

PAUL

A MAN OF GRACE AND GRIT

STUDY THIRTEEN

Traveling as Paul Traveled

Selections from Acts 15–23

Paul really traveled well. I don't mean he traveled in luxury. I mean he traveled in obedience.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

SUCCESSFUL traveling often includes one staple. Whether you're traveling locally on your weekly grocery trip or you're traveling globally on an exotic vacation like an African safari . . . you need a solid plan.

But what do you do when plans don't unfold as you'd like?

On your way to Africa, the flight to Nairobi is delayed for 16 hours. You miss your connection which causes you to miss your first excursion—that hot-air balloon ride over the Serengeti. But if you reschedule that, you forfeit the jeep ride. The elephant lodge with panoramic views closes just before you arrive because of a broken water line—so you're rebooked at the high-rise hotel downtown.

How do you handle such unexpected setbacks? Those inevitable changes to your plans?

The apostle Paul was an adventurer for God—well acquainted with planning and sudden changes. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we consider how he dealt with the unexpected, difficult “setbacks” as they appeared. We'll see how his best responses came from possessing a strong awareness of his identity in Christ, a clear mission, and a deep sense of God's purpose in whatever he faced.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before you engage God's Word today, meditate on David's hymn, [Psalm 23](#). Paul must have prayed through this psalm hundreds of times during his missionary journeys. Reflect on why this prayer is so important when we experience the unexpected, and then ask God to bless your time in His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

At the completion of his first missionary journey, Paul returned to Antioch with Barnabas for local ministry, mixed with time for rest and recovery. Paul and Barnabas were delegates to the Jerusalem Council. God's grace had flowed through their ministry to gentiles. Should the new gentile believers become like Jews with all their rituals and procedures? The Jerusalem church said no. Gentiles were not required to adopt all Jewish customs to be saved.



Paul suggested that he and Barnabas venture out and return to the same cities to teach and strengthen the believers. But, the two divided after a sharp disagreement over John Mark's place on the missionary team. Barnabas took John Mark and sailed for Cyprus.

Paul devised a plan to preach the gospel to gentiles and plant churches. To do so, he assembled a new team and began the second missionary journey, which is where we pick up in Acts 15.

Use your observation and interpretation skills in the charts below.¹ For interpretation, use your Bible-study resources like [Constable's Notes](#) (netbible.org), [IVP New Testament Commentary on Acts](#) (biblegateway.com), [Bible maps](#) (insight.org/maps), and the [Holman Bible Dictionary](#) (studylight.org). Also, in case you don't have a copy in your library, be sure to grab Pastor Chuck's commentary [Insights on Acts](#) at [insight.org/store](#).

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Assembling a New Missionary Team <i>Acts 15:40–16:10</i>	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>Peruse Acts 15:40–16:10. Who joined Paul? (Note, one is not named.)</p> <p>Their journey took them through Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Bithynia, Troas, and Macedonia. Locate these areas on a Bible map found at insight.org/maps and look up these destinations in your favorite Bible dictionary like the Holman Bible Dictionary at studylight.org. Record insights you'd like to remember below.</p>	<p>In Acts 15:40, what is significant about Silas' commissioning?</p> <p>According to 16:1–3, what made Timothy worthy of joining Paul's team? Further, how did Paul demonstrate cultural sensitivity given Timothy's heritage?</p> <p>Write a couple of principles that stand out to you based on your study of Paul's selections.</p>

Paul met a young disciple named Timothy. Paul wanted him to join him. There was something of a soul connection with Timothy. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Selections from Acts 15–23

God's Blessing for Obedient Travelers <i>Acts 16:6–40</i>	
 Observation	 Interpretation
Read Acts 16:6–8. What happened to Paul and Silas' plans?	On two occasions in Acts 16:6–8, the Holy Spirit closed the doors to preaching the gospel. Why do you think He did so?
According to 16:9–15, what prompted the team to travel to Macedonia, and what unfolded in Philippi?	According to 16:9–15, what is significant about the gospel taking hold in Philippi? What impact did that have on Paul and on the New Testament church?
Look at 16:16–24. What actions of Paul stirred such anger? What consequences did he and Silas face?	From 16:16–24, how did Paul's discernment, conviction, and obedience eventually lead to his and his team's suffering?
Read 16:25–40. How did God miraculously intervene? What unfolded with the Philippian jailer and with the Philippian officials?	Acts 16:25–40 details God's reward for Paul's obedience. Summarize that reward below and explain its relevance for Christ followers today.

