

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

November 6, 2016
7th Sunday of Luke
Revision D

Gospel: Luke 8:41-56

In the West, today's Gospel lesson is read from either Matthew at this same time in the church year, or from Mark in mid-July.

Understanding the role of the Twelve Apostles is crucial to understanding the Church. Their names are on the foundations of the gates of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:10-14) and they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:22-30). But yet, they did not just fall out of the sky on Pentecost ready to evangelize the earth. And the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was not just a magic elixir that enabled them to do anything. Rather, they had some struggles of their own that they needed to go through. And the Lord spent time with them to train them in what they should do. And the Holy Spirit then enabled them to do that. Today, we will look at some of the training the Lord used to prepare them for Pentecost.

Gospel Context

On the 7th Sunday of Luke, the Gospel lesson was about the Gadarene demoniacs who lived in the tombs, broke their chains and cried out day and night after cutting themselves with stones. Jesus and the Twelve rowed across the Sea of Galilee to heal these poor guys, then rowed right back. On the way over to Gadara, they were rowing into a fierce storm and Jesus calmed the storm. The Twelve reacted, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Mark 4:41).

Upon their arrival back in Capernaum (which is today's Gospel lesson), Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. Right after that, He sent the Twelve out two by two to heal the sick, cast out demons and raise the dead all by themselves (Matthew 10:8). Today's Gospel lesson, then, is part of the training program. In just two years, Jesus would be sending the Twelve out to evangelize the earth, but at this point they're struggling to figure out who He is!

There are (at least) three stages of recognition that the Twelve experienced:

1. As Messiah when they were called and shortly thereafter (John 1:41). This alone is not sufficient. "Messiah" means "the anointed one"; King David and Aaron the High Priest were also anointed.
2. As the Son of God following some of these incredible miracles (Matthew 14:33). This is a crucial recognition! Satan also recognized this and trembles at it (James 2:19).
3. As I AM in terms of the Word of the Cross where they take up their cross also (John 8:38). Satan doesn't do this!

Gospel: Luke 8:40-56 (Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43)

When Jesus arrived back in Galilee after healing the Gadarene demoniacs, he was met by a crowd that included the ruler of the local Synagogue (probably Capernaum). The ruler asked Jesus to come to his house to heal his daughter. On the way, a woman touched the hem of Jesus' garment and was instantly healed of a flow of blood (or hemorrhage).

History of the Synagogue:

The traditions of the synagogue go back to Moses (Acts 15:21). However, as an institution, it probably originated with Ezra and the return from captivity in Babylon (see Ezra 7:9-10). There was a formal service at the synagogue on the Sabbath, but it wasn't the same as at the Temple in Jerusalem since no animal sacrifice was done at the synagogues. Focus was on the reading – probably by chanting – of the Scriptures, where certain parts of the Scriptures were required to be read at certain times of the year. [For example Exodus 12:24-27]. The music was probably a little different also since the “instruments of David” were only used at the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 23:5, 1 Chronicles 25:1-7, 2 Chronicles 29:25-28).

Synagogues were located throughout the world wherever there was a Jewish community. On Paul's missionary journeys, it was his common practice to stop at the synagogue on the Sabbath. Some synagogues received him, while others didn't (compare Berea to Thessalonica in Acts 17:1-13).

The ruler of the synagogue had a role similar to pastors in churches today. He conducted the public worship, appointed who should read the Scriptures and prayers, selected someone to preach (if he didn't preach himself), and supervised care of the building and property. Most synagogues also had elders and attendants. The elders formed a council for judgment in civil and religious matters and the attendant had the care of the scrolls as well as the job of executing the punishment of scourging and teaching the children to read.

Later on after Pentecost, many priests became obedient to the Faith (Acts 6:7) and so did some synagogue rulers such as Crispus (Acts 18:8) and Sosthenes (Acts 18:17) in Corinth.

A Little Faith Goes a Long Way:

Both Jairus and the woman with a hemorrhage exhibited a little faith – they came to Jesus convinced He could help. Both also had their faith tested a little also. Jairus had to stretch his faith from believing Jesus could heal sickness to believing He could raise the dead. Jesus also encouraged Jairus to do so. Jairus' faith was further tested with the public ridicule from the mourners.

