

THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

INTRODUCTION

A. Paul's background

1. His family

- a. He was born as Saul in Tarsus, on the southern coast of modern-day Turkey. His name was changed to Paul after his conversion to Christianity.
- b. His exact date of birth is unknown but was about 5 years younger than Jesus and he died around 64 A.D.
- c. He was a Jew
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 11:22, *Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I.*
 - 2) Philippians 3:5, *circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee.*
 - 3) He was proud of his Jewish heritage, Romans 9:4-5, *They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.*
- d. His father trained him in tent-making, Acts 18:3, *and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.*
- e. He was a Roman citizen
 - 1) Acts 22:28, *The tribune answered, "I bought this citizenship for a large sum." Paul said, "But I am a citizen by birth."*
 - 2) Holman Bible Dictionary, *The Roman citizen had the right of appeal after a trial, exemption from imperial service, right to choose between a local or Roman trial, and protection from degrading forms of punishment like scourging. Paul might have carried a wax tablet that functioned as a birth certificate or certificate of citizenship in order to prove his Roman citizenship. However, most people who claimed citizenship were trusted since the penalty for impersonating a Roman citizen was death.*

2. Religious instruction

- a. He was raised in Jerusalem and trained in Judaism under the religious leader Gamaliel.
 - 1) Acts 22:3, *I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.*
 - 2) Galatians 1:14, *And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.*
 - 3) Mishnah (Jewish oral tradition)
 - a) *At five years old [one is fit] for the Scripture, at ten years for the Mishnah, at thirteen [for the fulfilling of] the commandments, at fifteen for the Talmud (Jewish civil and ceremonial law), at eighteen for the bride-chamber, at twenty for pursuing a calling, at thirty for authority.*
 - b) *When Rabbi Gamaliel the Elder died, the glory of the Law ceased and purity and abstinence died.*
- b. He was trained as a Pharisee.
 - 1) Acts 23:6, *Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.*
 - 2) The Pharisees
 - a) The term *Pharisee* means *separated ones*, those who separated themselves to the study of the law.
 - b) They were the largest and most important religious group in Israel.
 - c) They controlled the synagogues and had great control over most of the Jewish people.
 - d) They developed the oral tradition of the law, their interpretation of written Scripture.
 - e) They opposed Jesus because He did not accept their interpretations of oral law.
 - f) They believed in life after death.
 - 3) The Sadducees
 - a) They were from the wealthy and priestly families.
 - b) They were in charge of the temple, its services, and concessions.
 - c) They accepted the first five books of the Bible and rejected the oral law.
 - d) They were materialistic and did not believe in life after death.

- c. He was possibly a member of the Sanhedrin
 - 1) Acts 26:10, *And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them.*
 - 2) The Sanhedrin
 - a) The highest Jewish council in the first century.
 - b) There were 71 members and the high priest presided over the council.
 - c) There were members from both parties, Pharisees and Sadducees.
- d. He was well-read.
 - 1) Paul loved his books, 2 Timothy 4:13, *When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.*
 - 2) He was born in Tarsus which was influenced by several cultures, including Greek.
 - 3) He was able to converse with philosophers from other cultures as seen when he was in Athens, Acts 17:22, *So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.*
 - 4) A. T. Robertson, *Paul knew how to think and had such passion of soul and keenness of intellect that he still challenges the respect of the greatest minds of the modern world.*

B. Outline of Acts concerning the Apostle Paul

1. Transformation from Saul to Paul
 - a. At Stephen's stoning (7:54 - 8:3): 35 A. D.
 - b. Saul's conversion (9:1-19a)
 - c. His conflicts (9:19b-31)
 - d. The church at Antioch (11:19-30): 46 A. D.
2. Paul's First Missionary Journey (12:25-14:28): 47-49 A.D.
 - a. From Antioch to Cyprus (12:25-13:12)
 - b. At Pamphylia and Pisidian Antioch (13:13-52)
 - c. To Iconium and Lystra (14:1-20a)
 - d. Completion of First Missionary Journey (14:20b-28)
 - e. Return to Antioch (14:21-28)
3. The Council at Jerusalem (15:1-35): 49 A.D.
 - a. The Council meets
 - b. The Council's letter to Gentile believers (15:22-35)
4. The Second Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22): 50-51 A.D.
 - a. Conflict and new direction (15:36-16:10)
 - b. At Philippi (Part 1 and 2) (16:11-40)
 - c. At Thessalonica and Berea (17:1-15)
 - d. At Athens (17:16-34)
 - e. The completion of the Second Missionary Journey (18b-22)
5. The Third Missionary Journey (18:23-21:16): 53-56 A.D.
 - a. The entrance of Apollos (18:23-28)
 - b. At Ephesus (19:1-20)
 - c. A riot at Ephesus (19:21-41)
 - d. Ministry in Greece, Macedonia and Asia (20:1-16)
 - e. Final farewell at Ephesus (20:17-38)
 - f. To Jerusalem (21:1-16)
6. At Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-23:35): 56 A.D.
 - a. Jerusalem (21:17-36)
 - b. Paul addressed a mob (21:37-22:21)
 - c. Responses of the mob and the Sanhedrin (22:22-23:11)
 - d. A plot to kill Paul (23:12-35)
7. At Caesarea (24:1-26:32)
 - a. Paul in Caesarea before Felix (24:1-27)
 - b. Paul's appeal to Caesar (25:1-22)
 - c. Paul's defense to Agrippa (25:22-26:32)
8. Paul's journey to Rome (27:1-28:31): 59 A.D.
 - a) Paul at Sea (27:1-44)
 - b) From Malta and to Rome (28:1-16)
 - c) Paul at Rome (28:17-31): Martyrdom - 64 A.D.