When you are going through turmoil, difficulty, persecution, and hardship, it does not necessarily mean you're out of His will. It could mean you're right in the nucleus of His will. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Perseverance in Church Planting . . . Persistence through Persecution <i>Acts 17:1–16; 32–34; 18:1, 18; 19:1, 8, 10; 20:13–16</i>	
 Observation	 Interpretation
Read Acts 17:1–16. Where did Paul plant churches? Who opposed him in both locations?	What is significant about the churches planted in Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus? How did their establishment impact the New Testament, and how does it impact believers today?
Read 17:15–16, 32–34. Where did Paul travel next? Did he plant a church there? What troubled him?	
Read 18:1, 18. As Paul wrapped up his second missionary journey, where did he next establish a church?	What was unique about the Berean church? How is its example relevant for believers today?
Read 19:1, 8, 10. Immediately, Paul began his third missionary journey. Where did he plant his next church? How long did Paul stay?	As Paul established churches, who persistently opposed him? What was Paul's practice in the face of such opposition?
Read 20:13–16. In an effort to return to Jerusalem, Paul completed his third missionary journey. To locate the areas mentioned on the second and third missionary journeys, consult the <i>Bible map</i> found at insight.org/maps .	

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Think of the hostility they met with and the lack of comforts. They lived in harm's way, with dangers and perils. Nevertheless, he pressed on.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Paul's Sensitivity Sharpened His Obedience

Paul's ability to travel obediently was sharpened by his sensitivity. He possessed a deep sense of God's sovereign hand of protection as he journeyed as well as a keen sensitivity to God's opening and closing of doors as he proclaimed the gospel.

Luke 9:1–6 contains Jesus' directives to His disciples to go and preach. Read and reflect on what Jesus said. Record your observations below. Note any principles from Jesus that you found enlightening for your study on Paul's travels. See especially 9:5 on the topic of closed and open doors.

When you travel as God would have you travel like Paul, you're sensitive to doors that open and doors that close, and people who are ready and people who aren't. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Traveling Well

Reflect on these four application principles based on Paul's travels in this study.

1. *When you travel, don't go alone.* Paul always traveled with others, with a team. Whether your mate, a family member, or a friend—two are better than one. Three are better than two.
2. *When you travel, don't lose touch with home.* Paul always stayed close with family and friends, remaining accountable with reports from his journey. He was accountable and vulnerable.
3. *When you travel, don't believe everything you hear.* Paul was worshiped and adored as well as rejected and mistreated. He was neither swayed to make his own pedestal nor derailed from his mission.
4. *When you travel, don't become aloof.* In the busyness of his missionary ministry, Paul never erected a spiritual wall. He stayed available. He stayed real. He stayed accessible.

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What did you learn from this study on traveling well that will be especially helpful to you, and why?

Which of the four application principles most resonates with you in your current journey? Why?

There's no journey like the journey to the cross to change you forever. I invite you to come. And when you do, I need to warn you: you better be ready for some changes. He'll change your thinking. He'll change your motives. He'll change your whole direction. He'll solve your selfishness. He'll remove that antagonism that is a part of your life. He'll turn your ugliness into sweetness. He'll relieve you of the guilt and the shame of your sins. That's what happens when you come to the cross. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Lord, for this model, Paul, who traveled so well and who finished so strong. Help me to see the significance of Paul's travels, the providence of including Paul in Your plan and, of all things, including me too. I dedicate these words to You and my life as well. In the lovely name of our fairest Lord Jesus, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2001, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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