From the healing of the woman's hemorrhage, we have an example of the use of physical objects for spiritual purposes. Jesus taught that one thing sanctifies another. Here power went out from Him (Luke 8:46) via a touch of the hem of His garment. The Master sanctified the garment and the garment sanctified the hem. Jesus had criticized the scribes and Pharisees for saying that whoever swears by the Temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the

Temple, he is obliged to perform it. Jesus pointed out: Which is greater, the gold or the Temple that sanctified it? (Matthew 23:16-17). Thus, one thing sanctifies another. This is also the case with icons, holy water, holy oil and many instances of relics of the saints.

We in the West are unaccustomed to dealing with holy relics. In 2 Kings 13:20-21 is an account of a man being raised from the dead by touching the bones of Elisha. And in this account, it was completely unintentional; no faith at all existed on the part of the burial crew. The relics of Elisha had been sanctified by the power behind the life of Elisha. Similarly during the two years that Paul was in Ephesus on his Third Missionary Journey, handkerchiefs and aprons that touched Paul's body were used to heal diseases and cast out evil spirits (Acts 19:12). Again, one thing sanctified another.

When Jesus stopped and said, "Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45-46), the woman was petrified. She had made the Teacher unclean and He had caught her doing so! (Anyone with a bodily discharge was unclean, and so was anyone who touched them – Leviticus 15:1-7). But the Son of God cannot be made unclean unless He so permits (as He did on the Cross – 2 Corinthians 5:21). Therefore, uncleanness touching the Clean One became clean also. After she fell at His feet and confessed, He said, "Be of good cheer, your faith has made you well!"

John Chrysostom compared the woman to the synagogue ruler. Besides the synagogue ruler being a well-known public figure and the woman being an outcast, Chrysostom said: "Do you see the superiority of the woman to the ruler of the synagogue? She did not detain Him (but he required His presence); she took no hold of Him, but only touched Him (but he required the laying on of His hand – Matthew 9:18). Even though she came later, she was the first to go away healed" (Homily XXXI on Matthew 9).

Chrysostom pointed out that the woman did not approach Jesus boldly since she was ashamed of her affliction and considered herself unclean. Under the Law, her affliction was considered a "great uncleanness" (Ibid.). According to the Mosaic Law, she was unclean for the entire twelve years of her flow of blood (Leviticus 15:25). Likewise, anyone touching her bed or anything she sat on was also unclean (Leviticus 15:26-27), as was anyone touching her (Leviticus 15:7). Being unclean, she was equivalent to a leper and couldn't participate in the worship or sacrifices of Israel.

Since by touching Jesus, she would make Him unclean also, this may be why she touched only the hem of His garment (Luke 8:44), as if that would make a difference to the Pharisees.

Death Becomes Merely a Sleep:

When Jesus arrived at the synagogue ruler's house, He was greeted by the tumult of the weeping and wailing of the mourners (Mark 5:38). Jesus' response was to tell them all that the child was not dead, but sleeping. And they all ridiculed Him (Luke 8:52-53). Jesus said the same thing later on regarding Lazarus (John 11:11). Chrysostom comments: "He is teaching us not to fear death: for it is no longer death, but has henceforth become a sleep. Since He, Himself was to die, He uses the persons of others to prepare His disciples beforehand to be of good

courage and to bear the end meekly. Since in truth, when He had come, death was from that time forward a sleep” (Ibid.). This was not so apparent, however, until after Christ’s Resurrection.

We note that Jesus did not rebuke the mourners or criticize them for ridiculing Him. Chrysostom said that the flute players and the noisy wailers (Matthew 9:23) and the tumult (Mark 5:38) served a useful purpose. All this testified that the child was for sure dead and they even ridiculed Jesus for stating otherwise. Thus the wailers served as proof that the miracle occurred; but they were declared unworthy to witness the event (Ibid.). This is why He put them all out of the house and brought only Jairus, his wife, plus Peter, James and John into the room when He raised the child (Luke 8:51). Later, Peter did the same thing when he raised Tabitha (Acts 9:39-41).

