

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

Healing of St. Veronica

November 7, 2021
7th Sunday of Luke
Revision E

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.

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Background for the Gospel Lesson

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 Veronica, 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.

Cyril of Alexandria stated¹ that Veronica had given up all hope of being healed by men and conceived a wise plan to seek the Physician from above. She may have taken courage by seeing Jairus leading Jesus to his house to prevent his daughter from dying. However, she touched Jesus secretly in order to avoid being punished for touching a holy man while she was unclean. Jesus perceived power going out from Him and did not let the woman remain concealed. By revealing Veronica's faith, Jesus benefitted us all, and also encouraged Jairus to trust in His grace.

“Veronica was a woman afflicted with an issue of blood, the prey of a severe and violent malady, which refused to yield to the skill of physicians, and set at naught all the appliances of human remedies. For she could not be healed by any, even though she had unsparingly lavished all her substance upon those who promised to deliver her from her disease. When, therefore, the unhappy woman had given up all hope from men, and now survived only for utter misery, she conceived in her a wise plan. For she had recourse to the Physician Who is from above, from heaven, as One Who is able readily and without effort to affect those things that are beyond our power, and Whose decrees, whatever it be He would accomplish, nothing can oppose.”

“Her faith in this was perhaps occasioned by seeing Jairus leading Jesus to his house, to prove Himself mightier than death, to prevent his daughter from dying. For she thought perchance within herself, that if He was mightier than death, and the destroyer of corruption, how much more can He also alleviate the malady that afflicts her, staunching by ineffable power the fountains of her issue of blood! She drew near, therefore, and touched the hem of His garment; but secretly and not openly; for she hoped to be able to escape notice, and, as it were, to steal healing from One Who knew not of it. But why, tell me, was the woman careful to escape notice? For why, should she not draw near to Christ with more boldness than that leper (Luke 5:12), and ask for the remission of her incurable pain? For he said, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean’. Why should not she act like those blind men, who when Christ passed by called out and said, ‘Have mercy upon us, O Lord, Son of David’? (Matt. 20:30). What then was it that made that the sick woman wish to remain hidden? It was because the Law of the all wise Moses imputed impurity to any woman who was suffering from an issue of blood, and everywhere called her unclean; and whoever was unclean, might neither touch anything that was holy, nor approach a holy man. For this reason, the woman was careful to remain concealed, lest as having transgressed the Law, she should have to bear the punishment which it imposed. And when she touched, she was healed immediately and without delay.”

“But the miracle did not remain hidden; for the Savior, though knowing all things, asked as if He knew it not, saying, ‘Who touched Me?’ (Luke 8:45). The holy apostles with good reason said, ‘The multitudes throng You and press You’. He set before them what had been done, saying, ‘Somebody touched Me; for I perceived power going out from Me’ (Luke 8:46). Was it then for love of glory

¹ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 45, Studion Publishers, 1983, pp. 198-199.

that the Lord did not allow this instance of His godlike working, the miracle, I mean, that had happened to the woman to remain concealed? By no means do we say this, but rather, that it was because He always keeps in view the benefit of those who are called to grace through faith. The concealment of the miracle, then, would have been injurious to many, but being made known, it benefited them in no slight degree; and especially the ruler of the synagogue himself. For it gave security to the hope to which he looked forward and made him firmly trust that Christ would deliver his daughter from the bonds of death.”

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!” (Luke 8:48)

John Chrysostom compared² 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”.

Chrysostom also pointed out³ that Veronica 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”. 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

² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXI, 2.

³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXI, 2.

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.

John Chrysostom further pointed out⁴ that Jesus did not allow Veronica to be hidden, even though she was "unclean". This accomplished four things: 1) It put an end to the woman's fear that she had stolen the gift and remain in agony of conscience. 2) He set her right knowing that He knew what she was doing. 3) He exhibited her faith to everyone such that everyone should emulate her. 4) He encouraged Jairus, the synagogue ruler, who was about to lose his faith that Jesus could help him.

In speaking to the crowd, "Jesus said, 'Who touched Me?' When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, 'Master, the multitudes throng and press⁵ You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" But Jesus said, 'Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me'. Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And Jesus said to her, 'Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace'" (Luke 8:45-48).

Cyril of Alexandria stated⁶ that this event demonstrated that Jesus was God. There was the miraculous event, but there was also what Jesus spoke, "I perceived power going out from Me". All created beings possess power as a gift of God, not of itself. As God, Jesus could perceive power going out from Him.

