the face of fierce persecution (Acts 14:19; 16:22-24; 2 Corinthians 11:25-26). Saul's education, his background as a Pharisee, his Roman citizenship, and his unflagging zeal all contributed to his success as a missionary Saul thought he was pursuing heretics but he was persecuting Jesus himself. Anyone who persecutes believers is also guilty of persecuting Jesus because believers are the body of Christ on earth. Mt 20: 40 And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' 45 He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' Jesus identifies himself with the church. That explains the church's loyalty to Christ and his teaching.

**Ananias**: Saul is directed to Ananias for discernment and guidance. In our life journey, we need spiritual people to guide us and discern God's plans for our life. Ananias found Saul and greeted him lovingly as 'Brother Saul'. It is not always easy to show love to others especially when we are afraid of them or doubt their motives. Saul was a known persecutor to everyone. However Ananias obeyed Jesus and accommodated Saul lovingly. Saul, a Chosen Instrument of God: we are called to be God's instruments of His grace, healing, compassion and kindness to everyone and everywhere no matter how hostile people and environment could be. After receiving his sight and spending some time with the believers in Damascus, Saul went to synagogue to tell the Jews about Jesus Christ.

“Many days” The Scriptures state that: “After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him,” (Acts 9:23). Saul was baptized in Damascus and many days later the Jews conspired to kill him. According to the narrative in Acts 9 he escaped from them in Damascus, and went to Jerusalem. When the Jews in Jerusalem tried to kill him the brethren took him down to Caesarea and sent him to Tarsus. It seems probable that the “many days” of Acts 9:23 refers to time that Saul spent in Arabia. Please consider this passage of Scripture: “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles-- only James, the Lord's brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing to you is no lie.” (Gal 1:15-20)

The overall Synopsis of St. Pauline Letters: The following books of the New Testament were written by the apostle Paul over a period of several years and from several different locations.

The Book of Romans: This is one of the longest epistles written by Paul to the growing church in Rome as a way of expressing his enthusiasm for their success and his desire to visit them personally. The bulk of the letter is a deep and poignant study on the basic doctrines of the Christian faith namely Salvation, faith, grace, sanctification, and many practical concerns for living as a follower of Jesus in a culture that has rejected Him.

1 and 2 Corinthians: Paul took a great interest in the churches spread throughout the region of Corinth -- so much so that he wrote at least four separate letters to that congregation. Only two of those letters have been preserved, which we know as 1 and 2 Corinthians. Because the city of Corinth was corrupt with all kinds of immorality, much of Paul's instructions to this church center on Christian morality from the sinful practices of the surrounding culture and remaining united as Christians.

Galatians: Paul had founded the church in Galatia (modern day Turkey) around 51 A.D., then continued his missionary journeys. During his absence, however, groups of false teachers had corrupted the Galatians by claiming that Christians must continue to observe the different laws from the Old Testament in order to remain clean before

God. Therefore, much of Paul's epistle to the Galatians is an appeal for them to return to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith -- and to avoid the legalistic practices of the false teachers.

Ephesians: As with Galatians, the letter to the Ephesians emphasizes God's grace and the fact that human beings cannot attain salvation through works or legalism. Paul also emphasized the importance of unity in the church and its singular mission - a message that was especially important in this letter because the city of Ephesus was a major trade center populated by people of many separate ethnicities.

Philippians: It is a joyful letter of Paul. Paul encouraged the Philippian Christians to relish the joy of living as servants of God and disciples of Jesus Christ -- a message that was all the more poignant because Paul was confined in a Roman prison cell while writing it.

Colossians: Paul wrote this letter from prison who sought to correct numerous false teachings that had infiltrated the church. Apparently, the Colossians had began worshipping angels and other heavenly beings, along with the teachings of Gnosticism -- including the idea that Jesus Christ was not fully God, but merely a man. Throughout Colossians, then, Paul lifts up the centrality of Jesus in the universe, His divinity, and His rightful place as Head of the church.

1 and 2 Thessalonians: Paul had visited the Greek city of Thessalonica during his second missionary journey, but was only able to remain there for a few weeks because of persecution. Therefore, he was concerned about the health of the fledgling congregation. In these letters, he clarifies the second coming of Jesus and exhorts the christians to be vigilant about false teachers.

1 and 2 Timothy: The 1 and 2 Timothy were the epistles written to individuals, rather than regional congregations. Paul had mentored Timothy for years and sent him to lead the growing church in Ephesus. For that reason, Paul's epistles to Timothy contain practical advice for pastoral ministry -- including teachings on proper doctrine, avoiding unnecessary debates, the order of worship during gatherings, qualifications for church leaders, and so on. The letter we know as 2 Timothy is quite personal and offers encouragement regarding Timothy's faith and ministry as a servant of God.

Titus: Like Timothy, Titus was a protege of Paul's who had been sent to lead a specific congregation - specifically, the church located on the island of Crete. Once again, this letter contains a mix of leadership advice and personal encouragement.