Chrysostom went on to apply the Gospel lesson to life in his day. Why, he asked, do people mourn and weep at the funeral of a Christian? Doing so testifies that the resurrection is a fable, and that the deceased is gone and has no hope. By doing so, “How will you be able to persuade the Greek that you believe otherwise?”

“If indeed he departed a sinner, his wickedness has stopped; for certainly, had God known that he was being converted, He would not have snatched him away before his repentance. But if he ended his life righteous, he now possesses all good in safety. From this, it is clear that your tears are not of kindly affection, but of unreasoning passion. For if you loved the departed, you should rejoice and be glad that he is delivered from the present waves” (Ibid.).

Something else occurred at the raising of Jairus’ daughter that would come to have significance over a year later. The wife of Pontius Pilate and her 12-year old son were also present at the house of Jairus at that time. And Jesus healed Pilate’s son of some form of lameness in addition to raising the daughter of Jairus.

Later according to tradition¹, during Jesus’ trial before Pilate, when word was brought to Pilate regarding his wife’s dreams (Matthew 27:19), he said to the Jewish leaders, “You know that my wife is a worshipper of God, and prefers to adhere to the Jewish religion along with you”. They said to him, “Yes; we know”. Pilate then mentioned what his wife said. The Jews answered Pilate, “Did we not tell you that He was a sorcerer? Behold, he has sent a dream to your wife”.

According to tradition², Claudia Procula, Pilate’s wife, was a granddaughter of Augustus Caesar, and she was also a good friend of Fulvia, the wife of Jairus, the Synagogue Ruler. Pontius Pilate used to love to engage in intellectual and philosophical arguments with Jairus. Claudia Procula was present at Jairus’ house when Jesus raised Jairus’ 12-year old daughter from the dead (Mark 5:41-43), and her own 12-year old son was healed of lameness at the same time. She had tried to influence her husband in favor of Christ, but to no avail. Pilate had been concentrating on his political career, desiring a higher position in Egypt. Hindering Pilate was

¹ Roberts and Donaldson, “Part I, The Acts of Pilate”, Chapter 2, First Greek Form, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994.

² Catherine van Dyke, tr., “The Letters of Pontius Pilate and Claudia Procula”, Relics of Repentance, 1st Edition, Issana Press, Lincoln, NE 68503, 1990.

none other than Herod, where the two supposedly became friends over Jesus' trial (Luke 23:6-13). Herod wanted to install a cousin in place of Pontius Pilate, and this had created a rivalry between them.

After Herod saw Jesus and became friendly with Pilate, Herod pressed Pilate to get Jesus' trial over with quickly so that the two of them could embark on a fishing trip. Herod later double-crossed Pilate and spoke secretly against him to Caesar. Pilate's young son, on hearing that his father had allowed the execution of Jesus, the One who had healed him, could not bear it and suddenly dropped dead.

Pilate never got the promotion he was looking for. A few years after Pentecost, he was called to appear before the Emperor in Rome regarding why he released Barabbas, an insurrectionist and a murderer. By the time Pilate got to Rome, Claudius was dead and Caligula was on the throne. Pilate was not able to defend himself and was exiled to Gaul. Claudia went with him to help, but Pilate committed suicide there. Claudia returned to Jerusalem and spent the rest of her life in prayer and fasting with the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

THE TRAINING OF PAUL

November 6, 2016
20th Sunday after Pentecost
Revision D

Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19

Today's Epistle lesson is also used in the Eastern lectionary for the 20th Sunday after Pentecost. In the West, the Epistle text is sometimes used for the 5th Sunday of Trinity.

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Today's Epistle lesson is also used in the Eastern lectionary for the 20th Sunday after Pentecost. In the West, the Epistle text is sometimes used for the 5th Sunday of Trinity.

The subject of today's Epistle is the early life of the Apostle Paul between his conversion and the beginning of his First Missionary Journey where the Church in Antioch sent him out. During this time, Paul also had a "flight to Egypt" experience where he had to escape from a garrison of soldiers (about 400 men, Acts 21:31, 23:23).

The context of the Epistle lesson is just how the Apostle Paul came to be an Apostle and how he got to know what he knew. To explain this, we need to go beyond just the Epistle text and cover Paul's life prior to 45 AD.