"This is a fit subject for our admiration. Veronica was delivered, being saved from a state of suffering that was bitter and incurable; and thereby we again obtain the firm assurance, that the Emmanuel is truly God. How and in what manner? Both from the miraculous event itself, and from the words where He spoke with divine dignity. For He said, 'I perceived power going out from Me' (Luke 8:46). But it is above our pay grade, and probably that even of the angels, to send forth any power, and that of their own nature, as something that is of themselves. Such an act is an attribute appropriate solely to the Nature That is above all, and supreme. For every created being whatever that is endued with power, whether of healing, or the like, possess it not of itself, but as a thing given it by God. To the creature all things are given, and done in it, and of itself it can do nothing. As God, therefore, He said I knew that power has gone out from Me."

"Veronica now made confession; and inasmuch as with her malady, with the disease, I mean, which had afflicted her, she had put off the fear, which made her wish to remain concealed. She proclaimed the divine miracle; and therefore, was very fitly deemed worthy of His tranquillizing words, and received security that she should suffer from her malady no more. For our Savior Christ said to her,

⁴ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, XXXI, 2.

⁵ That is, everyone close to Jesus was touching Him due to the crowd.

⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Homily 45, Studion Publishers, 1983, pp. 199.

‘Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace’” (Luke 8:48).

Jesus met Veronica in late 28 AD, and word of what happened spread around rapidly. By the Spring of 29 AD, John the Baptist had just been beheaded by Herod, the Twelve Apostles had been sent out to heal the sick and raise the dead and Jesus had just fed the 5000 and returned to Galilee. Along the way back to Galilee, Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee. When He got out of the boat, many thousands of people met Him, where everyone now wanted to touch the hem of His garment to be healed. Veronica had started a new trend!

“Then those who were in the boat (the Twelve Apostles) came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God’ (due to the miracle of calming the storm). When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched *it* were made perfectly well” (Matthew 14:33-36).

John Chrysostom stated⁷ that we not only touch the hem of Christ’s garment but we also touch His whole body at every Liturgy when we partake of the Eucharist. It is not the priest’s hand stretched out to us, but the hand of Christ Himself.

“Let us also then touch the hem of His garment, or rather, if we be willing, we have Him entire. For indeed His body is set before us now, not His garment only, but even His body; not for us to touch it only, but also to eat, and be filled. Let us now then draw near with faith, every one that has an infirmity. For if they that touched the hem of His garment drew from Him so much virtue, how much more they that possess Him entire? Now to draw near with faith is not only to receive the offering, but also with a pure heart to touch it; to be so minded, as approaching Christ Himself. For what, if you hear no voice? Yet you see Him laid out; or rather you do also hear His voice, while He is speaking by the evangelists.”

“Believe, therefore, that even now it is that supper, at which He Himself sat down. For this is in no respect different from that. For neither does man make this and Himself the other; but both this and that is His own work. When therefore you see the priest delivering it to you, account not that it is the priest that does so, but that it is Christ’s hand that is stretched out.”

Athanasius of Alexandria stated⁸ that, unlike the heathen and the Arians, we worship Christ Who is both God and man. We don’t divide the body from the Word, like the Arians; nor do we question Christ declaring Himself God. Veronica believed and recognized this.

“We do not worship a creature. Far be the thought. For such an error belongs to heathen and Arians. But we worship the Lord of Creation, Incarnate, the Word of God. For if the flesh also is in itself a part of the created world, yet it has become God’s body. We neither divide the body, being such, from the Word, and worship it by itself, nor when we wish to worship the Word do we set Him far apart from the Flesh. But knowing that ‘the Word was made flesh,’ we recognize

⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, L, 3.

⁸ Athanasius of Alexandria, Personal Letter to Adelphius, LX, 3.

Him as God also, after having come in the flesh. Who, accordingly, is so senseless as to say to the Lord: ‘Leave the Body that I may worship You’? Or who is so impious as to join the senseless Jews in saying, on account of the Body, ‘Why do You, being a man, make Yourself God?’ (John 10:33). But the leper was not one of this sort, for he worshipped God in the Body, and recognized that He was God, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean’ (Matthew 8:2). Neither by reason of the Flesh did he think the Word of God a creature; nor because the Word was the maker of all creation did he despise the Flesh which He had put on. But he worshipped the Creator of the universe as dwelling in a created temple and was cleansed. So also, the woman with an issue of blood, who believed, and only touched the hem of His garment (Matthew 9:20), was healed. Also, the sea with its foaming waves heard the incarnate Word, and ceased its storm (Matthew 8:26), while the man blind from birth was healed by the fleshly spitting of the Word (John 9:6). What is greater and more startling, even when the Lord was hanging on the actual cross for it was His Body and the Word was in it, the sun was darkened and the earth shook, the rocks were split. And the veil of the temple rent, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose; for perhaps this even offended those most impious men.”

