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# Who Mentored Paul?

*Acts 9:1-19, Galatians 1:17-18, Acts 9:19-31, Acts 11:19-30, Galatians 2:1, Acts 12:25-13:2*

Good morning, men. Every week we send out thousands of emails to webcasters, and one of the webcast email recipients sent me this email this week: "Dear Brother Patrick. This morning I watched, 'Lord, Why Are You Doing This to Me?' All that I usually do is read your email and delete it. But this morning, I felt the Lord impress on me that I should watch your message."

I think he thought he was trying to compliment me and encourage me; but let me ask you a question. Do you think he would make a good mentor? Probably not.

We're in the series, "What Happens When Men Mentor Men?"

This morning the subject is, "Who Mentored Paul?" Turn to Acts 9. Last week the big idea was "God has ordained all His best men to invest in other men." This week we will look at an example of it. It's interesting, because when you are talking about mentoring, usually when people talk about Paul, they are talking about the relationship between Paul and Timothy. That is the classic biblical example of mentoring. But who mentored Paul? Let's take a look at this. We will start in Acts 9.

## **GOD DOES NOT MAKE 90-DAY WONDERS**

First, what we will do is see that God doesn't make 90-day-wonders. What is a 90-Day Wonder? It's a Second Lieutenant who goes through 90 days of Officer Training School and then he comes out as a totally green, raw Second Lieutenant—the lowliest person on the officer food chain. They call them 90-Day Wonders. God doesn't do 90-Day Wonders.

We first meet Paul when he is named Saul. He is a young religious zealot. He is persecuting Christians. He is actually pretty good at it. He must be very good at it because they appoint him to go to Damascus. He is given letters to go there and pull Christians out of their homes, arrest them and bring them back to Jerusalem.

He's a young guy at the time of this story. It takes place when he was between 25 and 32 years of age, depending on how you do the biblical math. When he was in his late 20s, or maybe his early 30s, we find him on the road to Damascus. In Acts 9 it says, "Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples." Then he goes to Damascus has this experience that we have all heard about. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Jesus says to him. A fireball falls from heaven on a dusty ribbon of a road, the road to Damascus, and Paul becomes converted. This is his conversion experience.

He is told to go to a particular house and wait for a prophet named Ananias who will come and give him instructions on what he is to do next. He's actually struck blind temporarily. He has to be led there. Then in Verse 17, it says:

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Then the chronology gets a little muddled. Keep your finger here. Turn to Galatians 1:17.

Paul writes to the Galatians he said right after his conversion experience he says, "I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with [Peter] and stayed with him fifteen days.

Now keep your finger there and go back to Acts 9. The next thing we read in Acts 9, in the second half of verse 19, it says Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. Now, it may be that he immediately went to Arabia and then came back to Damascus, so there's a gap that's covered in Galatians 1:17. Reading on in Acts it says, he began to preach and all who heard were astonished. Read in Acts 9:23-25: "After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall."

Keep your finger in Acts and go back to Galatians 2:1. It is a highly probably chronology that Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, went to Arabia, came back to Damascus for a few days, they tried to kill him and in Galatians 2:1 it says, "fourteen years later Paul went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas."

You can leave Galatians and go back to Acts Chapter 9. This is starting to sound more complicated than I thought it would – I apologize for that. But the story is that he went to Arabia, came back to Damascus and then there is a huge gap of time. Then he goes up to Jerusalem.

Paul is converted like you were converted, and then he finds himself in a huge valley. They try to kill him two times. He has to flee for his life. He went from being the biggest enemy of Christ to being the enemy of those who are the enemy of Christ. He now has to flee. Let's go down to Acts 9:26.

When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He talked and

debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

This is the three year period here. This is the end of the three year period and they send him to Tarsus. This man was one of the power elite. Can you imagine how few people rise to the power elite ranks whether it is Morgan Stanley, or Goldman-Sachs, or the top of government, the top of the top. He was the power elite. He was converted. Twice he's had his life almost taken, and now he's had to flee to Tarsus, his hometown, and he's not heard of again for 13 years. Can you imagine how it feels to feel like God is going to use you, and then suddenly you find you've been benched and side-lined? You've been tucked away. This is not the first time something like this has happened.