Some Dates as References

Paul's life as an Apostle began in 45 AD when Barnabas went to Tarsus to get him and brought him to Antioch. Paul and Barnabas then taught in the Church in Antioch for a year (Acts 11:25-26) before being sent out by the Church on their First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1-4) in about 46 AD. Upon their return, they went up to Jerusalem for the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD (Acts 15, Galatians 2:1-10).

There are three places in Paul's epistles that give us some dates prior to 45 AD. Two of them involve the context of the Epistle lesson:

- Galatians 2:1 - Paul's conversion occurred 14 years before the Council of Jerusalem or 34 AD³

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³ The context is his going up to Jerusalem. He didn't go up to Jerusalem immediately following his conversion (Galatians 1:17), but he did three years later (Galatians 1:18) and 14 years later (Galatians 2:1).

- Galatians 1:18 - Paul went to see Peter and James in Jerusalem 3 years after his conversion or 37 AD
- 2 Corinthians 12:2 - Paul had a vision of heaven 14 years prior to writing 2 Corinthians. Since 2 Corinthians was written in 55 AD, his vision occurred in 41 AD

Let us look at these periods in the life of the Apostle Paul more closely.

Birth to 34 AD

Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia probably between 5 AD and 10 AD, and was a Pharisee along with his father (Acts 23:3, 23:6). His father was a Roman citizen, and thus Paul was also (Acts 22:27-28). As was customary, all Jewish boys learned a trade as part of their education. Paul's trade was tent making (Acts 18:1-3); this would prove very helpful later on (Acts 20:32-35, 1 Corinthians 9:6-12). Paul continued his education in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, the most respected Rabbi of that day (Acts 22:3, 5:34). This higher education usually began about age 16-17 for Jewish boys where some type of formal education usually began at age 6. Paul was an excellent student and advanced beyond many of his contemporaries, being "exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers" (Galatians 1:14). In the late 20's AD, it is possible that Paul came with other Pharisees to be baptized by John the Baptist. John refused to baptize the Pharisees (Luke 7:30) and called them a brood of vipers (Matthew 3:7).

In 30 AD, when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, Paul began to persecute the Church. Paul may have been a junior member of the Sanhedrin; he mentions that he cast his vote in favor of putting some Christians to death (Acts 26:10). In 31 AD (almost a year after Pentecost), Paul was present at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 22:19-20, Acts 7:59-8:3).

The martyrdom of Stephen began as a dispute with the Synagogue of the Freedmen (people from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia). They were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which Stephen spoke (Acts 6:9-10). Since Paul was from Cilicia, he may have been personally involved in this dispute. According to tradition⁴, Paul was also a relative of Stephen.

For the next three years, Paul "persecuted the Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4). He "punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, he persecuted them even to foreign cities" (Acts 26:11).

John Chrysostom pointed out⁵ some interesting contrasts in the life of the Apostle Paul. Paul persecuted the Church out of ignorance (1 Timothy 1:13), but yet he was extremely knowledgeable in the Law. The Jewish leaders persecuted the Christians out of love for power, but Paul did it out of zeal for doctrine. Paul's teacher, Gamaliel, was not like the other Jewish leaders, and does not seem to have a love for power like them; perhaps he instilled this in Paul. Paul was given mercy because of his ignorance; the other Jewish leaders were not given mercy because they did things willfully.

⁴ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, III, v. 13.