Hilary of Poitiers stated⁹ that Jesus may have appeared ignorant of who had touched His hem, but He also reads the thoughts of everyone. He may ask and appear ignorant, but He is just expressing His humanity. He does not know that which it is not yet time to declare, or which is not deserving of His recognition.

“The Lord Jesus Christ, then, Who searches the heart and the minds (Revelation 2:23), has no weakness in His nature, that He should not know. As we perceive, even the fact of His ignorance proceeds from the omniscience of His nature. Yet if any there be, who impute to Him ignorance, let them tremble, lest He Who knows their thoughts should say to them, why do you think evil in your hearts? (Matthew 9:4). The All-knowing, though not ignorant of thoughts and deeds, sometimes enquires as if He were, as for instance when He asks the woman who it was that touched the hem of His garment (Luke 8:45). Or the Apostles, why they quarreled among themselves (Mark 10:35-41), or the mourners, where the sepulcher of Lazarus was (John 11:34); but His ignorance was not ignorance, except in words. It is against reason that He should know from afar the death and burial of Lazarus (John 11:11-15), but not the place of his sepulcher. Or that He should read the thoughts of the mind (Mark 2:8-12), and not recognize the faith of the woman (Luke 8:46-47); or that He should not need to ask concerning anything (John 16:30) yet be ignorant of the dissension of the Apostles (Mark 10:41). But He, Who knows all things, sometimes by a practice of economy professes ignorance, even though He is not ignorant. Thus, in the case of Abraham, God concealed His knowledge for a time (Genesis 18:17-18); in that of the foolish virgins, He refused to recognize the unworthy (Matthew 25:6-12). In the mystery of the Son of Man, His asking, as if ignorant, expressed His humanity. He accommodated Himself to the reality of His birth in the flesh in everything to which

⁹ Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, IX, 66.

the weakness of our nature is subject, not in such wise that He became weak in His divine nature. But God, born man, assumed the weaknesses of humanity, yet without thereby reducing His unchangeable nature to a weak nature, for the unchangeable nature was that wherein He mysteriously assumed flesh. He, Who was God is man, but, being man, has not ceased to remain God. Conducting Himself then as one born man, and proving Himself such, though remaining God the Word, He often uses the language of man (though God, speaking as God, makes frequent use of human terms). He does not know that which it is not yet time to declare, or which is not deserving of His recognition.”

Death Becomes Merely a Sleep:

As soon as Jesus had finished speaking with Veronica, some people came from the synagogue ruler’s house: “Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher” (Luke 8:49). Chrysostom stated¹⁰ that Jesus anticipated this and both walked more leisurely and spoke with Veronica longer in order to give Jairus’ daughter time to die. Jesus’ response to news of the death of Jairus’ daughter was immediately, “But when Jesus heard *it*, He answered him (Jairus), saying, ‘Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well’” (Luke 8:50).

Cyril of Alexandria noted¹¹ that Jairus approached Christ asking Him to do something that only God can do, expecting that He was able to accomplish his request.

“Let us ask Jairus to tell us in what light he regards Him to Whom he offers his request. For if you draw near regarding Him as a mere man, and like one of us; as one, that is, who possess no power superior to ourselves, you miss your mark, and have wandered from the right road, in asking of a man that which requires the power of God. The supreme nature alone is able to give life to the dead. It alone has immortality; and from It everything that is called into being borrows its life and motion. Ask, therefore, of men the things that belong to men, and of God the things that belong to God. Moreover, you worship Him as the Almighty God; and do so, as certainly knowing and testifying that He is able to give you the accomplishment of your requests.”

By the time 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 comments¹²:

“He is teaching us not to fear death: for it is no longer death but has now 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”. This was not so apparent, however, until after Christ’s Resurrection.

¹⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXI, 2.

¹¹ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 45, Studion Publishers, 1983, pp. 195-196.

¹² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXI, 3.

We note that Jesus did not rebuke the mourners or criticize them for ridiculing Him. Chrysostom said¹³ 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. 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).

Cyril of Alexandria stated¹⁴ that sometimes people need to be led to God with what seems to be bit and bridle due to the force of circumstances. This is similar to the Lord's statement to His servants to go into the highways and hedges and compel people to come to His banquet. The circumstances of the illness of Jairus' daughter seemed to compel her father to seek Jesus. If Jesus had not gone to Jairus' house, the Jews at the synagogue would have said that He didn't have the power to do that and that He just pretended unhappiness with Jairus as a pretext. Jesus went anyway so that they all would be without excuse and to implant in them the hope of the resurrection from the dead.