It happened to Abraham. At the age of 75, he's going to be the father of a great nation. At 99, he's still wondering when that's will happen. Moses thought he would deliver his people at the age of 40, and at 79 he's still waiting for something to happen. Take David who has this prophecy over his life, this anointing to be the king of Israel as a boy, and then 13 years go by and he's still not king. He's been running for his life for 13 years. Or Joseph who has a vision that he will lead his people as a young man and then he is sold into slavery and prison.

God doesn't do 90-Day Wonders. God doesn't call a man from being Saul, and then 90 days later make him a Paul. He usually drives him to a place where He will work things into a man's life and maybe work some things out of the man's life.

Let me ask you a question. How many years did it take before you started to do real business with God after you were converted? Five, ten? How many of you are still waiting to do business with God? It is not normal for God to make 90-Day Wonders. The normal way God works is how you saw it in Saul's life. It takes 10 years or more for the average guy to really start doing business with God and Saul was no different. **The big idea today is this. Mentoring is all about turning Sauls into Pauls.**

## **WHO WAS PAUL'S PAUL?**

Who was Paul's Paul? We could say it's a lot of people. It was Ananias. It was Barnabas. It was Peter who he stayed with for 15 days. There were Peter, James and John when he went to Jerusalem. There were the brothers that lowered him in the basket. It takes a lot of people to mentor someone. Where there is a great man of God, you will always see someone special in his life. That is what happened in the life of Saul.

Turn with me to Acts 9:26. "When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple." But Barnabas took him and brought him to the disciples and persuaded them to accept Saul.

Barnabas saw something in this young zealot Saul that the others did not see. Barnabas vouched for Saul. That is what mentors do. Mentors see something in other people that the rest of the crowd does not see. Mentors are willing to put their reputation on the line for their mentees. They are willing to vouch for them.

Turn to Acts 11:24. What's going on in Chapter 11 is that the church in Antioch is the first Gentile church. It's ground zero for Gentile Christianity. This is the mission center for sending missionaries to the Gentiles. It's established when the Jews are scattered at the stoning of Stephen which is a large part Saul's fault, and so this church takes root in Antioch and Barnabas is there.

Verse 24 talks about Barnabas who was sent up there to teach them. "He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord." Mentors are men like this. They are full of the Holy Spirit and full of faith. They are good men. They want to help others. In Verse 25 Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul. Remember, Saul is over there, by my count, for as much as 12 or 13 years living in obscurity. Barnabas went to Tarsus looked for Saul, and when he found him, brought him to Antioch. For a whole year, Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. It was there in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

You see another thing that mentors do. Mentors drag their mentees along with them when they are doing ministry. It is on-the-job training. Barnabas had vouched for Saul. He had seen something in Saul that others did not see. Saul wasn't sitting on his thumbs in Tarsus we don't know what was going on but we can be sure God was building into his life there. Barnabas always had him in the back of his mind, and when the time was right he called him up. He went looking for him and called him up. That is what mentors do. They call the younger men up.

What was the result of this? The result is that Saul became Paul. Look with me at Acts 13:1. It says in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers. By the way, I want you to notice the order in which these names appear, because the order of names in the Bible is always very important. There were five prophets and teachers in Antioch: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. Who was the number one teacher and prophet in Antioch? It was Barnabas. Who was the last the least of the teachers in Antioch? It was Saul. He was number five out of five. He was the low man on the totem pole. The mentor brought in the mentee and started him out on the bottom rung. Acts 13:2: "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"

Then they begin their first missionary journey. They go to Cyprus. Acts 13:7 says that the pro-counsel sent for Barnabas, and Saul. Verse 9 begins "Saul, who was also called Paul." This is the first time he's called Paul in the Scriptures. Saul becomes Paul. He is released to be Paul by his mentee. He has made the transition from Saul to Paul with the help of Barnabas.

I want you to see the result of what happens after that. Verse 13: "From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed." Suddenly, the mentee has now become the leader. Up to this point it had always been "Barnabas and Saul" but from now on whenever they are linked together, it is always "Saul and Barnabas."

