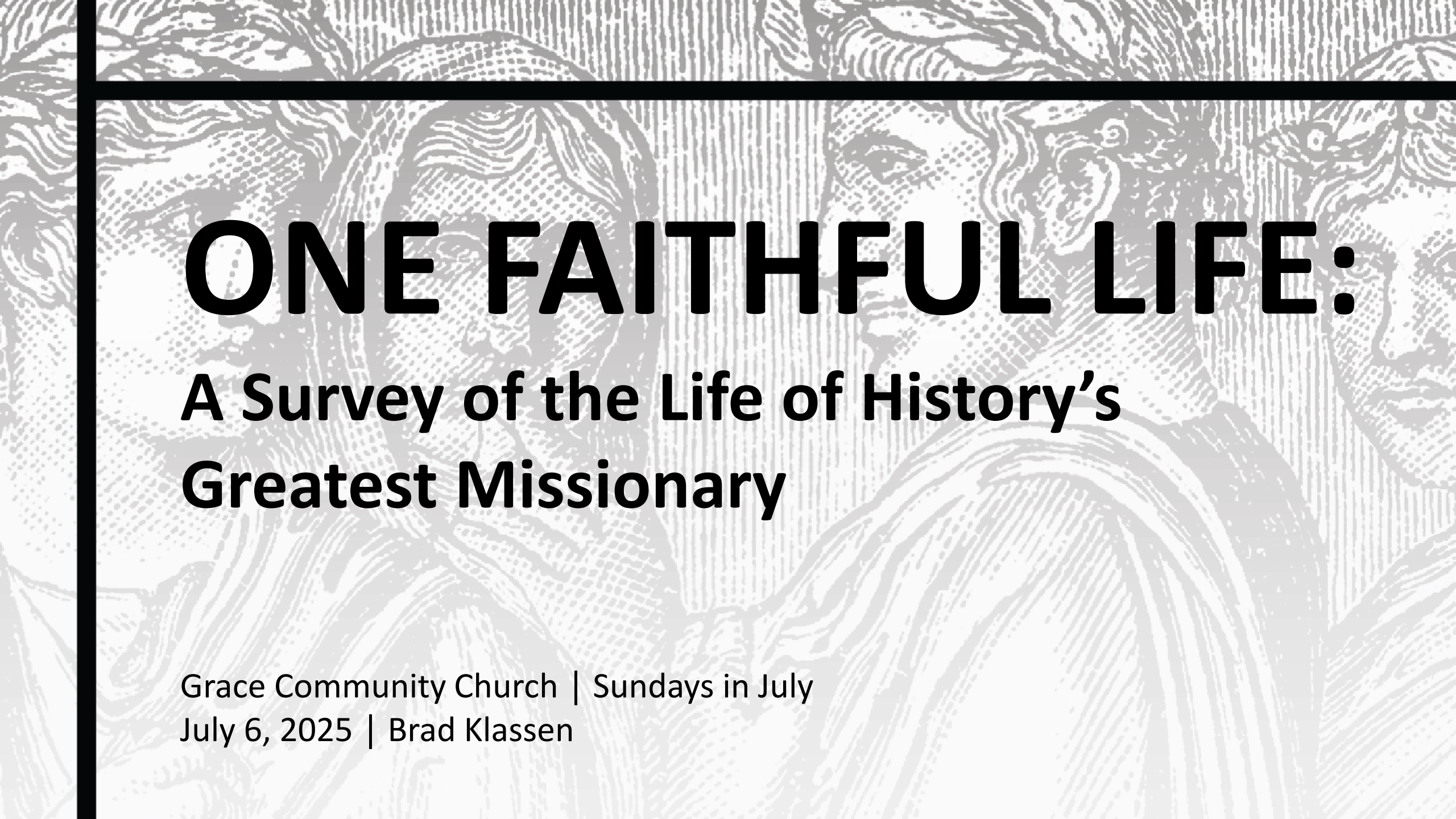




ONE FAITHFUL LIFE:

A Survey of the Life of History's Greatest Missionary

Grace Community Church | Sundays in July
July 6, 2025 | Brad Klassen

“The Christian movement began in the midst of a very peculiar people; in AD 35 it would have appeared to a superficial observer to be a Jewish sect. Thirty years later it was plainly a world religion.”

