

# PAUL . . . CALLED to BE an APOSTLE

I Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1, 11-2:5; Acts 9:1-19, 22:1-21, 26:1-18

## WHO WAS PAUL?

### I. A MAN of HIS TIMES

- A. A Jew (of the diaspora), family perhaps from Galilee (Jerome said), tribe of Benjamin
  1. Reared in Jewish community in Tarsus—devout but at ease with Gentiles
  2. Hebrew schooling in Tarsus (with characteristic pedagogy)
  3. Learned tent-making—probably weaving with mohair as well
  4. Aligned with vigorous, fanatical, Pharisee faction (celebrating Phineas) as a young man
  5. Gamaliel’s teaching in Jerusalem (perhaps influential as Paul embraced calling re Gentiles)
- B. A Hellene (Greek)
  1. Tarsus a significant city, in Cilicia, blending Asian, Greek (Ionian), and Roman cultures
    - a. Trading center, because of river/Mediterranean Sea
    - b. City’s educational endeavors rather renowned (without attending gymnasium Paul would have absorbed Greek concern for education, memorably structured according to *trivium* and *quadrivium*)
  2. Importance of Greek language, the *lingua franca* of the Empire and New Testament
- C. Roman
  1. Settlers following wars
  2. Administrative importance—leaving intact most of city-state apparatus
- D. Paul alternatively proud of Jewish, Greek, and Roman ties (N.B. Pilate’s post on Jesus’ Cross)

### II. A MAN FOR ALL TIMES.

- A. Mystic—someone who “by contemplation and self-surrender” knows God, apprehending truths in an immediate, intuitive way, quite different from hallucinations
  1. N.B. analysis of William James: *The Varieties of Religious Experience*
  2. Biblical examples: Moses at burning bush; Isaiah: “I saw the Lord;” John in *Revelation*
  3. Christian examples: Augustine; Dionysius; Anselm; Aquinas; Pascal, Teresa of Avila; John of the Cross
  4. Mystical moments in many ordinary believers’ lives (e.g. Paul Claudel in Notre Dame)
  5. Paul’s mystical experiences
    - a. Damascus road—repeated accounts in epistles, Acts
    - b. Macedonian call (Acts 16:6-10)
    - b. Vision of Paradise (II Cor 12:1-6)
- B. Theologian
  1. Immersion in Scripture while in Tarsus & Jerusalem—letters filled with quotations, analyses, analogies
  2. Years of solitary study, thought, prayer between conversion and missionary journeys
  3. Veteran of synagogue explanation, argumentation
  4. Establishes essentials of “Gospel” for all mankind—both narrative and systematic, doctrinal and practical
- C. Missionary
  1. Zeal to make converts basic to his personality
  2. Post-Damascus patience awaiting right time, preparing for endeavors, submitting to community of faith
  3. Energy—incredible journeys, church-plants, around world in two decades
- D. “Apostle”
  1. Self-declared (not one of original Jesus-band)
  2. Authority assumed and exercised

## WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

- I. One of a handful of **architects** of Western Civilization (including Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Locke, Newton, Jefferson, et al.)
- II. Preeminent **theologian** of Christian Church—recurrently reemphasized (e.g. Reformation, Karl Barth) with Romans the fundamental text
- III. The “**Herald** of the Holy Spirit” (Daniel-Rops, *The Church of the Apostles and Martyrs*)—guided by Spirit in his ministry and leaving words ever inspiring for centuries (e.g. I Cor 13, 15)
- IV. **Missionary** (missiologist) *par excellence*—ever exemplary whenever evangelism/missions undertaken.