

Preaching the Gospel to the Nations

A ROAD MAP

handout 1 - 13 July 2016

STAGE 1: CONVERSION AND FORMATION (Galatians 1-2)

Session 1 (13 July 2016) - St. Paul "goes to seminary."

Notes

1. What's going on in the Church? (Acts 15-16)
2. Paul Vindicates his apostleship. (Galatians 1)
 - 2.1. Saul's Conversion (Acts 9:1-19)
 - 2.2. "still breathing threats and murder against the disciples" (Acts 9:1)
 - 2.2.1. "And Saul was consenting to [Stephen's] death" (Acts 7:54-8:1).
3. Arabia and Damascus
 - 3.1. He can't find God in the temple, so where might he go? (Acts 26:17-21)
 - 3.2. What's in Arabia? (1 Kings 19:9-18; Exodus 19:16-20)
4. Paul returns to Jerusalem to confer with Peter.

Session 2 - St. Paul's seminary (cont'd) & the obedience of faith

Homily in Praise of Saint Paul

St. John Chrysostom

This excerpt from a homily preached by St. John Chrysostom around 400 AD in praise of St. Paul (Hom. 2 de laudibus sancti Pauli: PG 50, 477-480) is used in the Roman Office of Readings for the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul on January 25. It eloquently expresses the passionate love of Christ that drove St. Paul to face persecution and hardship with joy and leave behind the honors and benefits of the world.

For Prayer

Paul, more than anyone else, has shown us what man really is, and in what our nobility consists, and of what virtue this particular animal is capable. Each day he aimed ever higher; each day he rose up with greater ardor and faced with new eagerness the dangers that threatened him. He summed up his attitude in the words: "I forget what is behind me and push on to what lies ahead." When he saw death imminent, he bade others share his joy: "Rejoice and be glad with me!" And when danger, injustice and abuse threatened, he said: "I am content with weakness, mistreatment and persecution." These he called the weapons of righteousness, thus telling us that he derived immense profit from them.

Thus, amid the traps set for him by his enemies, with exultant heart he

turned their every attack into a victory for himself; constantly beaten, abused and cursed, he boasted of it as though he were celebrating a triumphal procession and taking trophies home, and offered thanks to God for it all: "Thanks be to God who is always victorious in us!" This is why he was far more eager for the shameful abuse that his zeal in preaching brought upon him than we are for the most pleasing honors, more eager for death than we are for life, for poverty than we are for wealth; he yearned for toil far more than others yearn for rest after toil. The one thing he feared, indeed dreaded, was to offend God; nothing else could sway him. Therefore, the only thing he really wanted was always to please God.

The most important thing of all to him, however, was that he knew himself to be loved by Christ. Enjoying this love, he considered himself happier than anyone else; were he without it, it would be no satisfaction to be the friend of principalities and powers. He preferred to be thus loved and be the least of all, or even to be among the damned, than to be without that love and be among the great and honored.

To be separated from that love was, in his eyes, the greatest and most extraordinary of torments; the pain of that loss would alone have been hell, and endless, unbearable torture.

So too, in being loved by Christ he thought of himself as possessing life, the world, the angels, present and future, the kingdom, the promise and countless blessings. Apart from that love nothing saddened or delighted him; for nothing earthly did he regard as bitter or sweet.

For Prayer

Paul set no store by the things that fill our visible world, any more than a man sets value on the withered grass of the field. As for tyrannical rulers or the people enraged against him, he paid them no more heed than gnats. Death itself and pain and whatever torments might come were but child's play to him, provided that thereby he might bear some burden for the sake of Christ.

Why did St. Paul go to Jerusalem to confer with Peter, James, and John?

JOHN CASSIAN: Who could be so presumptuous and blind as to dare to trust his own judgment and discretion, when the vessel of election bears witness that he needs the partnership of his coapostles? (Conferences 2.15)

STAGE 2: THE CHURCH IN THESSALONICA

Session 1 - Acts 17:1-15 [16-32 optional], 1 Thessalonians 1-2

The Christian claim that Jesus is Lord and King, to whom we owe absolute allegiance, was perceived by many people in the first century as a threat to the established Roman civil order...Christians are obliged to be good citizens, and to cooperate with civil authority as long as it does not overstep its bounds, but they do not accept the contention that the state has absolute power..