Philemon: The epistle to Philemon is unique in Paul's letters. Philemon was a wealthy member of the Colossian church. He had a slave named Onesimus who ran away. Strangely, Onesimus ministered to Paul while the apostle was imprisoned in Rome. Therefore, this epistle was an appeal for Philemon to welcome a runaway slave Onesimus back into his home as a fellow disciple of Christ

## Possible Chronology of Paul's Life

c. 5	Born—an Israelite—in Tarsus of Cilicia ( <a href="#">Acts 22:3</a> ; <a href="#">Phil 3:5</a> )
	A Roman citizen by birthright ( <a href="#">Acts 22:28</a> )
c. 15-20	At the school of Gamaliel, Jerusalem ( <a href="#">Acts 22:3</a> )
31	A Pharisee ( <a href="#">Phil 3:5</a> )
c. 32	Present at Stephen's stoning ( <a href="#">Acts 7:58</a> ; <a href="#">8:1</a> )
c. 33-34	Persecutor of the church ( <a href="#">Acts 8:1-3</a> ; <a href="#">Phil 3:6</a> )
34	Conversion on the Road to Damascus ( <a href="#">Acts 9:1-9</a> )
	Goes to Damascus ( <a href="#">Acts 9:10-19</a> )
	Travels to Arabia and remains there ( <a href="#">Gal 1:17</a> )
37	Returns to Damascus then exits the city for safety ( <a href="#">Gal 1:17</a> ; <a href="#">Acts 9:20-25</a> ; <a href="#">2 Cor 11:32-33</a> )
	Goes up to Jerusalem ( <a href="#">Acts 9:26-29</a> ; <a href="#">Gal 1:18</a> )
46	Barnabas travels to Tarsus in order to seek Saul ( <a href="#">Acts 11:25</a> )
47	Goes to Antioch with Barnabas teaching and many people ( <a href="#">Acts 11:26</a> )
	Agabus prophesies a famine ( <a href="#">Acts 11:27, 28</a> )
	Aid sent to Jerusalem through Barnabas and Saul ( <a href="#">Acts 11:29, 30</a> )
	Barnabas and Saul return with John Mark ( <a href="#">Acts 12:25</a> )
	Barnabas and Saul "separated" and sent out ( <a href="#">Acts 13:2, 3</a> )
	They travel from Antioch to Seleucia, then to Cyprus ( <a href="#">Acts 13:4</a> )
48	
	While on Cyprus they go to Salamis and Paphos ( <a href="#">Acts 13:5-12</a> )
	From Paphos they go to Perga of Pamphylia where John Mark departs for home ( <a href="#">Acts 13:13</a> )
	Ministry in Antioch of Pisidia ( <a href="#">Acts 13:14-50</a> )
	At Iconium ( <a href="#">Acts 13:51 - 14:6</a> )
	Flees to Lystra and Derbe, preaching the gospel ( <a href="#">Acts 14:6-7</a> )
	In Lystra Paul and Barnabas are mistaken for gods ( <a href="#">Acts 14:8-18</a> )
	Stoned at Lystra, supposed to be dead, but re-enters the city ( <a href="#">Acts 14:19-20</a> )
	Departs with Barnabas to Derbe, preaching the gospel ( <a href="#">Acts 14:20-21</a> )

	They return to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to strengthen disciples and appoint elders ( <a href="#">Acts 14:21-24</a> )
	From Pisidia they returned to Antioch of Syria and reported their journey to the church ( <a href="#">Acts 14:24-28</a> )
49	Goes up to the Jerusalem Council with Barnabas ( <a href="#">Acts 15:1-29</a> ; <a href="#">Galatians 2:1</a> )
	Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch of Syria, teaching and preaching ( <a href="#">Acts 15:30-35</a> ; <a href="#">Galatians 2:11-14</a> )
	Contention over John Mark; Barnabas and John Mark sail to Cyprus ( <a href="#">Acts 15:36-39</a> )
	Paul and Silas depart, going through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches ( <a href="#">Acts 15:40-41</a> )
50	Goes to Derbe and Lystra and picks up Timothy, strengthening the churches ( <a href="#">Acts 16:1-5</a> )
	They go to Troas and Paul sees a vision of a Macedonian man ( <a href="#">Acts 16:6-10</a> )
51	They sail from Troas to Neapolis ( <a href="#">Acts 16:11</a> )
	To Philippi where Paul meets Lydia ( <a href="#">Acts 16:12-15</a> )
	Paul and Silas imprisoned after casting out a demon from a slave girl ( <a href="#">Acts 16:16-25</a> )
	Prison doors opened miraculously and the jailer saved ( <a href="#">Acts 16:25-34</a> )
	Departs from Philippi ( <a href="#">Acts 16:35-40</a> )
	They passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia ( <a href="#">Acts 17:1</a> )
	At Thessalonica and preached Christ, but had to flee ( <a href="#">Acts 17:1-10</a> )
	At Berea where he leaves Silas and Timothy ( <a href="#">Acts 17:10-14</a> )
	At Corinth and rejoined with Silas and Timothy ( <a href="#">Acts 18:1-17</a> )
53	Paul returns to Antioch after stopping at Ephesus, Caesarea, and Jerusalem ( <a href="#">Acts 18:18-22</a> )
	Travels through Galatia and Phrygia strengthening the disciples ( <a href="#">Acts 18:23</a> )
	Passes through the upper regions on his way to Ephesus ( <a href="#">Acts 19:1</a> )
56	Goes to Macedonia ( <a href="#">Acts 20:1</a> )
	Travels to Greece ( <a href="#">Acts 20:2</a> )
	Goes back to Macedonia ( <a href="#">Acts 20:3</a> )
	At Troas ( <a href="#">Acts 20:4-12</a> )

