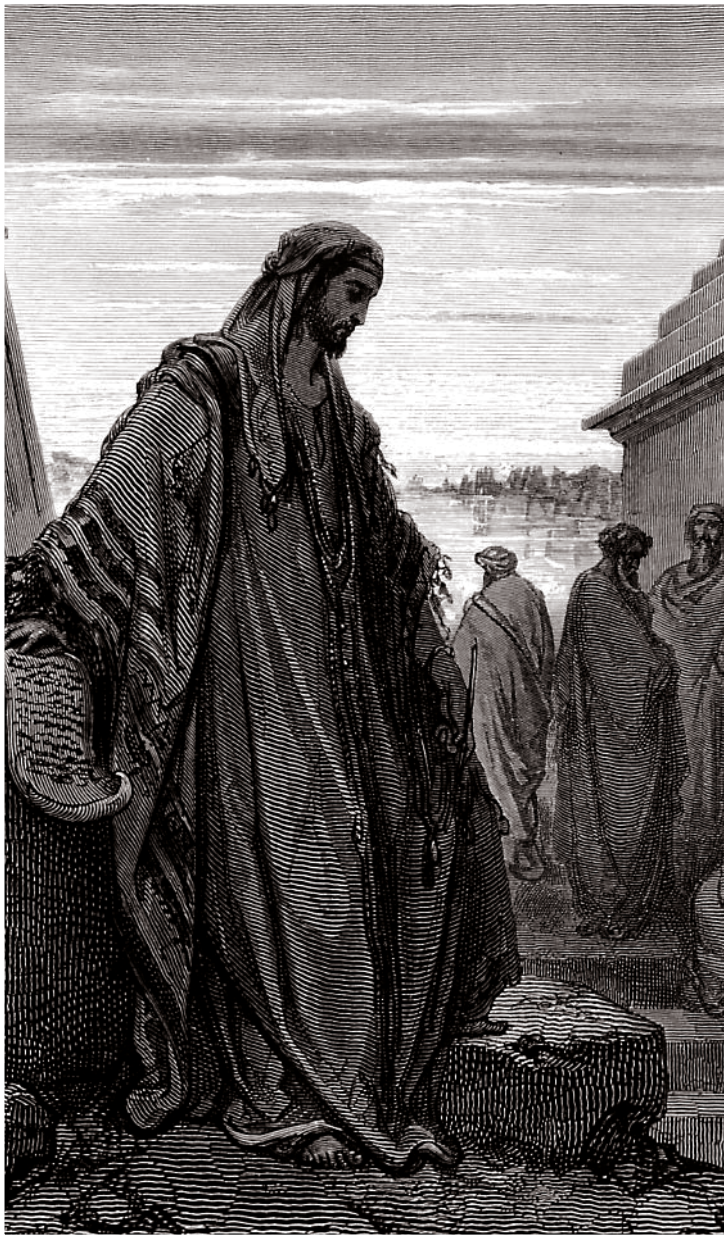


## The Twelve Apostles of the Lamb



*My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. Acts 26:4-5*

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## Chapter Thirteen



### The Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul is the most remarkable of all the Apostles. As noted in the previous chapter, he was the one directly chosen of God to replace the betrayer, Judas. As we read of the wonderful experiences and blessings given to the Apostle Paul, we should think of what Judas lost by not being faithful and obedient. The Scriptures say if we continually waste our blessings, the Lord will take them away and give them to another who will appreciate them. *Matt. 25:28 & Luke 19:24*

Paul was also known as Saul of Tarsus. His father was a wealthy Roman citizen, and the name Paul was more commonly used in Rome. His family was strongly Jewish and of the religious Pharisees. Saul was well educated in a religious school attended only by the sons of the rich. Saul had advantages in every way: he was well educated, wealthy, extremely religious and honored by his family and countrymen. *Acts 22:3*

Because Saul was a very dedicated Jew, he served God with all the zeal and love that he could. But although he served God with zeal, it was not based upon a knowledge of the wisdom of God. *Rom. 10:2, 3* He thought he was pleasing God when he severely persecuted the Christian Jews for what the Law said was “heresy” punishable by death. He was responsible for giving the command to have Stephen, the faithful Christian disciple, put to death by stoning.