Paul teaches that Christians are to respect government authority but also to recognize that all authority...is established by God and therefore subject to and limited by God's authority (Rom 13:1-7). State authority has the good purpose of maintaining the public order, which is necessary for individuals and peoples to

flourish. Therefore Christians are to pay taxes and to honor civil authorities (Rom 13:7). But there will be times when they must “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). [William Kurz, *Acts of the Apostles*, in CCSS, p. 264]

Notes

Session 2 - 1 Thessalonians 3-5

the issue of the supposed "rapture" (from the notes of Dr. Brant Pitre, PhD)

St. Paul and the Parousia (1 Thess 4)

1. The *Parousia* (Gk “presence”) of Christ: “principal subject” of letters (Prat 1.72)
 - a. Mentioned four times in the letter (1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23)
2. The Thessalonian’s Problem of “the Dead in Christ”
 - a. They have lost hope for Christians who have died
 - b. Promise of bodily “resurrection” (Gk *anastasis*)
3. Paul Clarifies Christian Eschatology:
 - a. Those who are “alive” at the end will not “precede” the dead
 - b. The dead in Christ rise first at the *Parousia* (bodily resurrection)
 - e. Christians who are alive will be transformed (bodily glorification)
 - d. Living and dead will be “caught up” (Lat *rapiemur*) in the clouds
4. Old Testament Background: Mount Sinai (Exod 19:16-20)

Mount Sinai

The Lord *descends* upon Mt Sinai
In a fiery *cloud* (the “glory cloud”)
The sound of a *trumpet*
The 12 Tribes go *to meet God*

The Second Coming

Jesus *descends* from heaven
Caught up in the *clouds*
The sound of the *trumpet*
Church gathered *to meet God*

For Prayer

5. Question: is Paul describing a secret Rapture (so Protestant Dispensationalism)?
6. Was St. Paul wrong about “the end of the world”? (Prat, 1.75-76)
 - a. Undeniable: some early Christians thought the world would end soon (2 Pet 3)
 - b. Apostolic Teaching: no one knows the hour (cf. Mark 13:32)

see handout from Currie, *Rapture*, pages 204-208

Session 3 - 2 Thessalonians

The Tribulation and the Antichrist (2 Thess 2) (from the notes of Dr. Brant Pitre, PhD)

1. Problems:
 - a. Thessalonians still suffering persecution (2 Thess 1:5)
 - b. Eschatology: some saying “the day of the Lord has come” (2 Thess 2:1-2)
2. Prerequisites for the Parousia:
 - a. The Great Tribulation: the “Rebellion” (Gk *apostasia*) comes first (Matt 24)
 - b. The Antichrist: the “man of lawlessness” comes (*parousia*) (cf. 1 John 2:18)
 - c. The “Restrainer”: currently restraining the “mystery of lawlessness”
3. The Great Tribulation: a final period of unparalleled tribulation (cf. Dan 12:1-2)
4. The Antichrist: eschatological opponent of Messiah (cf. Isa 14; Ezek 28; Dan 11:36)

- a. The “Man of lawlessness”: a man of evil
 - b. Self-deification: claims to be “God”; demands that he be worshiped
 - c. Deceiver: he will speak falsehood and work wonders
 - d. “Son of Perdition”: doomed to destruction (cf. Judas, John 17:12)
 - e. A Desecrator: he takes his seat in “the temple of God”
(cf. 1 Mac 1:20-24, 54)
5. Two Parousias: the Antichrist (2 Thess 2:9) and the Lord Jesus (cf. Isaiah 11)

see handout from Currie, *Rapture*, pages 208-213

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, §673-677

The glorious advent of Christ, the hope of Israel

673 Since the Ascension Christ’s coming in glory has been imminent, even though “it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.” This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are “delayed.”

674 The glorious Messiah’s coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by “all Israel,” for “a hardening has come upon part of Israel” in their “unbelief” toward Jesus. St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.” St. Paul echoes him: “For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?” The “full inclusion” of the Jews in the Messiah’s salvation, in the wake of “the full number of the Gentiles,” will enable the People of God to achieve “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” in which “God may be all in all.”

For Prayer

The Church’s ultimate trial

675 Before Christ’s second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the “mystery of iniquity” in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.

676 The Antichrist’s deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism, especially the “intrinsically perverse” political form of a secular messianism.

677 The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection. The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God’s victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven. God’s triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the Last Judgment after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world.