“‘But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief’. Why then did other Jews not obtain mercy? Because what they did, they didn’t do ignorantly, but willfully, well knowing what they did. For this we have the testimony of John, ‘Many of the Jews believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him. They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God’ (John 12:43). And Christ again said to them, ‘How can you believe, who receive honor one of another’ (John 5:44)? The parents of the blind man ‘said these things for fear of the Jews, lest they should be put out of the synagogue’ (John 9:22). The Jews themselves said, ‘Perceive you how we avail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him’ (John 12:19). Thus their love of power was everywhere in their way. When they admitted that no one can forgive sins but God only, and Christ immediately did that very thing, which they had confessed to be a sign of divinity, this could not be a case of ignorance. But where was Paul then? Perhaps one should say he was sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, and took no part with the multitude who conspired against Jesus. For Gamaliel does not appear to have been an ambitious man. Then how is it that afterwards Paul was found joining with the multitude? He saw the doctrine growing, and on the point of prevailing, and being generally embraced. For in the lifetime of Christ, the disciples consorted with Him, and afterwards with their teachers, but when they were completely separated, Paul did not act as the other Jews did, from the love of power, but from zeal. For what was the motive of his journey to Damascus? He thought the doctrine was pernicious, and was afraid that the preaching of it would spread everywhere. But with the Jews it was no concern for the multitude, but the love of power, that influenced their actions. Hence they say, ‘The Romans will come and take away both our place and nation’ (John 11:48). What fear was this that agitated them, but that of man? But it is worthy of inquiry, how one so skillful in the Law as Paul could be ignorant? It is he who says, ‘which He had promised before by His holy prophets’ (Romans 1:2). How is it then that you know not, you who are zealous of the Law of their fathers, who were brought up at the feet of Gamaliel? Yet those who spent their days on lakes and rivers, and the publicans, have embraced the Gospel, while those that studied the Law are persecuting it! It is for this he condemns himself, saying, ‘I am not fit to be called an Apostle’ (1 Corinthians 15:9). It is for this he confesses his ignorance, which was produced by unbelief. For this reason, he says, he obtained ‘mercy’ (1 Timothy 2:16). What then does he mean when he says, ‘He counted me faithful?’ (1 Timothy 1:12) He would give up no right of his Master’s; even his own part he ascribed to Him, and assumed nothing to himself, nor claimed for his own the glory which was due to God. Hence in another place we find him exclaiming, ‘Sirs, why do you these things to us? We also are men of like passions with you’ (Acts 14:15). So again, ‘He counted me faithful’. And again, ‘I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me’ (1 Corinthians 15:10). And again, ‘It is He that works in us both to will and to do’ (Philippians 2:13). In acknowledging that he ‘obtained mercy’, he admits that he deserved punishment, since mercy is for such. And again in another place he says of the Jews, ‘Blindness in part is happened to Israel’” (Romans 11:25).

Paul's Conversion

Armed with letters from the high priest to the synagogues of Damascus (Acts 9:1-2), Paul headed north to seek out Christians that had scattered because of his persecution (Acts 8:4). On the road to Damascus, Paul met the Lord and was struck blind (Acts 9:3-8). In that encounter, the Lord told Paul to go into the city of Damascus where he would be told what to do. The Lord also told Paul that He would send him to the Gentiles that they also might have an inheritance among the faithful (Acts 26:16-18).

Meanwhile in Damascus, the Apostle Ananias also had a vision (Acts 9:10-12). Ananias was one of the original Seventy and was one of the people Paul was looking for, and Ananias knew it (Acts 9:13-14). The Lord told Ananias that Paul was coming and that:

- Paul had been told that a man named Ananias would lay hands on him to restore his sight (Acts 9:12).
- Paul would evangelize the Gentiles and proclaim Christ to kings and to Israel (Acts 9:15).
- The Lord would show Paul how much he needed to suffer for the Lord's Name's sake (Acts 9:16).

Ananias went right away to the house on the street called Straight where Paul was staying and laid hands on him, restored his sight and baptized him. Located at this address today is the Patriarchate of the Church of Antioch.

34 AD to 37 AD

Paul spent some days with the disciples of Damascus after his baptism (Acts 9:19-20). Undoubtedly, Ananias and Paul talked about their visions: that Paul was a chosen vessel to evangelize the Gentiles and would suffer a lot. In our Epistle reading, Paul stated that he did not immediately confer with flesh and blood (Galatians 1:16), but he went to Arabia for a while (Galatians 1:17). The implication is that he spent the greater part of three years (34-37 AD) in Arabia (Galatians 1:18). See Figure 1 for a map of Paul's movement in and around Damascus and Arabia.

To a Jew in the 1st Century "Arabia" did not necessarily mean the entire Arabian Peninsula. Josephus wrote that Arabia could be seen to the East from a tower in Jerusalem. In the 2nd Century, the kingdom of Nabatea was established as generally to the East of Palestine. This area was generally referred to as Arabia by residents of Palestine (see map). Note that Nabatea includes both the area surrounding Damascus and the area of Decapolis evangelized by the healed demoniacs in Mark 5:20 (see also Matthew 8:28).