“But the fate of the damsel was not without profit to her father. For just as sometimes the violence of the reins brings the spirited steed that has bounded away from the road back to its proper course, so also trouble often compels the soul of man to yield obedience to those things which are for its good and are commanded. To this effect we find the blessed David also addressing God over all, concerning those men who, not being as yet willing to walk uprightly, were led on, so to speak, by the disorderly impulses of their mind to the pit of destruction. ‘Do not be like the horse *or* like the mule, *which* have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, or else they will not come near you’ (Psalm 32:9). For the force of circumstances brings men even against their wills to the necessity of bowing their neck to God, as we may see indirectly shown in the Gospel parables. For Christ somewhere said, that when the banquet was ready, a servant was sent to call them to the supper, and gather those that were bidden; but they, employing fictitious excuses of various kinds, would not come. Then the Lord, it says, spoke to that servant: ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled’ (Luke 14:23). What then is the meaning of men being invited from the hedges — and that as it were by force — if it be not what is here referred to? For sometimes misfortunes beyond the power of endurance hedge men into extreme misery; and meeting, it may be, with care and assistance from those who fear Christ, they are thus led on unto faith in Him and love. Being weaned from their former error they received by tradition from their fathers, they accept the saving word of the Gospel. And such we may well affirm to be those who are called from the hedges.”

“Jairus then drew near; but we deny that his coming was the fruit of freewill; rather it was the fear of death which made him thus act against his will; for it had already, so to speak, assailed his daughter; and she was his only one.”

¹³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXI, 3.

See also Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 46, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 201.

¹⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 45, Studion Publishers, 1983, pp. 196-198.

“But there was also a sort of wise management in what was done. For had Christ not yielded to Jairus’ request for grace, both himself and whoever else suffered under the same ignorance, or rather, lack of common sense, would have said that He was not able to raise the damsel, nor drive death away from her, even if He had gone to the house. They would have said 1) that He was without power, and unequal to the accomplishment of the divine miracle; and 2) that He made His displeasure at Jairus a pretext for keeping away. To put a stop therefore to the impure and unbridled false accusations of the Jews and restrain the tongues of the numerous persons ever ready for faultfinding, Jesus consents immediately, and promises to raise up her who was in danger. And the promises were followed by the fulfillment, in order that disbelief on their part might be without excuse, and that this miracle, like the rest, might be for their condemnation. For Christ also said of them, ‘If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father’ (John 15:24). The Savior then went to raise the damsel, and to implant in the dwellers upon earth the sure hope of the resurrection of the dead.”

Cyril of Alexandria also pointed out¹⁵ that Jairus had a conflict of interest: faith in Christ versus his responsibilities to the Mosaic Law as synagogue ruler. Since Faith came first to Abraham, all nations are blessed in him by imitation of his Faith. The Law came 430 years later by the ministry of angels to confirm the Faith that we have in Christ. Faith is the cause of life and slays sin, which is the mother and nurse of death. Jesus told Jairus, “Only believe, and she will be made well”, and Jairus did so.

“These are the fruits of faith, for the sake of which the Law also was given to those of old time by the hand of Moses. Paul witnesses to this, where he writes: ‘Without faith, *it is* impossible to please *Him*’ (Heb. 11:16). It is necessary, therefore, for us to explain in what sense we say that the Law was given because of faith. Abraham was justified by obedience and faith. For it is written: ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God’ (James 2:23). And God promised him both that he should be the father of many nations, and that all nations should be blessed in him; that is to say, by the imitation of his faith. One can see, therefore, that the grace that is by faith is prior to the ceremonial enjoined by the Law, in that Abraham attained to it while still uncircumcised. And afterwards, in process of time, the Law entered by the hand of Moses. Did it then thrust away the justification that is by faith — that I mean which God promised to those who follow the steps of the faith of our father Abraham, which he had while still uncircumcised? How can this be true? Paul, therefore, writes: ‘This I say, *that* the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect’ (Gal. 3:17). And again: ‘*Is* the Law then against the promises of God? Certainly not!’ (Gal. 3:21). And the same Paul further teaches us the reasons for which the Law at length entered by the ministration of angels, and the manner in which it confirms the faith in Christ, by having been brought in before the time of the incarnation of the Only-begotten, saying at one time, that ‘the Law entered that the offense might abound. But where

¹⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 46, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 201-202.

sin abounded, grace abounded much more' (Rom. 5:20); and at another again, 'that the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe' (Gal. 3:22): and again, 'The Law was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made'" (Gal. 3:19).

