

Church of God Sunday School

PAUL BECOMES A MISSIONARY

Acts 9:20-30; 11:21-26; 14:6-28

Do you remember the story of Saul meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus (*duh-MAS-kuhs*)? Saul believed he was doing God's work, but he learned that he was working *against* God. Soon Saul became a *missionary*—one who is sent on a mission—to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The first time Saul preached about Jesus was in the city of Damascus. The people who "heard him were amazed." They wondered if this was the same man who had come from Jerusalem to arrest the followers of Jesus. It *was* the same man, but there had been a change. Saul had met Jesus!

The Jewish leaders decided to have Saul put to death. Not only did they hate any preachers of the Gospel of Jesus, they especially hated Saul, because he had once persecuted the Christians himself! What a testimony of how Jesus can change lives! But this made the Jewish leaders very angry.

The Jews watched for Saul at the city gates day and night, waiting to kill him. Many cities in the Bible had high walls surrounding the entire city. The only way in or out of that city was to go through the city gates.

The city walls were very thick. Often houses were built on top of the city wall with the windows extending out over the wall. This was a perfect place for the disciples to help Saul escape. Late at night (the best time to not be seen), the disciples lowered Saul over the city wall in a basket fastened with ropes. Saul safely escaped!

Saul traveled to Jerusalem, wanting to join the disciples of Jesus, "but they were all afraid of him." However, Barnabas (*BAHR-nuh-buhs*) trusted Saul. He told the Apostles



about Saul meeting the Lord on the road to Damascus and how boldly Saul had preached in Jesus' name. Then the disciples accepted Saul, and Saul spoke "boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus" in Jerusalem too.

Saul continued to travel to many cities. Everywhere he went, he had opportunities to preach the Gospel. "A great number [of people] believed, and turned unto the Lord." In time Barnabas joined Saul, and they traveled together to Antioch (*AN-tee-ahk*). They stayed there for a whole year, teaching the people

about Jesus. It was there in Antioch that the disciples were first called "Christians."

From this time on, the Bible uses Saul's other name—Paul. During those days, most Jews had two names: a Jewish name and a Greek name. Saul was his Jewish name, and Paul was his Greek name. It might be that Paul began to use his Greek, or Gentile, name because he was called to be the Apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13; 2 Timothy 1:11).

When Paul and Barnabas arrived in the city of Lystra (*LIS-truh*), they again preached the Gospel. There they met a lame man who had never been able to walk. He heard Paul preach, and this lame man believed that he could be healed.

Paul said loudly to the lame man, "Stand upright on thy feet." The man "leaped and walked." He was healed! The people of that city were amazed! They thought that Paul and Barnabas were two of their gods—Mercury and Jupiter.

The "priest of Jupiter . . . brought oxen and [flower] garlands unto the gates." The temple of their god Jupiter was at the city gates. There the priest was going to sacrifice the oxen and, with the people, worship Paul and Barnabas.



Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes and ran among the people, crying out, "Why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you!" (New Living Bible). They told the people they should worship only the true God, the One who created all things.

Later, Jews came to Lystra and convinced the people that Paul should be stoned to death. The very same people, who only a short time before tried to worship the two disciples, stoned Paul and left him for dead outside the city. But Paul was not dead! As the disciples stood around him, he got up and went back into the city. (That took courage!)

The next day Paul and Barnabas left for the city of Derbe (*DUHR-bee*). After they "preached the gospel to that city," they returned to some of the cities they had already visited to strengthen and encourage the believers. In time Paul and Barnabas returned to the city of

Antioch (where they began their journey). There they told the believers "all that God had done . . . and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

What a wonderful missionary Paul was! He was not afraid to tell people about Jesus, even when they tried to kill him. Who do you think gave Paul courage and boldness? God is the One who helped Paul, and God will help you too.

Did you know that God has a "mission" for you? God might not ask you to travel on a long journey (like Paul and Barnabas), but you still can be a missionary for Jesus by telling other boys and girls about Him.

MEMORY VERSE:

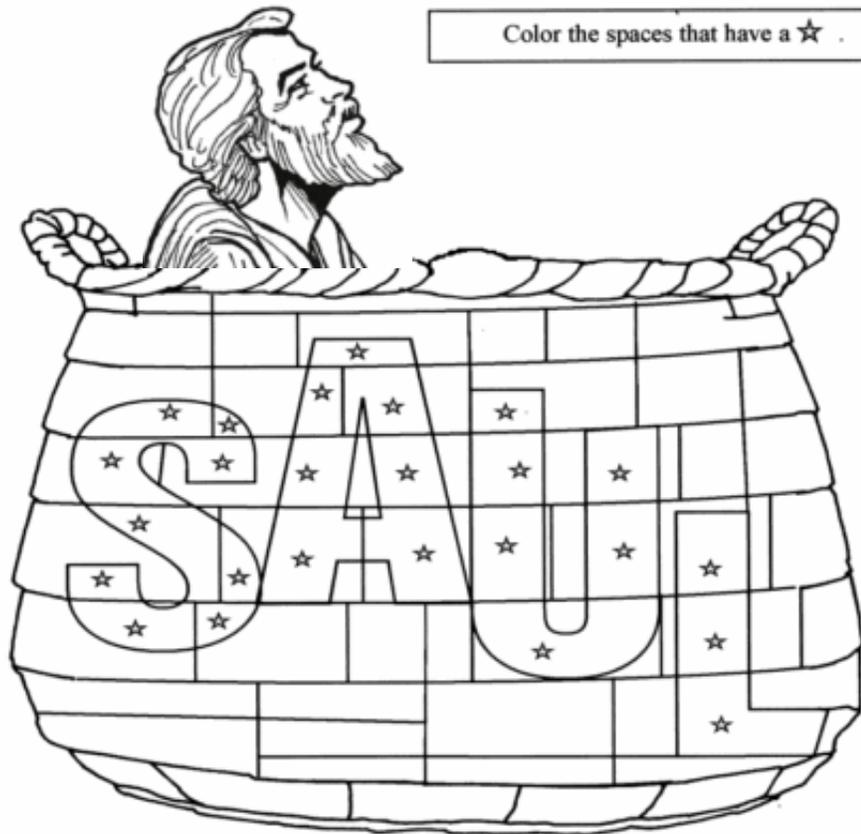
"And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

—Acts 11:21



The Jews in Damascus wanted to kill Saul. His friends helped him leave the city. How did they do it? One night they lowered him over the city wall in a basket!

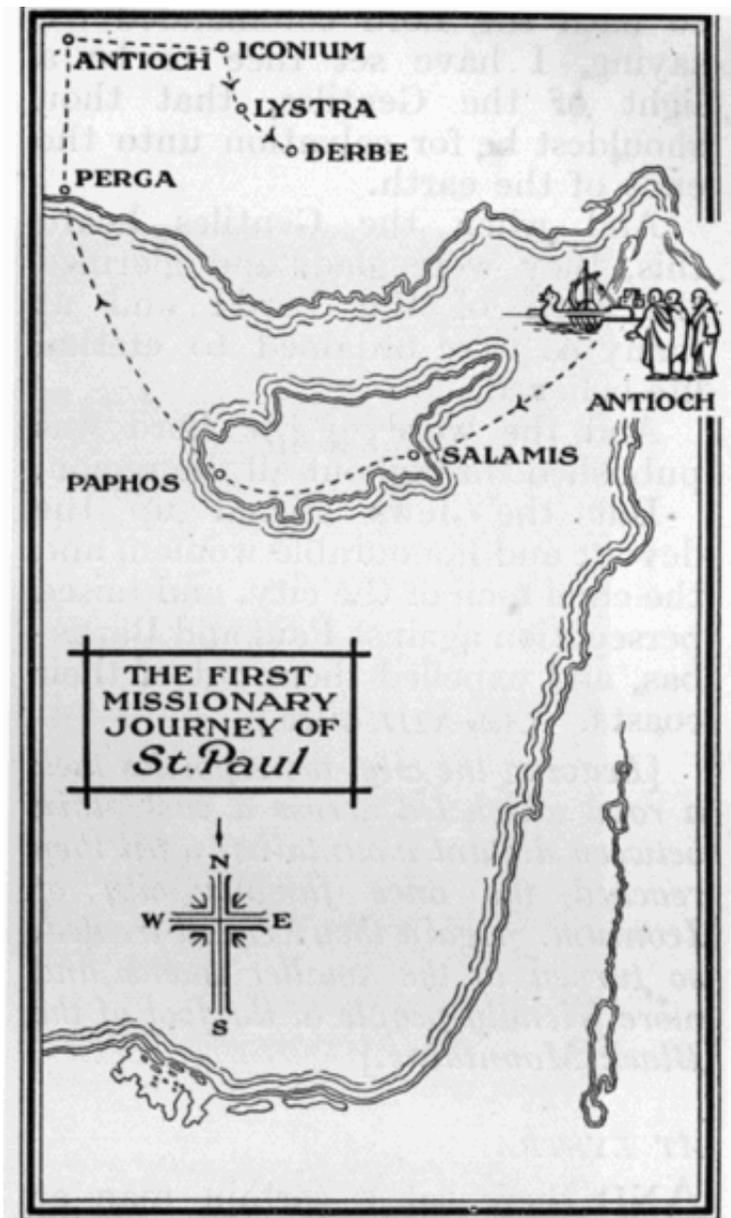
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Saul Escapes Over the City Wall

Paul's Journeys



USE THE MAP

Finish the names of the cities Paul and Barnabas traveled to.

1. A _____
2. S _____
3. P _____
4. P _____
5. A _____
6. I _____
7. L _____
8. D _____