—J. Gresham Machen, *Origin of Paul's Religion*, 7

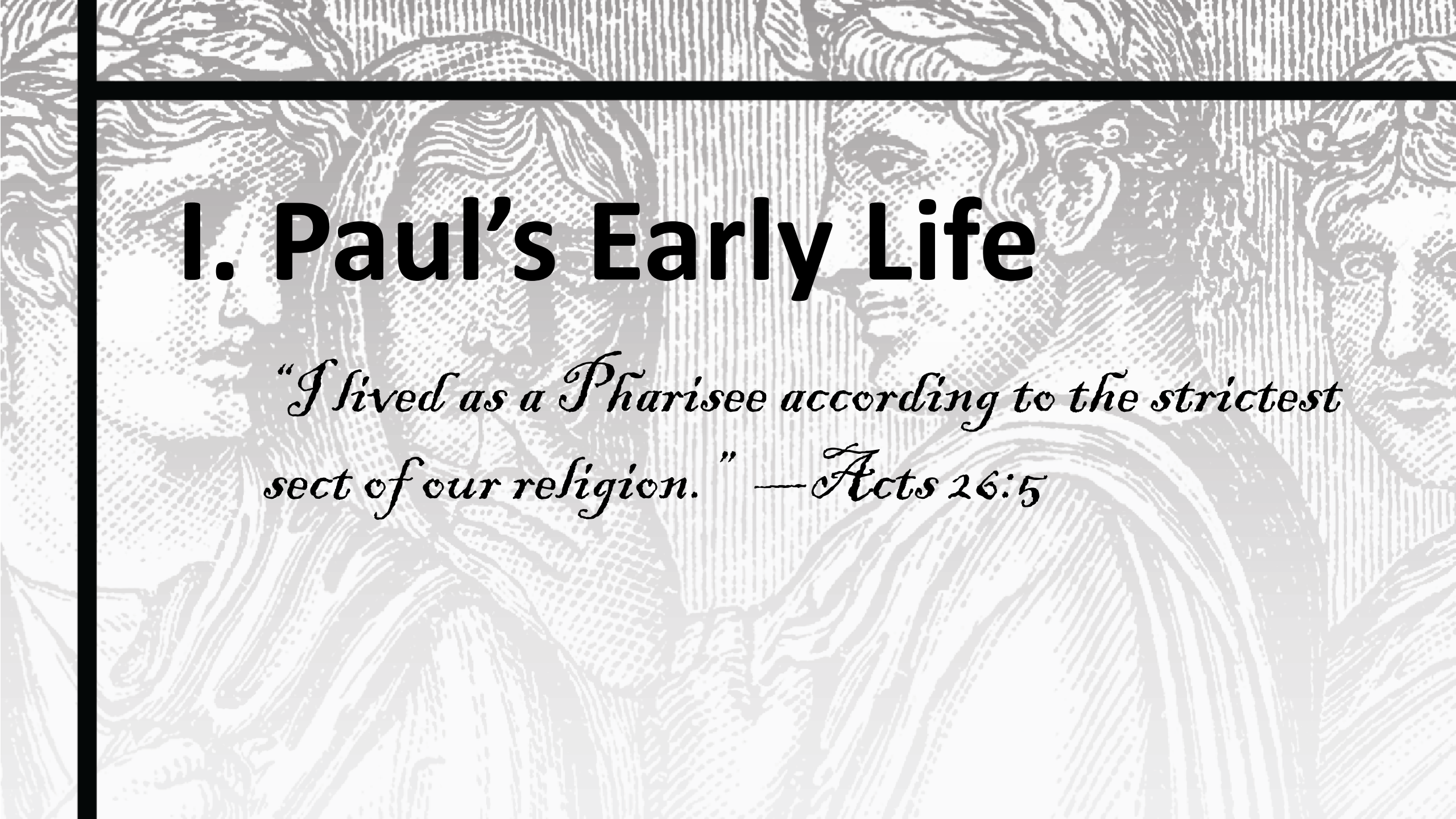


“Paul was not the only preacher of Christianity in the Gentile world of that day . . . but he outstripped all others as a pioneer missionary and planter of churches, and nothing can detract from his achievement as the Gentiles’ apostle *par excellence*.” —F. F. Bruce, *Paul*, 18

“It is not overstating the case to assert that the Apostle Paul is the most influential Christian who has ever lived.” — Robert Reymond, *Paul*, 17

“... from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.” —Romans 15:19b





I. Paul's Early Life

"I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion." — Acts 26:5

A. Paul's Greco-Roman Background

- *Roman Name:* Paul (Παῦλος)
- *Birthplace:* “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia” (Acts 22:3)
- *Birthdate:* between 5 BC and AD 7 (see Acts 7:58 and Philemon 9)
- *Citizenship:* of Tarsus (Acts 21:39); of Rome (Acts 22:27–28)



- *Jewish Name:* Saul (שָׁאוּל)
- *Lineage:* “of the tribe of Benjamin” (Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5)
- *Upbringing:* “a Hebrew of Hebrews” (2 Cor 11:2; Phil 3:5)
- *Education:* “brought up in this city [Jerusalem], educated under Gamaliel” (Acts 22:3)
- *Profession:* “I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees” (Acts 23:6; 26:5; Phil 3:5)
- *Reputation:* “being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions” (Gal 1:13–14; Acts 22:3; 26:6; Phil 3:5–6)

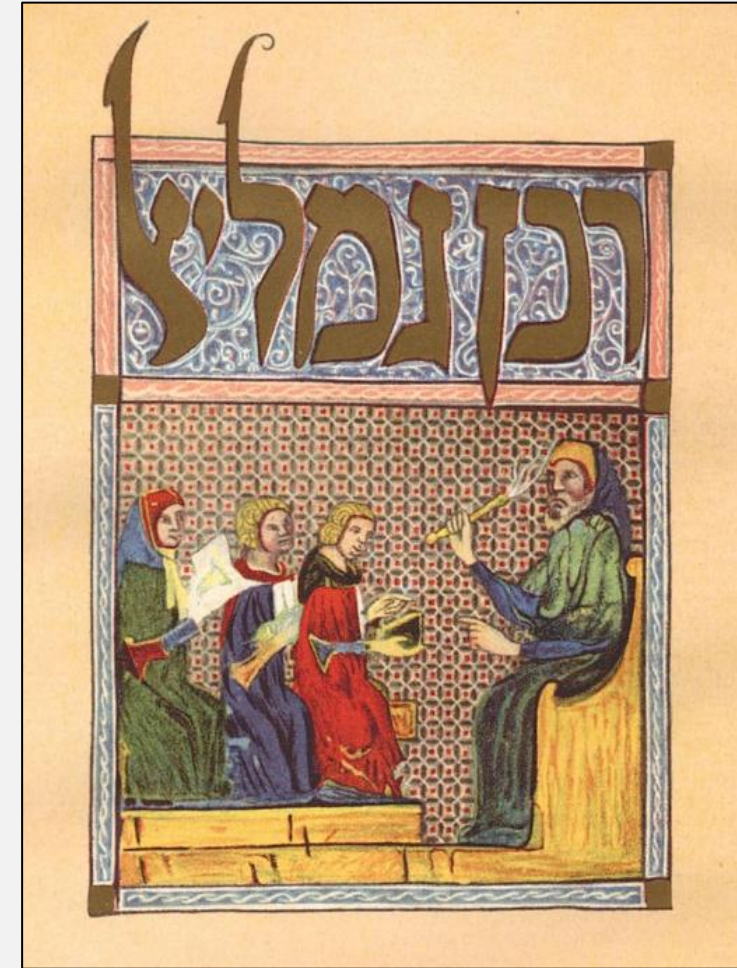


Illustration from a Jewish Encyclopedia; רבן גמלי'א means "Rabbi Gamliel"

- *Marital Status:* single, or married but widowed (1 Cor 7:7)
- *Relation to the Sanhedrin:* respected greatly (Acts 9:1–2; 22:4–5), possibly one of its 71 members (Acts 26:10)

SUMMARY:



- ✓ strictest religious training
- ✓ powerful zeal and intellect
- ✓ unique respect from the Sanhedrin
- ✓ elite social privilege

“The family, the surroundings, and the education of Paul had been selected with the perfection of a Divine purpose to make him fit to be what he was designed to be, the Apostle of the Gentiles. There was one nation, one family and one city, out of which the Apostle must arise. The nation was the Jewish; but the family was not Palestinian, it was Tarsian.