The last act of persecution Saul would commit would be to order the Christians of Damascus to trial in Jerusalem. Saul set out with a group of men, probably other religious men and soldiers, on the road to Damascus to bring the hated Christians

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back to Jerusalem. But on the way, Saul was met with the most marvelous experience any human would ever know—an experience which would change his life forever! *Reprint 550*

As Saul travelled, at around midday, suddenly there came upon the group of men a brightness that was even brighter than that of the sun. Saul and the others fell to the ground hearing, “*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*” Saul answered “*Who are you, Lord?*” The voice answered, “*I am Jesus, the one whom you persecute.*” Saul replied, “*Lord, what would you have me to do?*” Jesus answered, “*Arise and go into the city, and there you will be told what to do.*” The other men who travelled with Saul did not *see* Jesus, they only *heard* his voice. Not only did Saul *hear* the voice of Jesus, but he *saw* Jesus in his glory as a Divine, immortal spirit being! *1 Cor. 15:8* The other Apostles saw Jesus resurrected, but they did not see him as a Divine spirit being. Jesus chose to take on various human forms to appear to the others, so they would not be frightened.



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The brightness of this vision blinded Saul's eyes, but it opened his mind. When Jesus said to Saul, "*Why do you persecute me?*" he meant, "*Saul, why do you persecute those who believe in me?*" But why would Jesus come especially to a man like Saul of Tarsus who persecuted to death his followers? Why didn't he just honor the wishes of the Apostles and make Matthias the Apostle to replace Judas? God wanted to make a beautiful example out of Saul to show that He could take even the most feared of men and change his misguided heart to one of the most loving and merciful! *1 Cor. 1:26-29* God also wanted to show how He could prepare such a man from even before his birth and give him the qualities and advantages needed to perform the work of a great Apostle. *Gal. 1:15* Saul's family was wealthy, well educated and religious. His father was a Pharisee, and so Saul became a Pharisee. Both were more familiar with God's Law than most men. These qualities would make Saul naturally very useful in the spread of the Gospel to the Jews. But Saul would have to accept the call to leave all and follow Christ. God would not *make* Saul do anything. Saul had to choose for himself. *Acts 9:1-8*

Guided by the eyes of his travelling companions, Saul travelled on to Damascus as Jesus had asked. There he fasted and prayed earnestly to the Lord to show him what to do. Saul did not cry and say, "*Oh, poor me, I've lost my sight!*" No, he humbly waited for the direction of the Lord. And while he did, he received a vision that a man named Ananias would come and restore his sight. At this same time Ananias, a faithful disciple of Jesus, received a vision. The Lord said, "*Ananias, arise and go to the house of Judas for there a man from Tarsus named Saul is praying. Go and restore his sight.*" But Ananias said, "*Lord, this is the man who persecutes the saints in Jerusalem!*" Still, the Lord replied, "*Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake.*" And Ananias did just as the Lord had said. He went straight to Saul, and laying his hands on him he said, "*Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus has sent me to restore your sight*



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*and fill you with the holy Spirit.”* Just then, loose scales of skin fell from Saul’s eyes and he regained most of his sight. Then he arose and was baptized. Saul was ready to serve the Lord and willing to suffer much for his name’s sake. *Acts 9:10-20*

Saul immediately began preaching in Damascus, proclaiming the name of Christ in the synagogues saying, *“Jesus is the Son of God!”* All were amazed to hear Saul, the persecutor of Christians, preach the very name he had despised. Soon the high priests of Damascus became hateful of Saul and plotted to kill him. But the Christians in Damascus helped him to escape the city and return to Jerusalem.

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to work along side of the other Christians there, but they were afraid of this persecutor who had sentenced their beloved Stephen to death! The Lord then provided for his disciple Barnabas\* to come to Saul’s defense. Barnabas explained all that had happened to Saul and what a wonderful change the Lord had created in him. He showed how Saul was such a zealous witness for Jesus that he was almost killed. Then the Christians of Jerusalem understood and welcomed Saul into their fellowship. They witnessed the great power of their Almighty God!