The politics of this area was somewhat in turmoil at the time of Paul's conversion. From an article⁶ in Bible Review that gives a historical perspective to Nabatea:

"Although the mother of Herod the Great came from an eminent Nabatean family, he later fought the Nabateans in a war that he won only after suffering heavy losses. The Nabateans, in return, enthusiastically provided auxiliary troops to aid

⁶ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "What Was Paul Doing in Arabia?" Bible Review, October 1994

the Roman governor of Syria in brutally suppressing the Jewish revolt that followed Herod's death" (about 4 BC).

"In order to calm the tensions between the two peoples, one of Herod's sons, Herod Antipas, married the daughter of the Nabatean king, Aretas IV. However, in about 23 AD he divorced her in order to marry Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip. John the Baptist criticized this marriage, as reported both by Josephus and the Gospels, with the result that John was imprisoned and then beheaded (Matthew 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-29, Luke 4:19-20). Using a disputed border as an excuse, the Nabatean king attacked Galilee to avenge the insult to his daughter."

"The Nabatean king knew from experience that Rome had little patience with warlike actions between the client kings who guarded the eastern frontier of the empire. He thus had every reason to feel anxious not only about Jewish reaction, but about Roman reaction to his attack on Galilee. The Roman emperor was perfectly capable of reacting quickly and decisively. All he had to do was to give an order to the governor of Syria, who had four legions at his disposition."

Just as the Nabatean King Aretas was expecting the reaction from Rome, Paul [a Jew, a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee] went to Arabia.

Prior to leaving for Arabia, Paul had begun to preach Christ in the synagogues of Damascus (Acts 9:20). Those who heard him were amazed since they knew that Paul tried to destroy Christians in Jerusalem, and had come to Damascus to do the same (Acts 9:21-22). After his return to Damascus from Arabia, the amazement and consternation turned into a murder plot against Paul. The Jews hatched the plot (Acts 9:24) and got the governor of Damascus under King Aretas to go along (2 Corinthians 11:32). With an Ethnarch guarding the city looking for Paul, the Christians let Paul down in a basket through a window in the city wall (Acts 9:25, 2 Corinthians 11:32-33) and he escaped, heading for Jerusalem.

The Twelve had divided the world up into different regions, and then they drew lots to see who would go where. The Apostle John had drawn the region of Asia Minor⁷, but he couldn't go there until after the death of the Virgin Mary, since the Lord had directed him to care for her (John 19:25-27). On Paul's missionary journeys, he filled in for John in Asia Minor until John could get there. Paul did something similar during his first three years as a believer in Arabia. Timon, of the Seventy and of the first seven deacons, was later Bishop of Bostra in Arabia. Paul laid the groundwork for Timon. John Chrysostom noted⁸ Paul's fervent, yet extremely humble, character, as he began his life as an Apostle. He desired to go to places that the Twelve and the Seventy hadn't taken up the preaching of the Word yet.

"Paul was a fervent soul! He desired to go to regions not yet cultivated, which were in a wild state. Had he remained with the Apostles, since he had nothing to learn, his preaching would have been limited, for they needed to spread the Word everywhere. Thus this blessed man, fervent in spirit, undertook to teach wild barbarians, choosing a life full of battle and labor. He said, 'I went into Arabia', and added, 'and again I returned to Damascus' (Galatians 1:17).

⁷ We can see this from Revelation 2 and 3, where John addresses some of the Churches in this region.

⁸ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 1, v. 17

Observe his humility; he doesn't speak of his successes, or whom or the many he instructed. Yet such was his zeal, immediately after his baptism, that he confounded the Jews, and so exasperated them, that they and the Greeks lay in wait for him to kill him. This would not have been the case, had he not greatly added to the numbers of the faithful. Since the Jews were defeated in doctrine, they resorted to murder, which was a clear sign of Paul's superiority. But Christ did not allow him to be put to death, preserving him for his mission. Of these successes, however, Paul says nothing. In all his writings, his motive is not ambition, nor to be honored more highly than the Apostles, nor because he is embarrassed at being taken lightly. He calls himself, 'one born⁹ out of due time', and, 'the first of sinners', and 'the last of the Apostles', and, 'not fit to be called an Apostle' (1 Corinthians 15:8). The one who said this had labored more than all of them; which is real humility. For he, who is conscious of no excellence, and speaks humbly of himself, is candid but not humble; but for Paul to say so after such accomplishments, is to be practiced in self-control."