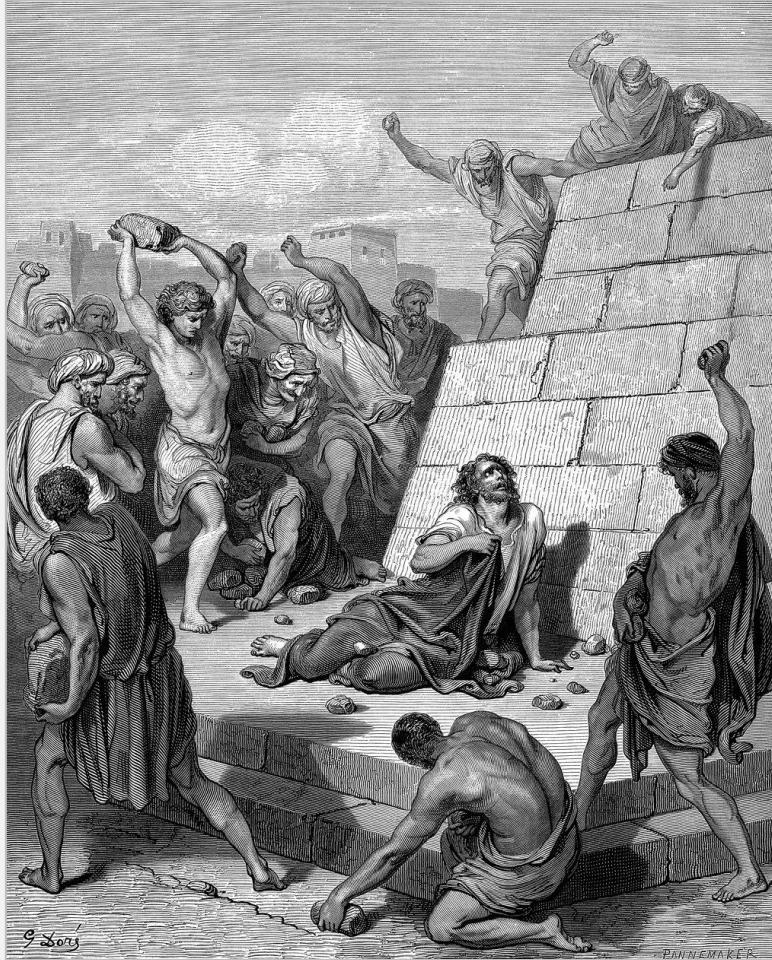
Only ‘a Hebrew sprung from Hebrews’ could be the Apostle of the perfected Judaic faith; but he must be born and brought up in childhood among the Gentiles, a citizen of a Gentile city, and a member of that conquering aristocracy of Romans which ruled all the cities of the Mediterranean world. The Apostle to the Gentiles must be a Jew, a Tarsian citizen, and at the same time a Roman.”

— William Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul*, 87

II. Paul's Conversion

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all." —1 Timothy 1:15

- Paul's zealous, self-righteous Pharisaism fueled his hatred for Jesus and His followers.



*"The Stoning of St. Stephen,"
engraving by Gustave Dore*

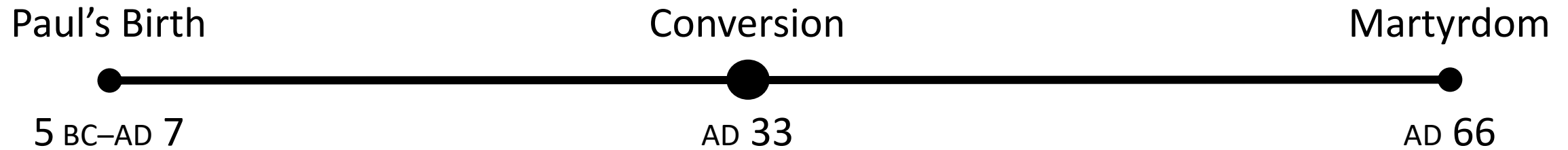
- The first mention of his name ("Saul") is deliberately placed at the conclusion of the narrative of Stephen's martyrdom.
- **Acts 7:58** – "When they had driven him out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul."
- Saul (Paul) now becomes the chief agent of terror against the church.

- **Acts 8:3** – “But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.”
- **Acts 22:4–5** – “I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify”
- **Acts 26:10** – “. . . not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.”
- **Galatians 1:13** – “. . . I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.”

B. Paul's Conversion to Christ

- Paul's conversion is narrated three times in Acts (9:1–9; 22:3–11; 26:2–20) and alluded to frequently in Paul's own writings.
- It took place on a desert road outside of Damascus, 140 miles away from Jerusalem.
- It took place at the brightest time of the day, “midday” (Acts 26:13).
- Jesus physically appeared to Paul, and Paul consciously acknowledged Him as “Lord.”
- The experience was a stunning display of the sovereign grace of God in conversion and commissioning.





“The Paul we meet in the Bible is two different persons. The first Paul is the young, learned Pharisee who most likely collaborated in the arrest of, and who certainly approved and assisted in the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr. . . . The second Paul is almost unrecognizable from the first Paul. The post-Damascus Paul is a man motivated by love who teaches that the grace of God is at the heart of the gospel he preached. The contrast between the two Pauls is nothing less than astonishing. Who can explain how the hate-filled, raging persecutor became a love-filled apostle of grace and mercy?”

—Paul Barnett, *Paul and His Friends in Leadership*, 126-27

“No single event, apart from the Christ-event itself, has proved so determinant for the course of Christian history as the conversion and commissioning of Paul. For anyone who accepts Paul’s own explanation of his Damascus-road experience, it would be difficult to disagree with the observation of an eighteenth-century writer that ‘the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation.’”

—Bruce, *Paul*, 75

“His whole theology is nothing but the explication of his own conversion.”

—Stalker, *Life of St. Paul*, 45

“If Christ could save a sinner like Saul, he felt that no one else need despair.”

