

Paul's Calling and Mission

Acts 9:19-31 | Acts 13:1-12 | Romans 15:14-33

SERIES QUESTION What problem is being addressed, and how does the gospel answer it?

BIG IDEA The risen Christ called Paul, and the Holy Spirit sent him through the church to carry the gospel to the Gentiles and build up Christ's people.

Follow the calling

PASSAGE	WHAT HAPPENS	MISSION EMPHASIS
Acts 9:19-31	Saul joins the disciples, proclaims Jesus, suffers opposition, and is received through Barnabas.	Christ's call creates a witness who belongs to and depends upon the church.
Acts 13:1-12	The Spirit sets apart Barnabas and Saul; Antioch prays, commissions, and sends them.	The Spirit calls; the church discerns, sends, and participates.
Romans 15:14-33	Paul describes grace, frontier mission, church support, generosity, and prayer.	Christ accomplishes his mission through Spirit-empowered witnesses and partnering churches.

Calling in action

- New people — Saul belongs to the disciples he had intended to destroy.
- New message — Jesus is the Son of God and Israel's Messiah.
- Developing pattern — Paul begins in the synagogues and reasons from Scripture.
- New cost — the persecutor becomes the persecuted and suffers for Christ.
- Church reception — Barnabas advocates for Saul and helps the believers receive him.

Look closer

SON OF GOD Acts 9:20 is the only direct use of this exact title in Acts, apart from the related quotation 'You are my Son' in Acts 13:33. It identifies Jesus in unique relationship with the Father, in David's royal line, and as Israel's promised Messiah.

SAUL AND PAUL God did not rename Saul at conversion. Saul was his Jewish name and Paul his Roman name. Acts 13:9 says, 'Saul, who was also called Paul.'

BAR-JESUS AND ELYMAS Bar-Jesus means 'son of Jesus/Joshua.' Elymas was connected with his role as a learned man or magician, although the exact origin is uncertain. The man called 'son of Jesus' acts as a 'child of the devil' by trying to turn another person from the Lord.

Strong words and gospel truth

Paul confronts a false prophet who is deliberately preventing Sergius Paulus from hearing the truth. Christian witness normally requires patience, gentleness, and respect. Yet gentleness does not mean passivity when someone deceives others or obstructs the gospel. Strong words must protect others and serve truth—not excuse anger, pride, or impatience.

Paul's mission in his own words

- Grace given for service — Paul calls his ministry to the Gentiles 'the grace God gave me.'
- Christ accomplishes the work — Paul speaks only of what Christ accomplished through him by the Spirit.
- Frontier ambition — Paul aims to preach where Christ is not known.
- Church partnership — believers assist, give, welcome, encourage, and join the struggle through prayer.

The Gospel Then and Now

CHURCH REALITY THEN A diverse worshiping church listened to the Spirit and commissioned gospel witnesses.

CHURCH TEMPTATION NOW We can become inward-looking or outsource mission to pastors and professional missionaries.

GOSPEL-SHAPED CHURCH Because mission belongs to Christ, the whole church worships, listens, sends, goes, gives, welcomes, protects, and prays.

Discuss

1. What changed in Saul's zeal—and what remained recognizable?
2. What does Acts 13 teach about the Spirit's call and the church's responsibility?
3. When might strong words be necessary to protect others, and what guardrails should govern them?
4. If not every Christian is called to be Paul, how does every congregation participate in Christ's mission?

ECO CONNECTION Essential Tenets III.B: election for salvation and service; III.D: faithful stewardship of all of life. eco-pres.org/constitution/

READ MORE ONLINE BibleProject, Guide to the Book of Acts: bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-acts/

BEFORE NEXT WEEK Read Galatians 1-6 in one sitting and Acts 15. Mark the church problem, Paul's gospel answer, and the response he calls for.



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<https://keithbreuer615.github.io/pauls-letters-class/>