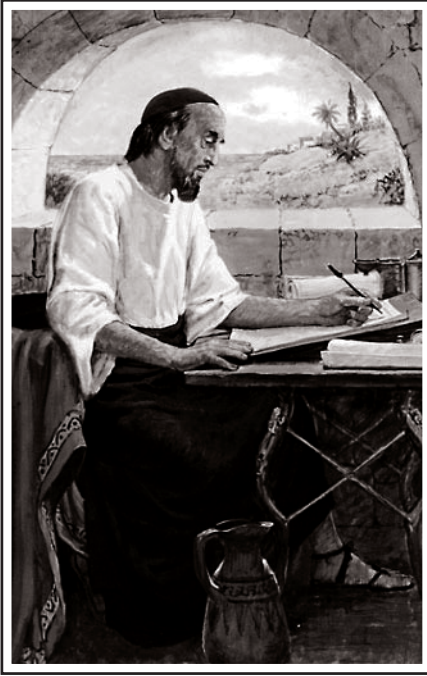
But imagine how Saul’s family and friends must have felt to see his conversion. They interpreted this power of God as the power of Satan overtaking their beloved Saul. *“What an embarrassment you are to the holy nation of Israel!”* they must have thought. Saul was then persecuted by his family, and all that he had as a Pharisee and son of a wealthy man was taken from him. Saul was left as a man without honor in his family and country, and he went from riches to poverty for the sake of Christ. *Acts 9:19-30, & Reprint 4355*

Saul was not discouraged by this nor tempted to slow down his zeal for the Lord. No, he then travelled to Arabia to study the many prophecies and the Law to see how they pointed

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\*It is possible that Barnabas, also called Joses in Acts 4:36, is the same as *“Joseph called Barsabas who was surnamed Justus”* in Acts 1:23. See also Acts 15:22 Remember that Justus and Matthias were the two on whom the Apostles cast lots when choosing a replacement for Judas.

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to his Lord Jesus and how they made clear God's plan. For three years he studied, becoming mature as a Christian and more capable as the chosen instrument of the Lord. Filled with the holy Spirit and the wisdom of God's beautiful plan, he was anxious to return and teach this plan to all. It is interesting to note that three years is about the same amount of time in which the other Apostles studied and learned with their Master during his three and a half year

ministry. Studying God's plan is very important for every Christian to do before making great efforts to serve Him. II Tim. 2:15

And now the time had come for Saul to begin his mission for Christ. Again, the Lord provided Barnabas to help Saul see the direction he should take. Barnabas was a Levite—a Jewish convert to Christianity from the Gentile Island of Cyprus. He knew of the great need in Antioch for help in understanding the word of God. He encouraged Saul to go there that he might strengthen the faith of the new Gentile converts. Barnabas remembered what was said to Saul in the vision “...bear my name before the Gentiles...” Barnabas was known as the “son of consolation” or the “son of encouragement.” Barnabas wanted to encourage his brethren in Antioch and thought of Saul as the best hope for doing so. Barnabas had a special concern for the Gentile converts because his home country, not far from Antioch, was also Gentile, and he had many friends there. Perhaps many of these friends had been converted by Barnabas himself.

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Saul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch for about a year until the new converts were strong in the faith. The brethren in Antioch knew that there were other Churches waiting to be helped by Saul and Barnabas, and they unselfishly asked them to go on their way to establish new Churches throughout other Gentile cities.

And so, Saul and Barnabas began their missionary journeys preaching to Gentiles and Jews. Saul used his name Paul for it was a more common name among the Gentiles. They used a different method of witnessing when presenting the message of God to the Gentiles. These were a people who had pagan gods, and they didn't understand the writings of the Hebrew prophets. Paul and Barnabas used the power of the holy Spirit to heal the sick so that the people would listen to what they had to say.

In the Gentile city of Lystra, the people were so amazed at these miracles that they thought Paul and Barnabas were their pagan gods, Mercury and Jupiter. They immediately brought sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas and praised them as their gods. But Paul and Barnabas quickly went among them and said that they were just two men sent from the only true



God and that He wanted to show them that these sacrifices to false gods were wrong.

Many Gentiles of Lystra listened and some even became believers, but then, some Jews entered the city to preach against Paul and Barnabas and all began stoning them out of the city. There they were, left for dead to be eaten by wild animals. But the few who believed came and ministered to Paul and Barnabas and restored them to health that they might preach again. Fearing for the lives of these new converts, Paul

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and Barnabas left Lystra so that these babes in Christ would not be harmed. Paul and Barnabas entrusted the care and providence of this young Church to God. *Reprint 4369, 4364 & Acts 14:6-22*