I'll show you a couple verses you can see yourself. Acts 13:42 says, "As Paul and Barnabas" and Acts 13:43 says, "they followed Paul and Barnabas." Wherever they are mentioned after this it is always Paul and Barnabas. Paul has become the leader and that is what mentors help them do. Mentors look for mentees that will exceed them in ministry. A father who mentors his son wants his son to do better than

he did. That is the natural order of the spiritual realm. Jesus said, “You will do greater things than I did.” It is the natural order of mentoring that you want those you mentor to do better than you did. Part of my legacy as a father to my son John, and my daughter Jen, is that they will be better parents to their children than I was to them, and that is my legacy.

This is true with any man who wants to mentor a younger guy. **The big idea today is this: Mentoring is all about turning Sauls into Pauls.** It is looking for Sauls. You may be Saul. You should be looking for somebody like Barnabas—somebody who will see something in you that others don’t see. Do you have someone like that? Every man needs to have a Barnabas. Do you know what the name Barnabas means? Son of encouragement. He was an encourager and every man needs a Barnabas.

Who was Paul’s Paul? Barnabas. If you are a Saul, you should be looking for a Barnabas—someone who sees what others do not see—someone who will vouch for you; someone who will call you up when the time is right and give you a place of leadership.

Maybe you are already Paul. Maybe you have already made the transition from Saul to Paul. You do not need Barnabas anymore. If you are Paul you do not really need Barnabas anymore. Who was Paul’s Paul? Paul was Paul’s Paul. The Holy Spirit was Paul’s Paul. There is a time when you make the transition from being a needy mentee to a man who is ready to pour out your life into other people. That does not mean you do not need encouragement. That is why you have friends. There is a point you become Paul himself. **Mentoring is all about turning Sauls into Pauls.**

## WHAT MENTORS DO

What do mentors do? My father-in-law Ed Cole, is the most important mentor I ever had in my life. When Patsy and I married, we would go down about once a month to South Florida where they lived, and on Saturday mornings (I am not sure how this got started) I would get up and go into the kitchen where there was a little table and I would do my devotions there. Then my father-in-law would get up. We would talk for a couple of hours before the womenfolk would wake up. I would ask him questions. He would tell me about life. The greatest lessons I learned on how to be a man and how to be a man in business I learned at that table listening to that man.

What do mentors do? They are available to young Sauls who want to become Pauls. Are you somebody who is a Saul who needs somebody to help you become a Paul? Or are you like Barnabas? Someone who is there who has that ability to recognize this in other people. Mentors look for people who will exceed them. Mentors are looking for people they can build up— to actually do better in life than they could; people who can learn off their mistakes and who can climb right over the mistakes they made.

I have a prayer that I have been praying since about 1996. I have been praying that everybody I deal with in ministry, and this includes you that you would exceed me in ministry. That has been my constant prayer since about 1996 – that you would exceed me in ministry. I will not consider myself successful unless you do. I will not consider myself successful unless my children are better parents to their children than I was to them. That is what it means to be a mentor. It is to have zeal, a passion, to see men become all that God wants them to be. It means to have a passion to see your kids become all that

God wants them to be. That is the big idea this morning that mentoring is all about taking those Sauls and turning them into Pauls. Does this make sense? It really does make sense. So let's go do it. Let's pray.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Our dearest Father, Lord, thank you for the incredible way You revealed how You build men up, and how when You converted Paul, instead of doing the rest of it too, You handed him off to mentors and especially to Barnabas. Lord, there are men all around this community who are converted but they are not doing business with You yet. They feel like they have been set aside. Some of them are right here in this room and they need a Barnabas. Father, I pray for those of us ready to be mentors who are ready to take Sauls and help them become Pauls. I pray You would take the scales off of our eyes and help us see these men, and take action. Lord, for those men who are the Saul, who really are feeling set aside, Lord would you embolden some of them to ask another man if he would be a Barnabas to him—to be a mentor to him? Give us the courage to do this for the sake of Your kingdom, for the sake of this city, and for the sake of our families. In Christ's name. Amen.