—Robertson, *Epochs in the Life of Paul*, 26

“For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

—2 Corinthians 4:6



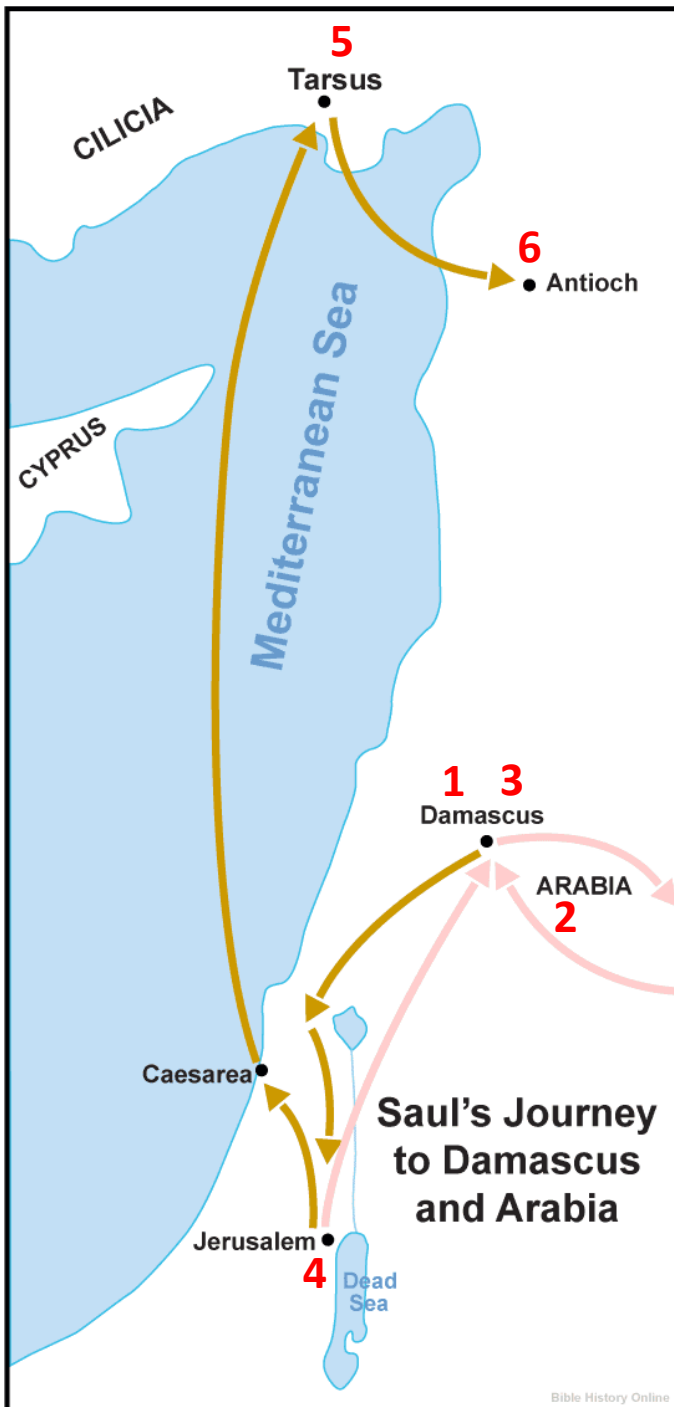
*“The Conversion of St. Paul,”
engraving by Gustave Dore (1866)*

- Paul had not only been called out of darkness; he had also been called to proclaim the excellencies of His Savior.
- **Acts 9:15** – “But the Lord said to him [Ananias], ‘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.’”
- **Acts 26:19–20** “So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first”

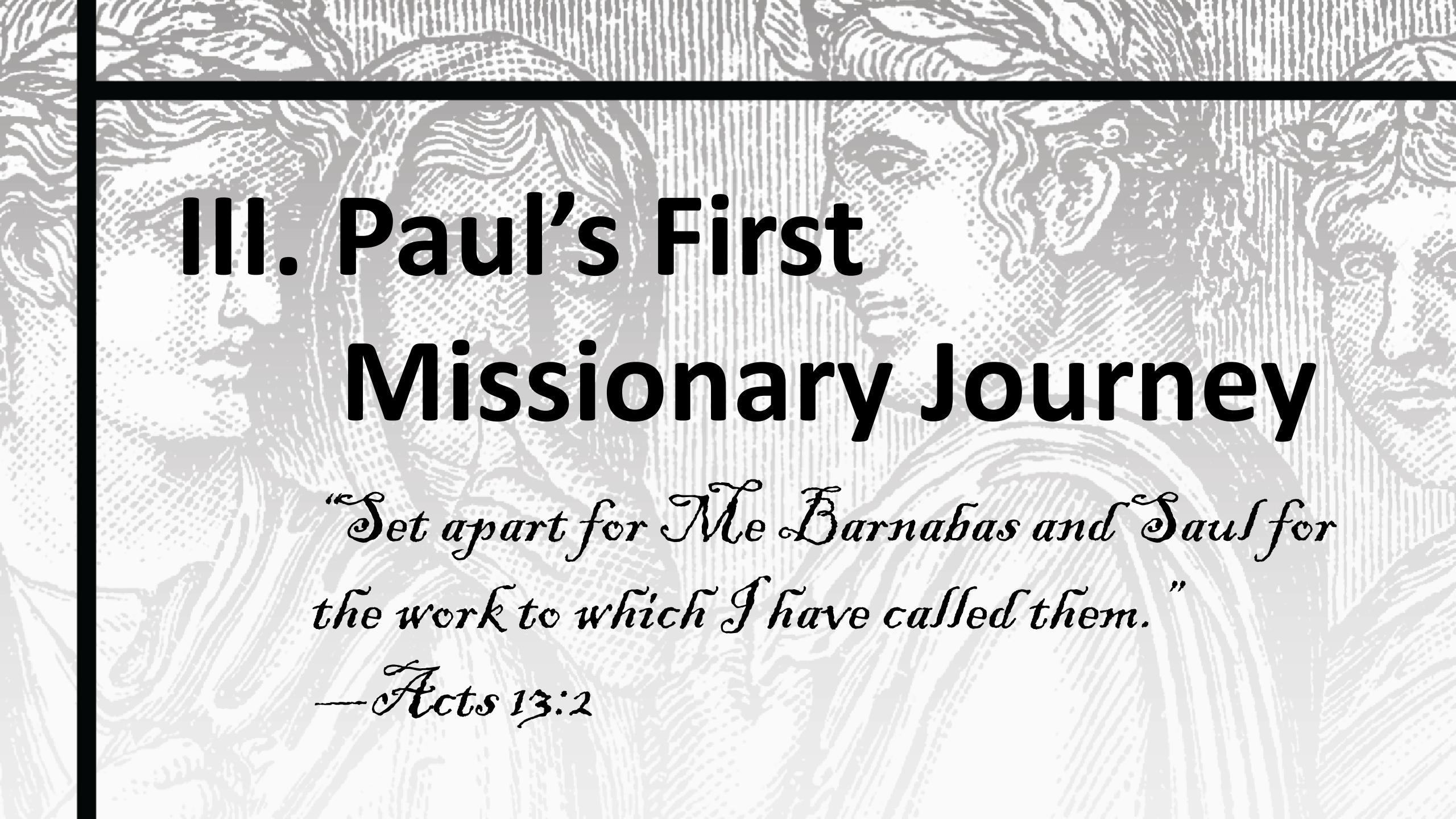


- **Acts 9:20, 22** – “and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God.’ . . . But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.”
 - ✓ the Savior’s historicity
 - ✓ the Savior’s deity
 - ✓ the Savior’s fulfillment
 - authoritative declaration
 - courageous confrontation
 - skillful demonstration

C. Paul's New Mission (cont'd)



- The chronology of Paul's early ministry:
 1. Damascus (Acts 9:19–20; AD 33)
 2. Arabia (Gal 1:15–17; AD 33–35)
 3. Damascus (Acts 9:23–25; Gal 1:15–17; AD 36)
 4. Jerusalem (Acts 9:26–29; Gal 1:18–20; AD 36)
 5. Tarsus/Cilicia (Acts 9:30; Gal 1:21–24; AD 36–43)
 6. Antioch (Acts 11:23–26; AD 43–46)

The background of the slide features a detailed, grayscale illustration of three men, likely Paul, Barnabas, and Saul, depicted in a classical, etched style. They are shown from the chest up, with long hair and beards, wearing robes. The illustration is positioned behind the text, creating a layered effect.

III. Paul's First Missionary Journey

*"Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for
the work to which I have called them."*

—Acts 13:2

- Paul's "first" missionary journey does not represent his first efforts in gospel ministry; he had already preached in Damascus, Arabia, and Tarsus/Cilicia.
- Rather, Paul's "first" missionary journey represents the first deliberate effort of the church to send missionaries "to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).
- **Acts 13:2–3** – "While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."
- This first journey begins AD 46; the team is comprised of Barnabas, Paul, and Mark.

- The missionary team focuses on *evangelism* for the first half of their journey (Great Commission Part 1 – Matthew 28:19).
- They begin in Cyprus (Acts 13:4–12) and then travel north to evangelize Galatia (Acts 13:13–14:20).
- They experience great successes (the conversion of Sergius Paulus), and sorrowful lows (Mark's abandonment; Paul's stoning).
- A key moment in the narrative is found in Acts 13:13; Luke uses Saul's Greek name "Paul" for the first time and depicts him as the new leader of the mission to the Gentiles.



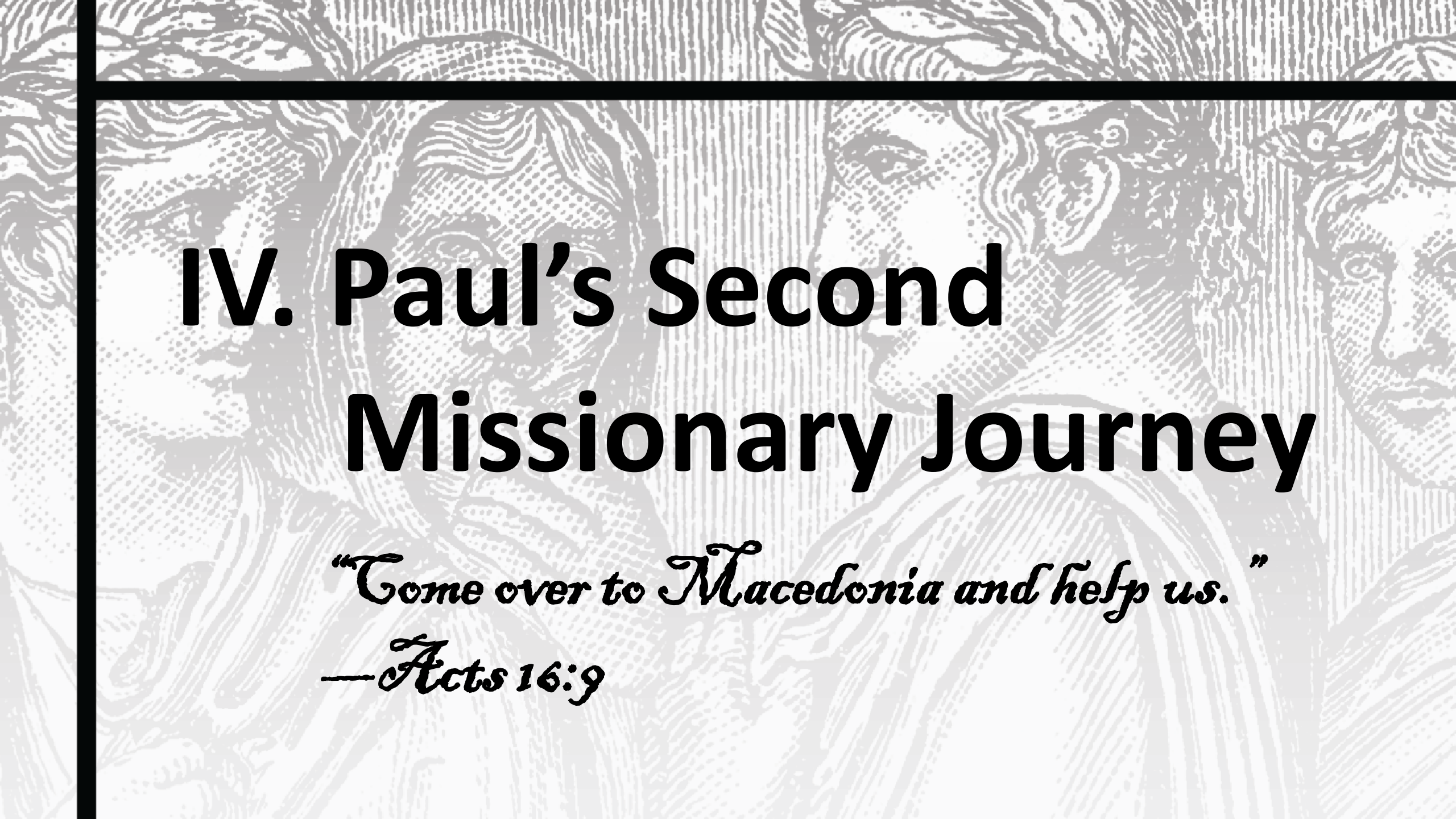
- The missionary team then focuses on *edification* for the second half of their journey (Great Commission Part 2 – Matthew 28:20).
 - **Acts 14:21–23** – “After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’ When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”
-
- ```
graph TD; A["strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith"] --> B["✓ doctrinal instruction"]; A --> C["✓ moral exhortation"]; A --> D["✓ leadership indigenization"]; A --> E["✓ divine commendation"]; B --> D; C --> E; F["appointed elders for them in every church"] --> D; G["commended them to the Lord"] --> E;
```
- ✓ doctrinal instruction
- ✓ moral exhortation
- ✓ leadership indigenization
- ✓ divine commendation

- **Acts 14:27** – “When they had arrived and gathered the church together [in Antioch], they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.”
- **Galatians 2:4–5** – “But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.”
- Paul and Barnabas travel 250 miles from Antioch to Jerusalem to participate in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1–33; Gal 2:1–10; AD 49), defend the gospel of grace, and preserve the unity of the church.