"Faith, then, in every way, is the cause of life, as that which slays sin, the mother and nurse of death. Excellently, therefore, said Christ to the ruler of the synagogue of the Jews, when his daughter was dead; 'Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well' (Luke 8:50). For Christ makes those alive who approach Him by faith, in that He is life; for in Him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). And He will raise the dead 'suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet' (1 Corinthians 15:52), as it is written. And having this hope in Him, we shall both attain to the city that is above, and reign as kings with Him."

Irenaeus of Lyons pointed out¹⁶ that the people that Christ raised from the dead rose in the same bodies in which they had died, and each of these people eventually died again. This contrasts the resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ, where we will never die again.

"Let our opponents — that is, they who speak against their own salvation — inform us as to this point: The deceased daughter of the synagogue ruler (Mark 5:22-42); the widow's dead son, who was being carried out to burial near the gate of the city (Luke 7:12); and Lazarus, who had lain four days in the tomb (John 11:38-44), — in what bodies did they rise again? In those same, no doubt, in which they had also died. For if it were not in the very same, then certainly those same individuals who had died did not rise again. For the Scripture says, 'The Lord touched the open coffin, and those who carried *him* stood still. Jesus said to him, "Young man, I say unto you, arise". So, he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother' (Luke 7:14-15). Again, He called Lazarus 'with a loud voice, saying, Lazarus, come forth; and he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth' (John 11:43-44). This was symbolical of that man who had been bound in sins. Therefore, the Lord said, 'Loose him, and let him go' (John 11:44). Those who were healed were made whole in those members which had in times past been afflicted. The dead rose in the identical bodies, their limbs and bodies receiving health, and that life which was granted by the Lord, who prefigures eternal things by temporal. He shows that it is He who is Himself able to extend both healing and life to His handiwork, that His words concerning its future resurrection may also be believed. So also, at the end, when the Lord utters His voice 'by the last trumpet' (1 Corinthians 15:52), the dead shall be raised, as He Himself declares: 'The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth -- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation'" (John 5:28).

Why Do People Mourn at the Death of a Friend?

¹⁶ Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, V, xiii, 1.

Chrysostom went on to apply¹⁷ 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?”

“Let no man therefore beat himself any more, nor wail, neither disparage Christ’s achievement. For He overcame death! Why then do you wail for nothing? Death has become a sleep. Why lament and weep? If Gentiles did this, they would be laughed to scorn; but when the believer behaves himself unfittingly in these things, what plea does he have? What excuse will there be for those that are guilty of such folly, and this, after so long a time, and so clear proof of the resurrection? But you, as though laboring to add to the charge against you, also bring in heathen women singing dirges, to kindle your feelings, and to stir up the furnace thoroughly. You don’t listen to Paul, saying, ‘What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?’” (2 Corinthians 6:15)

“The children of the heathen, who know nothing of resurrection, find words of consolation, saying, ‘Bear it manfully, for it is not possible to undo what has taken place, nor to amend it by lamentations’. Are not you, who hear sayings wiser and better than these, ashamed to behave more unfittingly than they? For we do not say, ‘Bear it manfully, because it is not possible to undo what has taken place’, but, ‘Bear it manfully, because he will surely rise again’. The child sleeps and is not dead; he is at rest and has not perished. For resurrection will be his final lot, and eternal life, immortality and an angel’s portion. Listen to the Psalm, ‘Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you?’ (Psalm 116:7). God calls it ‘bountiful dealing’, and do you make lamentation?”

“What more could we have done, if you were a foe and an enemy of the dead? If there must be mourning, it is the devil that ought to mourn. He may beat himself, he may wail, at our journeying to greater blessings. This lamentation is appropriate to his wickedness, not to us, who are going to be crowned and to rest. For death is a fair haven. Consider, at any rate, with how many evils our present life is filled; reflect how often we have cursed our present life. For indeed things go from bad to worse, and from the very beginning we were involved in no small condemnation. For, saith He, ‘In pain you shall bring forth children’; and, ‘In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread’ (Genesis 3:16, 19); and, ‘In the world you will have tribulation’” (John 16:33).

“But of our state there, no such word at all is spoken, but all the contrary; ‘the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away’ (Isaiah 35:10). And that ‘many will come from east and west and shall recline (in the bosoms) of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 8:11). And that the region there is a spiritual bride-chamber, and bright lamps, and a translation to Heaven.”

“Why then disgrace the departed? Why encourage the rest to fear and tremble at death? Why cause many to accuse God, as though He had done very dreadful things? Or rather, why after this invite poor persons, and ask priests to pray for the departed? ‘In order that the dead may depart into rest; that he may find

¹⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXI, 4-6.

the Judge propitious'. For these things then are we mourning and wailing? We are therefore fighting and warring with ourselves: exciting a storm against ourselves on account of the departed having entered into harbor.”

