

REFLECTIONS

June 12, 2005

And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle-I am telling the truth, I am not lying-and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles.

1 Timothy 2:7

A Man on a Mission

Part Three in the series *Graduating from Sunday School*

In today's world he might have sold vacuum cleaners or encyclopedias door-to-door, or he might have been the Fuller Brush man. In those days though, his trade was tent making. He was an ordinary man making a living in a simple trade.

It is a fascinating notion to picture Apostle Paul soliciting customers for tents he would make. I suppose tents came in several sizes, maybe a couple of shapes; probably they came in only a few colors. Then once the orders were taken, I can picture him laying out the fabric and cutting it to size. But the most vivid picture I have of Paul's work setting is the sewing circle.

Can't you visualize people like Priscilla and Aquila sitting around him asking questions and listening to his answers as he was sewing the pieces together? Wouldn't it have been a great setting for him to share his story—for him to tell how he moved from Tarsus to Jerusalem to become a rabbi; for him to explain how his zeal for the law allowed the stoning of Stephen; for him to describe the fear he felt when he encountered the blinding Light on the Damascus road, and the need he had to go into exile in the desert while he sorted out the transformation of his life. I imagine the sewing circle to have been a great setting for him to introduce Christ to the workplace. But there is one thing I can't imagine. I can't imagine that Paul ever considered his daily work to be separated from his mission as a herald for Christ. About that his mind was very clear.

Paul was a man on a mission. The mission was clear enough for him to write it down in a few words for his young disciple, Timothy. And as he wrote it down, he made the surprising discovery that he had become something that he never dreamed of being—of all things, he was a *teacher*, and his subjects were people he never expected to care for.

We remember Apostle Paul today as the author of some of the richest material in our Sunday School curriculum. But we should also remember him as an ordinary man who might just as well have been a barber, an auto mechanic, or a custodial servant. His mission did not define his vocation. Paul's vocation served his mission. His is a model for us follow. Like Paul, we may discover outcomes we never dreamed.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +