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Paul's missionary journeys helped spread the gospel throughout much of the ancient world. Over the course of his ministry, the Apostle Paul travelled more than 16,000 kilometres (10,000 miles) and established at least 14 churches. The Book of Acts records three separate missionary journeys that took Paul through Greece, Turkey, Syria, and numerous regions you won't find on modern-day maps. Some scholars argue that Paul also took a fourth missionary journey, since parts of the New Testament appear to reference travels that may have taken place after the events in Acts. Paul's travels played a crucial role in the formation and development of the early Christian church.

You could sum up Paul's life by saying, "He's on a Mission from God!"

Before Jesus spoke to Saul (a name also used for Paul) **he was zealous for God**, actively defending the old testament teachings that he grew up with and studied, and was out there breathing threats and murder against these new Jesus followers, thinking he was doing the right thing.

Then Jesus spoke to him while on the road to Damascus, putting him on the right path. Jesus the Messiah! Whoa! Then he understood what the Prophets & Law were pointing to - Jesus, the Lamb of God given to take away sin of the world. The Messiah has come.

It all just fitted into place - Jesus is the Christ!

His enthusiasm for God now had a new direction. After some days with the believers at Damascus, he immediately preached Christ in the synagogues. *"Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ."* Acts 9:22.

The Lord said about Saul (Paul), *"...he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."* Acts 9:15-16.

We might think at times that Paul enjoyed travelling the region and writing letters to various churches and friends. But reading through the book of Acts and the letters he wrote, you quickly understand the personal hardship he endured in sharing the good news. God used Paul, along with many others, to spread the gospel message throughout the northern Mediterranean region, from Antioch to Rome, which then spread out into the rest of the world.

Paul was finally executed in Rome for sharing the message of Jesus. Paul wrote, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."* Gal 2:20. He was **one tough missionary for Jesus!** A humble man with his eye on the prize.

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God ...to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."

2 Timothy 1: 8, 11-12

There is no one in the Bible, apart from Christ, who lived a life of boldness & humility, gratitude & thankfulness, love & concern more than Paul the Apostle.

This is more significant considering the terrible trials and sufferings he went through. Here is a list that still falls short of all he suffered. It comes from 2 Corinthians 11:23-33:

- in labours more abundant
- in stripes above measure
- in prisons more frequently
- faced death often
- from the Jews 5 times forty stripes minus 1
- three times beaten with rods
- once stoned
- three times shipwrecked
- a night and a day in the deep sea
- in journeys often
- in perils of waters & the sea
- in perils of robbers
- in perils of his own countrymen & the Gentiles
- in perils in the city & in the wilderness
- in perils among false brethren
- in weariness and toil
- in sleeplessness often
- in hunger and thirst
- in often fasting
- in cold and nakedness
- a daily deep concern for all the churches
- a thorn in the flesh
- abandoned by all his friends while imprisoned
- despaired even of life