“The Judaizers will follow in his train and dog his steps, maligning his name and preaching the gospel of ceremonialism, while Paul proclaims the gospel of grace. Paul will win the lost to Christ. The Judaizers will seek to save the saved, to rescue them from Paulinism and save them to Pharisaic orthodoxy. They will have only too great success in Galatia and Corinth. Paul will go on with foes in front and in the rear.”

—A. T. Robertson, *Epochs in the Life of Paul*, 137–38



# IV. Paul's Second Missionary Journey

*"Come over to Macedonia and help us."*  
—*Acts 16:9*

- **Acts 15:36** – “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”
- “Paul’s vision was not limited to initiatory efforts. If he wishes to go only where there is need for a first foundation to be laid, this does not mean that in such cases Paul is only concerned with putting in that foundation. If he will not build on another’s foundation, this does not mean that he is disinterested in construction of what he himself has laid. Paul repeatedly displays commitment not only to founding but also to up-building, not only to begetting but also to rearing, not only to planting, but also to nurturing” (Paul Bowers, “Fulfilling the Gospel, 188–89).
- This second journey begins AD 49, and the team takes on a new look: Paul and Silas, then Timothy, then Luke, and then Aquila and Priscilla.

- Having visited churches in Cilicia and Galatia, Paul attempts to head west, to the major city of Ephesus—but is prevented.
- **Acts 16:6–7** – “They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them.”
- **Acts 16:10–12** – “When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; and from there to Philippi . . .”

Luke





## B. Paul's European Campaign (cont'd)

- Paul and his team plant churches in the Macedonian cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.
- The persecution Paul and his team faced in the region is offset by the love these new churches have for Paul; they become his “crown and joy” (1 Thess 2:19; Phil 4:1).
- Faced with an imminent threat to his life after several months of ministry, Paul is escorted by several of his new converts to Achaia.





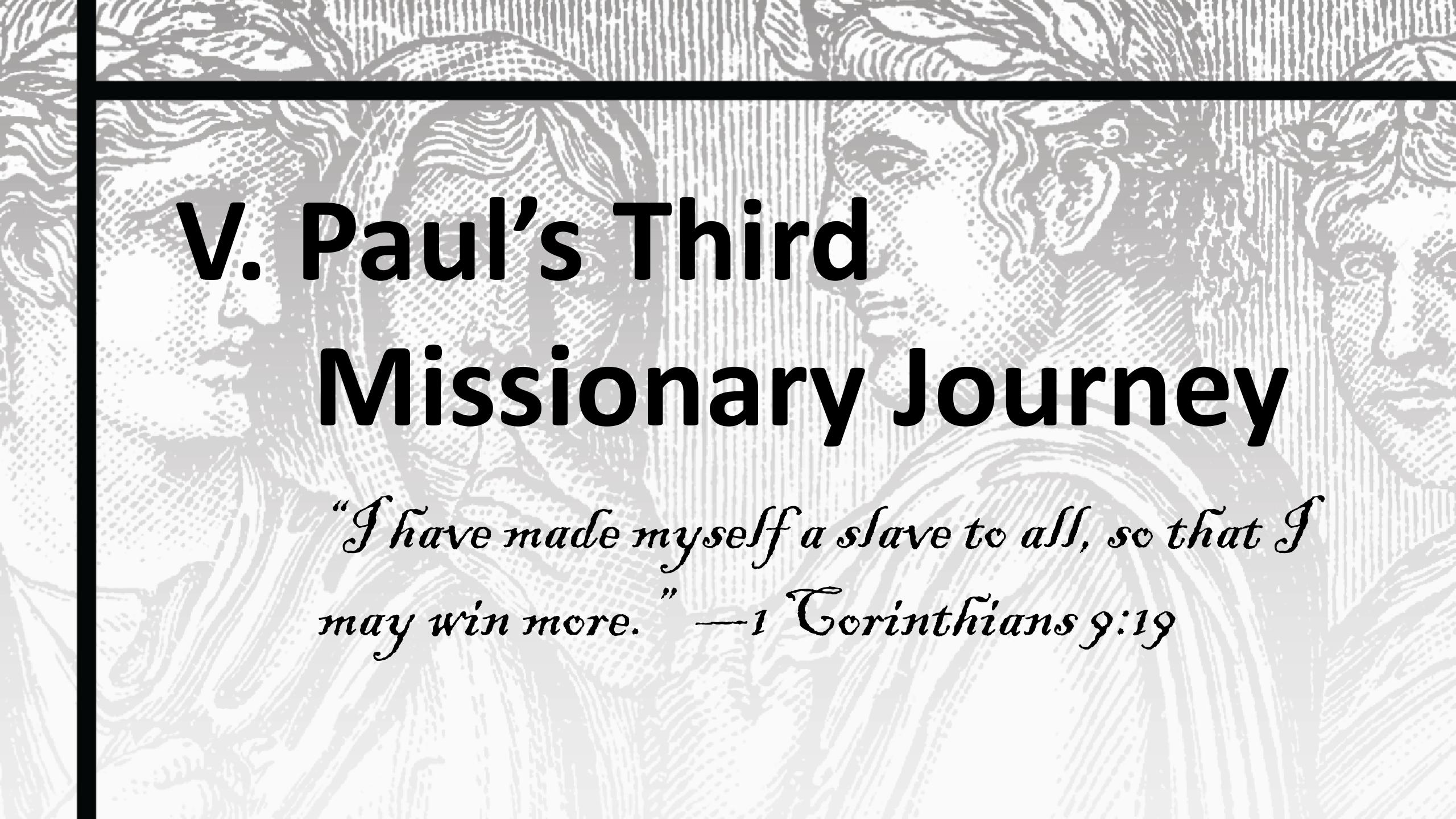
*"St Paul Preaching in Athens," engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi, based on a painting by Rafael*

- Awaiting the arrival of his teammates, Paul reluctantly ministers in Athens.
- Paul is provoked by the rampant idolatry and truth-suppression of the "wisest" minds of his age.
- Paul exposes their ignorance, preaches Jesus and the resurrection, and calls them to repent or be condemned.
- Luke's record of Paul's speech (Acts 17:22–31) becomes "the greatest missionary document of the New Testament" (Adolf Deissmann).

- Paul arrives in Corinth in early AD 50, fatigued and fearful.
- He finds some encouragement in two new ministry partners who also share his trade—Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1–3).
- Yet it takes a special word from the Lord to calm his concerns: “Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:9–10).
- Paul will stay 18 months, plant a church, and write two letters—1 Thessalonians (AD 50) and 2 Thessalonians (AD 51).
- Exactly as the Lord promised, Paul is uniquely protected from his opponents—by the Roman governor Gallio (ruled AD 51–52; Acts 18:12–17).