“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”.

Jairus' Relationship with Pontius Pilate

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 tradition¹⁸, 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”.

Also according to tradition¹⁹, 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 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

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ Catherine van Dyke, tr., “The Letters of Pontius Pilate and Claudia Procula”, Relics of Repentance, 1st Edition, Issana Press, Lincoln, NE 68503, 1990.

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 7, 2021
20th Sunday after Pentecost
Revision E

Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19

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

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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 AD²⁰

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²⁰ 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; Prior to Conversion

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 tradition²¹, 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 out²² 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.

²¹ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

²² 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).

Chrysostom noted²³ that even though Paul had done some great things as an Apostle, Paul himself emphasized his unworthiness since he had persecuted the Church. Paul ranked himself lower than all the Apostles, both the Twelve, the Seventy and those who came later.

“Paul, after the Cross, persecuted Christ, and stoned His martyr Stephen by those many hands (Acts 7:59-8:1); but he repented, and condemned his former sins, and ran to Him whom he had persecuted. Christ immediately enrolled him among His friends, and the chief of them, having appointed him a herald and teacher of all the world, who had been ‘a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man’ (1 Timothy 1:13). Paul rejoiced at the loving-kindness of God, proclaimed it aloud, and has not been ashamed, but having recorded in his writings, as on a pillar, the deeds formerly dared by him, and has exhibited them to all. Paul thought it better that his former life should be placarded in sight of all, so that the greatness of the free gift of God might appear. He didn’t want to obscure Christ’s ineffable and indescribable loving-kindness by hesitating to parade before all men his own error. Paul continually treats of his persecution, his plotting, his wars against the Church, at one time saying, ‘I am the least of the apostles²⁴, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God’ (1 Corinthians 15:9); at another, ‘Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief’ (1 Timothy 1:15). And again, ‘You have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to* destroy it’” (Galatians 1:13).

“For making as it were a kind of return to Christ for His long-suffering towards him, by showing who it was, what a hater and enemy that He saved. Paul declared with much openness the warfare which at the first with all zeal he warred against Christ; and with this he holds forth good hopes to those who despaired of their condition. For he says, that Christ accepted him, in order that in him first ‘Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life’ (Timothy 1:16), and the abundant riches of His goodness.”

Paul said, “But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now, we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Corinthians 13:10-12). This suggests that Paul was saying that his earlier experience in Judaism was marked by childishness.

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

²³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, X, 1-2.

²⁴ Not the least of the Twelve, but the least of ALL the Apostles. See John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXVIII, 6. This is quite a statement, since most of the Seventy Apostles worked for Paul at some point on his various missionary journeys. For more details on who and when, see Mark Kern, The Life of the Apostle Paul, St Athanasius Press, 2014. This is available at <https://www.stathanasius.org/resources/e-books/>.

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.

John Chrysostom noted²⁵ that God called Paul at just the right time on account of Paul's excellent capacity. However, Paul himself in his humility, always spoke of this as grace and the mercy of God towards someone who didn't deserve it.

“Paul's object is to show, that it was by some secret providence that he was left for a time to himself (Galatians 1:16). Paul he was set apart from his mother's womb to be an Apostle and to be called to that ministry (Galatians 1:15). Yet he was not actually called until that time on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-16), which summons he instantly obeyed. It is evident that God had some hidden reason for this delay.”

“God indeed says that He called him on account of his excellent capacity, as He said to Ananias, ‘He is a chosen vessel of Mine, to bear my name before Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel’ (Acts 9:15). That is to say, capable of service, and the accomplishment of great deeds. God gives this as the reason for Paul's call! But Paul himself everywhere ascribes it to grace, and to God's inexpressible mercy, as in the words, ‘However for this reason I obtained mercy’, not that I was sufficient or even serviceable, but ‘that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life’ (1 Timothy 1:16). Behold his overflowing humility; I obtained mercy, says he, that no one might despair, when the worst of men had shared His bounty. For this is the force of the words, ‘that Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him’”.

34 AD to 37 AD; Immediately after Conversion

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

²⁵ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 1, vv. 15-16.

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 article²⁶ 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 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 live in this area of 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 Ethnarch²⁷ guarding the city looking for Paul, the Christians

²⁶ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "What Was Paul Doing in Arabia?" Bible Review, October 1994

²⁷ An Ethnarch was the ruler of an entire province. By contrast Herod Antipas and his brother Philip (Luke 3:1) were only tetrarchs, who governed a fourth of a province.

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.

John Chrysostom noted²⁸ that the calling of Paul was a huge event in the history of the people of God. The enemy of the people of God just became their champion and chief spokesman!

