

MENTOR 3: PAUL

THE LESSON: ACTS 26

Saul of Tarsus – later to be known as the Apostle Paul – began life as a highly educated and religious man. He was respected within the Jewish community and had the advantage of Roman citizenship. And he hated Christians. He hated Christians so much that he hunted them down at every opportunity, seeking to kill as many as he could. Then he met Jesus and everything changed.

Paul referred to himself as one “untimely born” because he did not meet Jesus in the way that the other apostles did. Instead, he met him in a vision, something that still happens to some believers today. But like those who encountered Jesus in the flesh, Paul’s life was completely changed and transformed, and his entire course was redirected: from killing Christians to building churches.

Paul’s life didn’t get easier after this life-changing encounter. His own testimony makes no secret of the fact that he was beaten, whipped, stoned, shipwrecked, and imprisoned. Tradition tells us that he was martyred by decapitation. But we also know that he believed it was all worth it. He wrote: “For my Lord’s sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in him.”

While in prison, Paul wrote many of the letters to the early Christian churches that are a part of our canon of scripture today. In them he wrote, “I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow the rule of prayer that you created for yourself.

(If you didn’t make one, try saying the morning and evening prayers from the “Forms of Prayer to be used in Families,” which begins on page 728 of the BCP. If you don’t have a copy, you can look it up here: <http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer>.)

Spend some time considering the example of Paul. Ask God to help you to honour him whatever your circumstances and struggles. Close with this prayer adapted from Philippians 1:20: **“Lord, it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death.”**

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

O God of the spirits of all flesh, we praise and magnify thy holy Name for all thy servants who have finished their course in thy faith and fear, especially thy servant St. Paul; and we beseech thee that encouraged by their examples and strengthened by their fellowship, we also may be found meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; through the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (PRAYER FOR THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS, BCP PAGE 56)

A NEW CREATION:

MENTOR 3: PAUL

ACTS 26: “SUCH AS I AM”

¹So Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense...

⁹“I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

¹²“In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. ¹⁴And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ¹⁵And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

¹⁹“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. ²¹For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²²To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

²⁴And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” ²⁵But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. ²⁶For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” ²⁸And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” ²⁹And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”