When the Apostle Paul and Barnabas preached to the Jews, they used a different method of witnessing, for the Jews were in expectation of the Messiah and were familiar with the prophecies. The two men would enter into the synagogues, and when it was their turn to talk, they would share the prophecies which pointed to Jesus. Sometimes the Jews would listen and would accept Jesus as the Messiah. But, often times the high priests would get so angry that they would stone them or beat them with rods. Sometimes the priests convinced the Roman government to put them in jail. Little did the priests know that this is exactly what the Lord wanted, for being in jail gave Paul



the opportunity to witness to kings. This fulfilled the vision to Ananias, that Paul would bring Christ “before the Gentiles,” “the children of Israel” and “before kings.” Yes, the Apostle Paul spent many years in prison, but because of this, he witnessed to King Agrippa and the two governors, Festus and Felix. *Acts 23:12-35 & 24-26*

During the missionary journeys of Paul and Barnabas, there arose a controversy about the Gentiles. Some of the Christian Jews began thinking that they were better than the Gentile converts because they continued to practice certain ceremonies of the Law. They wanted to force these practices on their Gentile brethren, but Paul clearly and forcefully preached that the Law was done away with when Christ died on the cross. *Col. 2:14* He said repeatedly to the Christian Jews in Jerusalem that the Law kept men in bondage, but when Christ died, he freed men from



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slavery to the Law if they accept him as their Savior. In living by and trusting in the rules of the Law, Christians were leaving the freedom in Christ and going back into bondage. *Acts 15*

As an illustration of bondage to the Law, imagine that one day you went into a store and broke a very expensive lamp. The store owner said, “*Now you must work two hours a day for the rest of your life to pay for that lamp.*” One day when you were working and feeling very sad that you would be working for the rest of your life, a nice man came into the store and said, “*I will pay for the lamp so you no longer have to work.*” You were so thankful to the man, and for one week you stopped working. But then, the following week you started working again! Now, wouldn’t that be foolish? But this is very similar to what the Christian Jews did. Like the rest of mankind, the Nation of Israel was under bondage to sin and death. God used the Nation of Israel to prove that sinful man is incapable of living a perfect life. He gave them a perfect Law saying, “*If you obey this Law perfectly, you will live, but if you do even the slightest thing wrong, you will die.*” They said to God, “*All that you command of us, we will do.*” Of course, they could not keep this vow, so Jesus came and obeyed the Law *perfectly* for them. Because he was perfect, he was the only one who could keep the Law, and as God had promised, he was given the right to live forever. Jesus wanted to help the poor world of mankind, and so he gave up his perfect life that they might live. So the Christian Jews no longer needed to live in bondage under the Law when they accepted Jesus as their Savior.

But what did Jewish Christians do with this favor? They started to do various rituals in the Law again, telling the Gentiles that if they didn’t do these rituals too, they were not good Christians. Even the Apostle Peter and Paul’s faithful companion Barnabas started saying these things to the Gentiles. Because of support from Peter and Barnabas on this error, some of the Christian Jews began to question whether Paul was really an Apostle with clear wisdom from God. At the Antioch Church, when the Apostle Peter started to treat the Gentile Christians with less respect than the Jewish

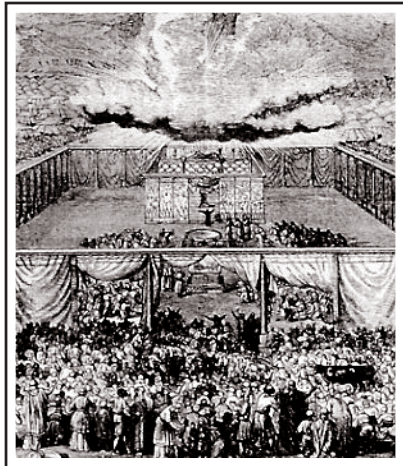
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Christians, the Apostle Paul became very angry. Paul defended his Apostleship and the truth. He told Peter in front of everyone that this bondage to the Law was a terrible error and that Christ fulfilled all the commands of the Law, making all men in Christ equally free. As Christians, we should keep in mind that no one is better than another. We should be loving and kind to everyone, but especially to the household of faith. *Gal. 6:10*

Eventually, through the loving zeal of the Apostle Paul toward all of the Churches, his Apostleship was fully accepted again by his fellow Christians. There were a few “*wolves in sheep’s clothing*” that he continued to warn the Churches about, but God permitted these false teachers to test the brethren. Those who truly loved the Lord and the truth remained faithful to God and respected the Apostle Paul.