“Paul alludes to the prediction addressed to Ananias concerning him at Damascus, when the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel’ (Acts 9:15). By ‘dispensation of the grace of God’ (Ephesians 3:2), Paul means the revelation made to him. As much as to say, ‘I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it’ (Galatians 1:12). God Himself said to Paul, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21). ‘This dispensation was a mighty one; to call someone, uninfluenced from any other quarter, immediately from above, and to say, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ (Acts 9:4). At this time, Paul was struck blind with that ineffable light!”

Tertullian noted²⁹ that the Apostles in Jerusalem had heard of the remarkable things that occurred on Paul’s 1st Missionary Journey, and they welcomed him with open arms on his return. Even just 3 years after Paul’s conversion, when he went to see Peter, he was welcomed by the brethren in Jerusalem.

“Having been converted from a persecutor to a preacher, Paul was introduced as one of the brethren to brethren, by brethren — to them, indeed, by men who had put on faith from the Apostles’ hands. Afterwards, as Paul himself narrates, he ‘went up to Jerusalem to see Peter’ (Galatians 1:18), because of his office, no doubt, and by right of a common belief and preaching. Now they certainly would not have been surprised at Paul’s having become a preacher instead of a persecutor, if his preaching were of something contrary. They would not have ‘glorified the Lord’ (Galatians 1:24), because Paul had presented himself as an adversary to Christ. They accordingly even gave him ‘the right hand of fellowship’ (Galatians 2:9), as a sign of their agreement with him, and arranged among themselves a distribution of office, not a diversity of Gospel. The intent was that they should severally preach not a different Gospel, but the same Gospel, to different persons, Peter to the circumcision, Paul to the Gentiles.”

Paul said, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood” (Galatians 1:15-16). We might ask, if God separated Paul already from his mother’s womb, why did He wait so long to call Paul?

John Chrysostom pointed out³⁰ that Paul was in a similar place as the laborers in Christ’s parable of the landowner who called laborers at different hours of the day. Not all the laborers were willing to come at the first hour. But God waited until they were ready.

²⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VI, v. 2.

²⁹ Tertullian, Prescription Against Heretics, 23.

³⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXIV, 3.

“Why can it have been that the landowner (God) did not hire all the laborers at once? As far as concerned Him, He did hire all; but if all did not listen at once, the difference was made by the disposition of them that were called. For this reason, some are called early in the morning, some at the third hour, some at the sixth, some at the ninth, some at the eleventh, when they would obey (Matthew 20:1-16). Paul also declared this when he said, ‘When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles’ (Galatians 1:15-16). When did it please God? When Paul was ready to obey!! For God willed it even from the beginning, but because Paul would not have yielded, then it pleased Him, when Paul also was ready to obey. Thus, also did He call the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43); although He was able to have called him before, but the thief would not have obeyed. If Paul at the beginning would not have obeyed, much more the thief. And if someone says, ‘No one has hired us’ (Matthew 20:7), in the first place, we must not be curious about all the points in the parables. For that He called all, as far as lay in Him, from the first, even the parable shows, saying, that ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard’” (Matthew 20:1).

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 Minor³¹, 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 noted³² 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). 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

³¹ We can see this from Revelation 2 and 3, where John addresses some of the Churches in this region.

³² John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 1, v. 17

calls himself, ‘one born³³ 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 governor³⁴ 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 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 continued³⁵ 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.

³³ The Greek word *ektroma* means literally “an abortion”.

³⁴ 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).

³⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VII.

37 AD to 45 AD; in Tarsus, Before Missionary Journeys

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 studied³⁶ 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 tradition³⁷, 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, Andronicus³⁸, 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).

³⁶ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, June 11.

³⁷ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

³⁸ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 8, May 17.

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 tradition³⁹, 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 tradition⁴⁰, 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 Thebes⁴¹. 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) 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.

John Chrysostom pointed out⁴²: when Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the Church of Antioch on their 1st Missionary, they did not immediately confer with flesh and blood in Jerusalem.

"The Apostles came to the Gentiles teaching them that with good reason they had been ordained by the Spirit. They did not say what they themselves thought, but 'what God had done with them' (Acts 14:26). It seems to me, that they mean their trials. It was not for nothing that they came, but providentially guided by the Spirit, that the preaching to the Gentiles might be firmly established. Notice

³⁹ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 28, September 10.

⁴⁰ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, March 16.