"What great things did he achieve in the city of Damascus? He tells us that the governor¹⁰ under Aretas the king set guards about the whole city, hoping to trap this blessed man. This is a proof of the strongest kind that he was violently persecuted by the Jews. He says nothing of this, but, mentioning his arrival and departure, is silent concerning the events which occurred, nor would he have mentioned them (2 Corinthians 11:32) had not circumstances required it."

"He said that after three years he went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas' (Galatians 1:18). What can be lowlier than such a soul? After such successes, lacking nothing of Peter, not even his assent, but being of equal dignity with him, he went to him as his elder and superior. The only object of this journey was to visit Peter; thus he pays due respect to the Apostles, and regards himself as not even their equal. Which is plain from this journey, for Paul visited Peter for the same reason many of our brethren today visit with holy men. Or rather by a humbler feeling, for today they do so for their own benefit, but Paul, not for his own instruction or correction, but merely for the sake of honoring Peter by his presence. He says, 'to visit Peter'; he does not say to see (Greek: *ideio*), but to inquire about, (Greek: *istoresai*) a word, which those, who seek to become acquainted with great and splendid cities, apply to themselves. Worthy of such trouble did he consider the very sight of Peter. Paul did this again on his arrival at Jerusalem, after having converted many Gentiles; having reformed and brought to Christ Pamphylia, Lycaonia, Cilicia, and all nations in that quarter of the world, he first addressed himself with great humility to James, as to his elder and superior (Acts 21:17-19). Next he submitted to his counsel, and that counsel contrary to this Epistle. 'You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those which have believed; therefore shave your head, and purify yourself' (Acts 21:20-24). Accordingly he shaved his head, and observed all the Jewish ceremonies; for where the Gospel was not affected, he was the humblest of

⁹ The Greek word *ektroma* means literally "an abortion".

¹⁰ The "governor" under Aretas was an Ethnarch. Archelaus (Matthew 2:22) was an Ethnarch, which is a higher position than a Tetrarch, such as Herod Antipas, Philip and Lysanias (Luke 3:1). Thus it was a higher ranking official who was after Paul, trying to kill him, than was after Peter (Acts 12:3).

all men. But where by such humility he saw any injured, he gave it up, for that was no longer being humble, but that could destroy the disciples.”

Chrysostom continued¹¹ to say that Paul, in his humility, referred to himself as “less than the least of all the saints” (Ephesians 3:8). In spite of being a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man (1 Timothy 1:13), he was given the grace to communicate the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles. Paul didn’t call himself the least of the Apostles, but less than the least of all the saints. In his humility, Paul mourned his former sins, even though they were blotted out.

37 AD to 45 AD

Arriving in Jerusalem, Paul met with Peter and James, the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:18-19). This was his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion and he only stayed 15 days. At first, the disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of him and didn’t believe he was a disciple. But Barnabas, who had also studied¹² under Gamaliel, took Paul in, introduced him to the Apostles, and declared to them concerning Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:26-27). When Paul spoke boldly in the Name of Jesus and disputed with the Greek-speaking Jews, they also hatched a murder plot (Acts 9:29). This is why he only stayed 15 days in Jerusalem. When the brethren in Jerusalem found out about the murder plot, they hustled Paul down to Caesarea and off to his hometown of Tarsus (Acts 9:30). With Paul out of the way and no longer organizing the persecution of the Church, Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and multiplied considerably (Acts 9:31). This peace lasted until about 44 AD when Herod (Agrippa) killed James, the son of Zebedee, and tried to kill Peter also (Acts 12:1ff) because it pleased the Jews.

Before leaving Jerusalem, Paul had another vision from the Lord that confirmed the one he had at his conversion (Acts 22:17-21). In this vision, which occurred while Paul was praying in the Temple, the Lord warned him to get out of Jerusalem quickly because:

- They will not receive your testimony in Jerusalem
- The Lord would send him far from there to the Gentiles.