- In late spring, AD 52, after 18 months, Paul takes leave of Corinth to return to Jerusalem and then to Antioch (Acts 18:18).
- On the way he stops briefly in Ephesus (Acts 18:19–20).
- Previously, the Lord had prevented him from ministry in Asia's capital. Now he states, "I will return to you again if God wills" (Acts 18:21).
- Paul leaves Aquila and Priscilla there to prepare for his return.
- From the beginning of this second journey (Acts 15:40) until its conclusion (Acts 18:22), in the span of about 2 ½ years, Paul travels over 3,000 miles by land and sea.





# V. Paul's Third Missionary Journey

*"I have made myself a slave to all, so that I  
may win more." —1 Corinthians 9:19*

- After spending “some time” with his church in Antioch (Acts 18:23), Paul leaves his sending church and attempts to enter the province of Asia again in late summer, AD 52.
- This time it was indeed “the Lord’s will.”
- Paul will spend three years in Ephesus (AD 52–55; Acts 19:1–20:1), before revisiting Macedonia and Achaia and returning to Jerusalem (AD 55–57; Acts 20:1–21:16).



- On the one hand, Paul experiences some of his greatest successes in Ephesus.
  - **Acts 19:9–10** – “But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”
- On the other hand, Paul experiences some of his greatest challenges in Ephesus.
  - **1 Corinthians 15:32** – “I fought with beasts in Ephesus.”



*"The Apostle Paul,"  
a painting by Rembrandt (1657)*

- During this journey, Paul will enter his most difficult period of ministry—one requiring a defense of the doctrine of salvation as well as a defense of his status as an apostle.
- Paul will write his four great "Capital Epistles" during this time—1 Corinthians (AD 55, in Ephesus), 2 Corinthians (AD 55, in Macedonia), Galatians (AD 55, in Corinth), and Romans (AD 56, in Corinth).



- During this third missionary journey, Paul will also demonstrate deep pastoral concern.
- Although in Ephesus, Paul is burdened for the well-being of the congregation 450 miles across the Aegean Sea—the church of Corinth.
- During his third journey, Paul writes three letters to Corinth and even sends Titus to help bring about their repentance.



“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.”

“I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.”

“But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.”

—2 Corinthians 2:4, 13; 7:6–7

- By the end of his third missionary journey, Paul has built an impressive network of gospel coworkers; Romans 16 gives a partial glimpse:

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ■ Phoebe                 | ■ Tryphaena and Tryphosa |
| ■ Prisca and Aquila      | ■ Persis                 |
| ■ Epaenetus              | ■ Rufus                  |
| ■ Mary                   | ■ Asyncritus             |
| ■ Andronicus and Junias  | ■ Phlegon                |
| ■ Ampliatus              | ■ Hermes                 |
| ■ Urbanus                | ■ Patrobas               |
| ■ Stachys                | ■ Hermas                 |
| ■ Apelles                | ■ Philologus and Julia   |
| ■ Aristobulos' household | ■ Nereus and his sister  |
| ■ Herodion               | ■ Olympas                |
| ■ Narcissus' household   |                          |

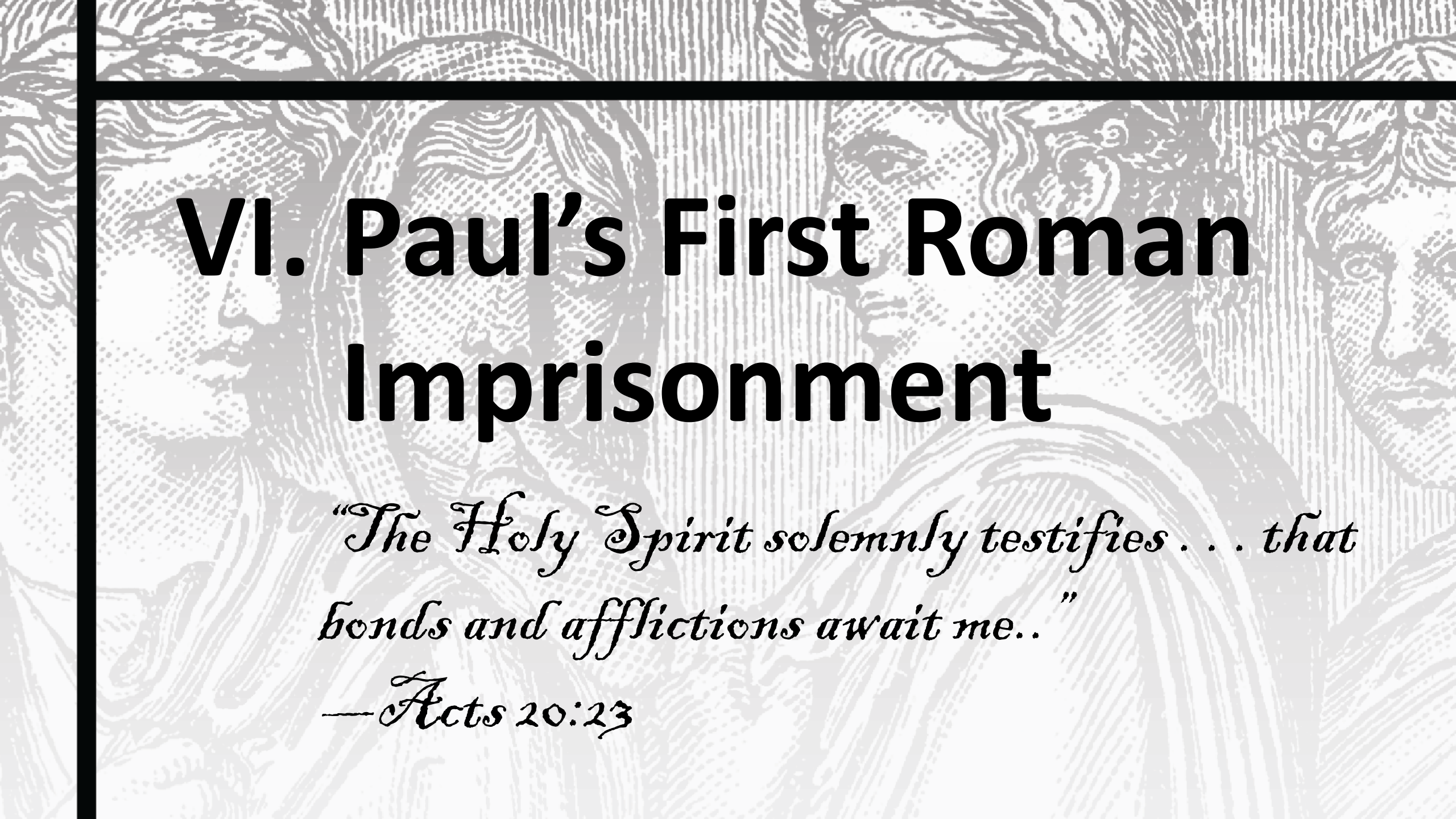
“He believed and knew from personal experience that the saving work of Christ found its richest and fullest expression not in isolation but in the Christian community held together by mutual love, grounded in a common love for Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord.”