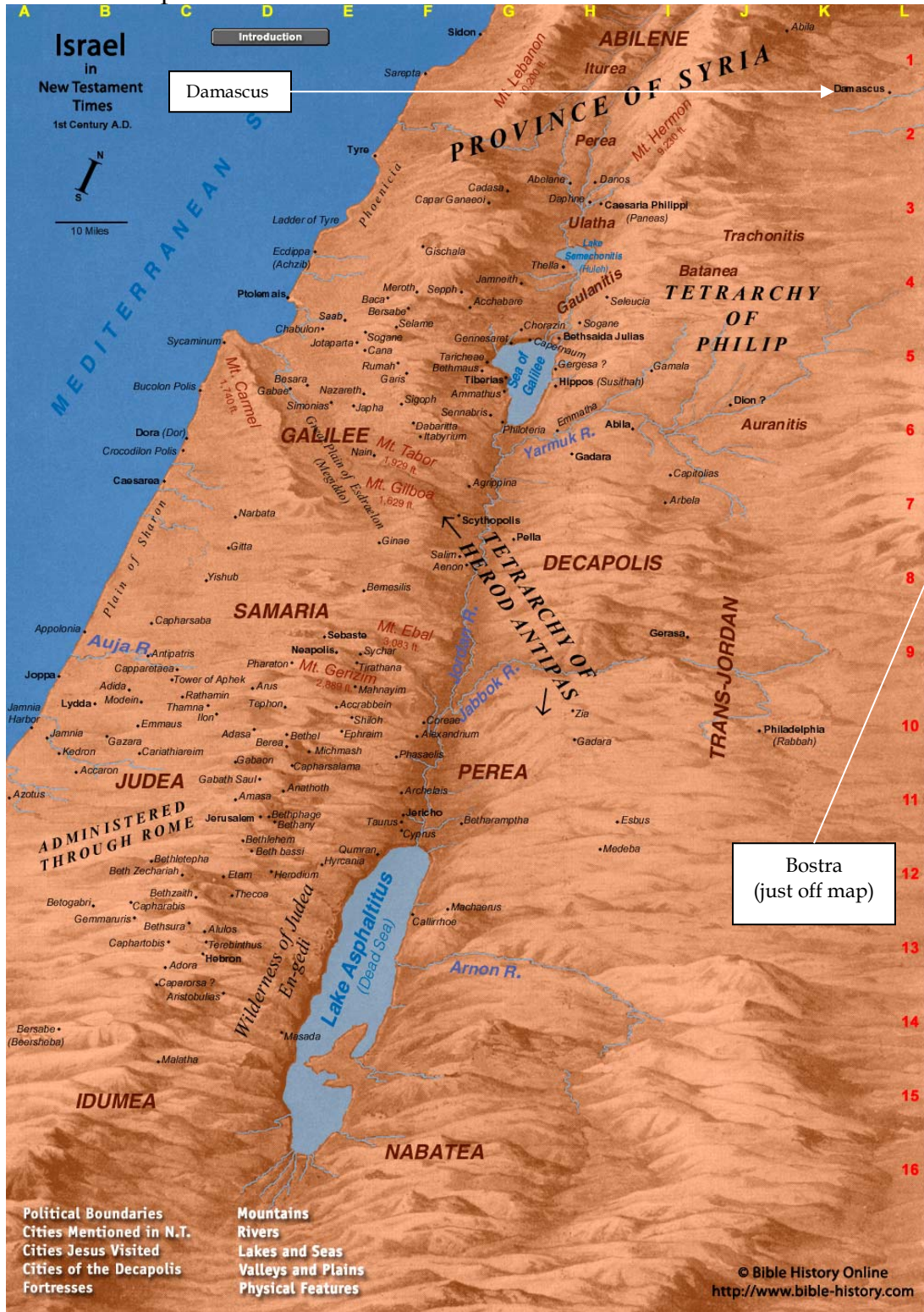
⁴¹ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 8.

⁴² John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXI, v. 27.

Paul's ardor. He does not ask whether it is right to speak to Gentiles, but he straightway speaks⁴³. Therefore, Paul says, 'When God revealed His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood' (Galatians 1:16). For it is indeed a great thing, a great, a generous soul (like this)! How many have since believed, and none of them all has shone like Paul! What we want is earnestness, exceeding ardor, a soul ready to encounter death."

⁴³ We might note that Paul had had an earlier vision in the Temple in Jerusalem where the Lord stated that He would send Paul to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-21). That occurred in 37 AD, three years after Paul's conversion. But Paul didn't do anything about that vision until he was sent out as an Apostle by the Church in Antioch in 46 AD.

Figure 1
 Map⁴⁴ of Paul's Movement Around Arabia and Damascus



⁴⁴ © Bible History Online <http://www.bible-history.com>. Other maps also available.