Paul spent the next 8 years in Tarsus (37 AD - 45 AD). During this time Paul had at least one other vision, this one greater than all the others. This vision occurred in 41 AD (14 years before the writing of 2 Corinthians in 55 AD). In this vision Paul was caught up into Paradise and heard things that he couldn’t even speak about (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). This vision prepared Paul for his role as an Apostle since the Churches on earth are modeled after the Assembly of the Saints in heaven just as the Tabernacle in the wilderness was modeled after the Tabernacle in heaven (Exodus 25:9, 20; 26:30, Acts 7:44, Hebrews 8:5).

There was other foundational work that Paul did while he was in Tarsus that we don’t notice until later. A number of the members of Paul’s immediate family either came to know the Lord; or if they already did, the breach between them and Paul was repaired. According to

¹¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VII.

¹² Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, June 11.

tradition¹³, Stephen, one of the first seven deacons was a kinsman of Paul and therefore some repair work on family relationships may have been necessary.

Some of Paul's kinsmen that are mentioned in the Scriptures are Herodion (Romans 16:11), Andronicus and Junius (Romans 16:7), Lucius, Jason and Sosipater (Romans 16:21). Herodian, Andronicus¹⁴, both members of the Seventy, and Junius were in Rome in 55 AD when Paul wrote Romans. According to tradition, they had been sent there by Peter and Paul to help get the Church started, and Paul addressed them by name in Romans 16. Herodian was later Bishop of Neoparthia and Andronicus was later Bishop of Pannonia (North of Dalmatia).

When Paul wrote Romans, he was in the middle of his Third Missionary Journey and was staying in Corinth at the time. With him in Corinth were Lucius, Jason and Sosipater (Romans 16:21), all members of the original Seventy and now doing apostolic work with Paul. Jason is also mentioned as working with Paul on Paul's Second Missionary Journey in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-7). According to tradition¹⁵, Jason was later Bishop of Tarsus; Lucius, Bishop of Laodicea; and Sosipater, Bishop of Iconium. Jason and Sosipater later teamed up as apostles and evangelized the Island of Corfu (West coast of Greece).

After spending about 8 years in Tarsus, Barnabas arrived in 45 AD looking for Paul (Acts 11:25). The Church in Antioch had gotten started recently by some men from Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 11:20). The men we know from the Scripture that were from Cyprus are Barnabas (Acts 4:36) and his brother Aristobulus (Romans 16:10). According to tradition¹⁶, Aristobulus was also Peter's father-in-law and later Bishop of Britain. Those from Cyrene were Simon of Cyrene and his sons Rufus and Alexander (Mark 15:21). Simon was pressed into service to carry Jesus' cross at the crucifixion. Rufus worked with the apostle Paul, was in Rome when Paul wrote Romans (Romans 16:13), and was later Bishop of Thebes¹⁷. Simon's other son, Alexander, became a traitor to the Faith and was largely responsible for Paul's martyrdom (2 Timothy 4:14, 1 Timothy 1:20). Another man from Cyrene was Lucius of Cyrene who was one of the prophets and teachers at the Church of Antioch (Acts 13:1).

When Barnabas found Paul in Tarsus, he brought him to Antioch (Acts 11:26). Along with the others, Paul and Barnabas taught at the Church in Antioch for a year before they went off on their First Missionary Journey. During this one-year period, Agabus, a prophet and one of the Seventy, predicted that there would be a great famine. During the famine, Barnabas and Paul hand-carried alms from Antioch to the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30).

As one can see from this brief history of the Apostle Paul's early life, there was considerable preparation and training he went through prior to his being sent out as an Apostle. He didn't have the opportunity to follow Jesus for three years like the Twelve and the Seventy. However, the Lord did speak to him personally and specifically in directing him what to do. When he said in Galatians, "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood" (Galatians 1:16)

¹³ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

¹⁴ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 8, May 17.

¹⁵ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 28, September 10.

¹⁶ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, March 16.

¹⁷ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 8.

following his conversion, he is not putting down the Twelve, nor is he saying one shouldn't confer with one's elders. He is simply referring to the visions he had that were necessary for him to be able to do what he had done.