The Apostles Peter and Paul, along with Barnabas, settled their differences, and again in harmony preached that Christ died to free the slaves of death. *Acts 15:7-12, 22, 25* These two Apostles were probably the most notable in establishing the faith of the early Church. This is why it was so important for the Apostle Paul to clear up this matter with the Apostle Peter. It is important that all of us do what we can to keep from error, for it spreads like weeds in a garden and chokes the beautiful flowers. This is a lesson to Christians today, that we should appreciate the care our elders take in upholding the truth.

The Apostle Paul brought forth understanding on this and many other important truths. Through his wisdom on the Law, Paul showed how the Law was given so that the Jews would be prepared in their hearts to receive Jesus as the Messiah. It was a “*schoolmaster [teacher] to lead them to Christ.*” *Gal.3:24* The whole letter to the Hebrews was



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written as an explanation of the Tabernacle of the Jews. Paul showed how it and the sacrifices of animals pictured Jesus, his Church and their sacrifices for the world of mankind. He also showed in this and other letters to the Churches how the selection of the Passover lamb pictured Jesus, the “*Lamb of God.*” So many beautiful truths like these are understood by Christians today because of the loving faithfulness of the Apostle Paul to all the Churches.

This loving zeal of Paul was seen in that he left all behind to follow Jesus—family, friends, riches, honor, health and comfort. Paul never complained about being poor, he just worked as a tent maker when he needed money. *Acts 18:3* When he had earned enough, he went on his way, preaching the loving plan of God. He never begged for money from his brethren, for he knew that “...*God would supply all his needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*” And God did provide for Paul through the generosity of some in the early Churches who helped with financial assistance. Paul never got all tangled up in earthly work, for this would take him away from precious time needed to serve the Lord. Paul said to his beloved Philippian brethren, “*I have learned that in whatsoever state I am, I will be content.*” *Phil. 4:11-19 & Vol. 6:286*

Paul proved his contentment in his physical health as well. Although he thought of his poor eyesight as a “*thorn in the flesh*” and prayed three times that it might be removed, he concluded that it was far better to endure this loss of health that he might gain the lessons of humility and submission. He also learned from this lesson a compassion for others and a greater reliance on the strength of God. *2 Cor. 12:7-10 & Reprints 2118, 5963 & 4486* He trusted in God that all of his needs were being provided and that he need ask only for God’s will to be done. *Phil. 4:19* All Christians must come to this same point of faith and trust in God’s provisions for their every need.

There were so many events in the Apostle Paul’s life covered in the Scriptures that entire books have been written about him. One small chapter cannot possibly cover every event and example of faith in Paul’s life. The Apostle Paul

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himself summarized his experiences to the Corinthian Brethren: *“Seeing that many glory in their wonderful accomplishments, I will glory also, but not in myself. No, I glory in that which I have suffered for Christ. I have labored for the Churches and the Gospel more than any other through more stripes than can be measured. I have been in prison more than any other. Five times I received thirty nine stripes from the Jews. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, and three times I suffered shipwreck. I have suffered perils from robbers, from my own countrymen, from heathens, and from false brethren. I ministered even when weary and in great pain. Often I went hungry and thirsty... And not only this, but I have had the constant care of all the Churches.”* 2 Cor. 11:18-31 The Apostle Paul was not complaining of the sacrifices he had made on behalf of Christ and his Church. No, he was rejoicing to have the privilege for their sake. He wanted to let the Churches know how much he had endured and would endure for them, because he loved them. Col. 1:24 & Acts 20:24

The Apostle Paul ministered to his beloved brethren right up to the time when he knew he was about to die. He had a very dear companion, Timothy, and wrote many letters of encouragement to him. When Paul was around sixty-six years old, he was imprisoned by the wicked persecutor of Rome, Nero. Paul wrote to Timothy to be strong and to fight the good fight of faith, rejoicing always! Paul said, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course: I have kept the faith.”* 2 Tim.4:7 Soon after these final words, the Apostle Paul was put to death for his faithfulness to Christ. Historians state that he was beheaded for the sake of Christ under Nero’s cruel orders. Reprint 3210

From the time that the Apostle Paul was converted until the time he died, he never stopped serving the Lord. His life as a Christian was one of the most beautiful illustrations of self-sacrifice. He never boasted unless it directly pointed to Jesus and God. He never gloried in himself unless it was to defend his effectiveness as an Apostle. He was a firm foundation to the Church and was truly one of the greatest examples of the *Twelve Apostles of the Lamb.* 2 Tim. 4:7, 8