—Hiebert, *Personalities around Paul*, 17

“The personalities that gather around the figure of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, constitute one of the most significant groups in human history.”

—Rolston, *Personalities around Paul*, 13





# VI. Paul's First Roman Imprisonment

*"The Holy Spirit solemnly testifies . . . that  
bonds and afflictions await me.."*

*—Acts 20:23*

- In AD 57, while visiting Jerusalem at the conclusion of his third missionary journey, Paul is arrested by the Roman authorities over false accusations of the Jews.
- He spends two years in in a prison in Caesarea Maritima (Acts 24:27), having hearings before several Roman officials.
- Paul eventually exercises his right as a Roman and appeals to Caesar (Acts 25:11).



"Paul before Agrippa" – a painting by Nikolai Bodarevsky

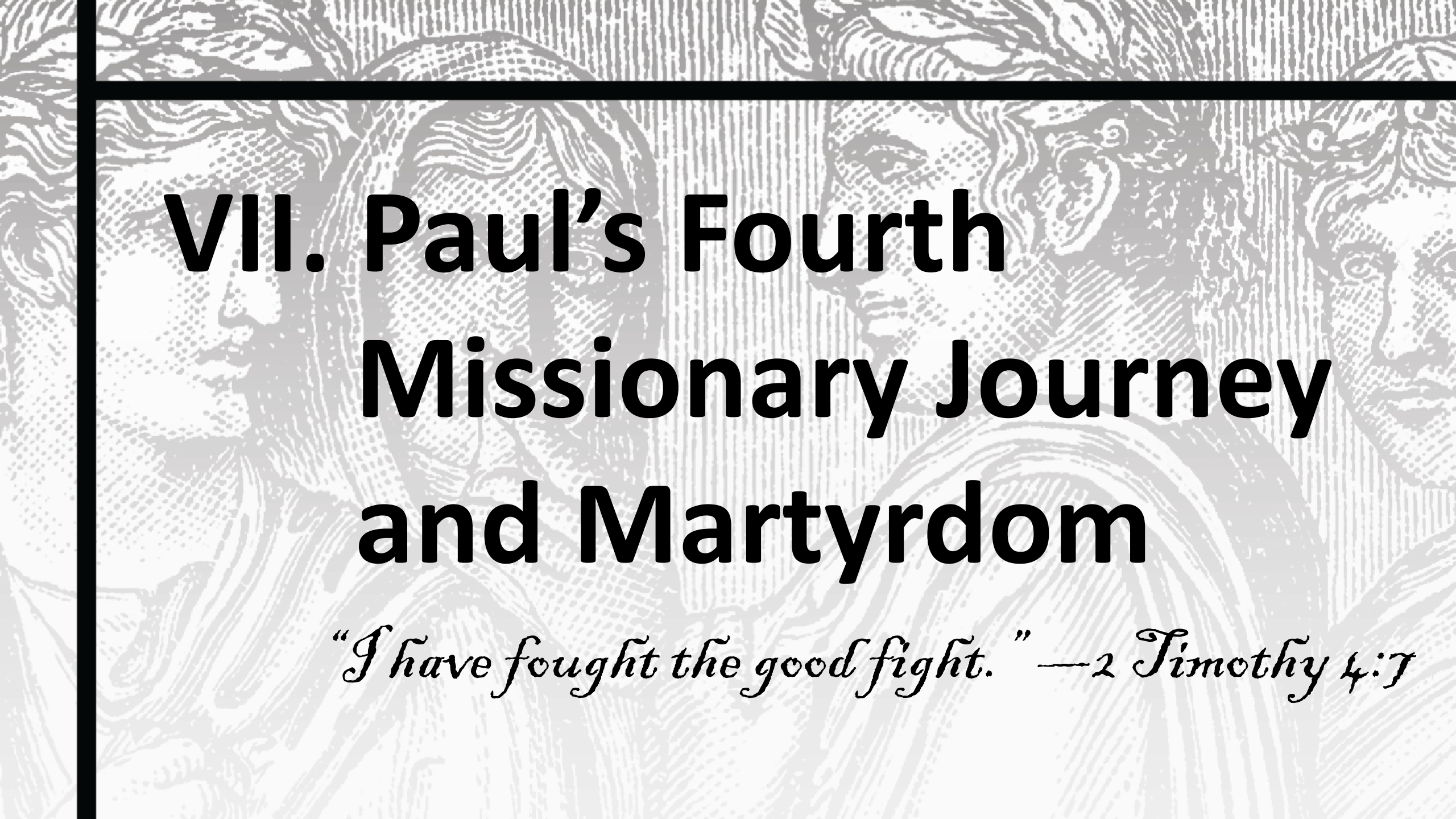


- In AD 59, Paul is sent to Rome in one of the most treacherous sea voyages recorded in ancient history (Acts 27:1–28:14).



- Paul finally arrives in Rome and is placed under house arrest for two full years (AD 60–62; Acts 28:30–31).
- As he awaits his hearing before Nero, he writes his “Prison Epistles” —Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

- Around AD 62, Emperor Nero releases Paul back into freedom.

The background of the slide features a detailed woodcut-style illustration of three men's faces. The man on the left is shown in profile, looking towards the center. The man in the middle is looking slightly to the right. The man on the right is looking directly forward. The illustration is rendered in a high-contrast, black and white style with fine lines and cross-hatching for shading. The text is overlaid on this background.

# VII. Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey and Martyrdom

*"I have fought the good fight." —2 Timothy 4:7*



## A. Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey

- Thus, in AD 62, Paul returns once more to his missionary labors.
- Although he previously wrote about plans to travel to Spain (Rom 15:24, 28), there is no indication he ever realized such plans.
- In his "Pastoral Epistles," Paul only describes movements in the Aegean Sea—Crete, Miletus, Ephesus, Troas, etc.
- He arrives in Nicopolis, and is arrested again (AD 65).



- Paul's charges are now associated with sedition and treason, and he assumes his execution is imminent; Nero has grown openly hostile to Christianity.
- **2 Timothy 4:7–8** – “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.”
- Paul is beheaded in Rome in AD 67.



“Paul in Prison”  
– a painting by Rembrandt



“There would come a day when men would call  
their dogs Nero and their sons Paul.”

—T. R. Glover

“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”

—Philippians 3:7–8a