

Chapter 1

Paul's Early Life & Training

A. Ancestry and Youth

1. References to Paul's ancestry and youth.
 - a. **Acts 21:39** – “But Paul said, ‘ am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city’”
 - b. **Acts 22:3** – “I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.”
 - c. **Acts 23:34** – “And when the governor had read it, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that he was from Cilicia,”
 - d. **2 Corinthians 11:22** – “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.”
 - e. **Romans 11:1** – “. . . For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.
 - f. **Philippians 2:5** – “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;
2. A man with two names.
 - a. Jewish name was Saul.
 - b. Roman name was Paul.
4. A native of Tarsus in the province of Cilicia, just north or the island of Cyprus.
5. Paul was born in Tarsus.
 - a. It is believed that Paul was born around 3 A.D.
 - b. Circumcision admitted him to the covenant of his fathers. Deuteronomy 6:4-9
6. His father was a Roman. Therefore, he was born a Roman citizen; a freeborn citizen of Roman. **Acts 22:25-28** – “And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, ‘Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?’
26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, ‘Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.’
27 Then the commander came and said to him, ‘Tell me, are you a Roman?’ He said, ‘Yes.’
28 The commander answered, ‘With a large sum I obtained this citizenship’ And Paul said, ‘But I was born a citizen.’”
7. He was a Pharisee.

- a. By birth – He was born the son of a Pharisee. Acts 23:6; Philippians 6:4-9
- b. By belief – He subscribed to their teachings.
 1. Background of the Pharisees.
 - a. The origin of the Pharisees is uncertain.
 - b. The name “Pharisee” means “the separated one, separatists.”
 - c. Pharisees are not mentioned in the Old Testament.
 - d. Pharisees first appear during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135 B.C.) during the Intertestamental Period during the Maccabean Period.
 - e. They are mentioned dozens of times in the New Testament
 - f. Josephus says that at their zenith of popularity they numbered more than 6,000.
 - g. Strict religious group of Jews who advocated minute obedience to the Jewish law and traditions.
 - h. Very influential in the synagogues.
 - i. They formalized the religion of the Scribes and placed it into practice.
 2. Pharisees believed:
 - a. In the resurrection of the body.
 - b. In the existence of Heaven.
 - c. In the existence of Hell.
 - d. In the existence of angels and spirits.
 3. Pharisees rejected Jesus claim to be the Messiah because:
 - a. He did not follow their traditions.
 - b. He associated with notoriously wicked people.
8. He was a tentmaker by trade. Acts 18:3
 - a. The word “tentmaker” in Greek can also be used to describe a leatherworker.
 - b. A Talmudic writer wrote: “What is commanded of a father towards his son? To circumcise him, to teach him the law, to teach him a trade.”
 - c. Among the Jews it was thought that the failure to teach a son a trade was to teach him to steal.

B. Paul's Education

1. References to Paul's Education.
 - a. **Acts 22:3** – “. . . But brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God . . . “
 - b. **Acts 23:6** – “. . . I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"

- c. **Galatians 1:11-14** – “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.
 - 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.
 - 13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.
 - 14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. “
 - d. **Philippians 3:5** – “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee.”
2. All indications are that Paul received an excellent, strict education.
- a. He mother probably educated him until the age of five.
 - b. From age five he studied under his father, a Jewish Pharisee. His father would have taught him:
 - 1. The Scriptures. As a Jewish boy he would memorize Scriptures.
 - 2. Traditional writings
 - 3. Jewish history. Deuteronomy 6:20-25
 - c. Because he was reared in a Greek and Roman environment, Paul received a thorough education in:
 - 1. Greek language
 - 2. History
 - 3. Culture
 - d. At about ten years of age he was probably sent to Jerusalem to attend the rabbinical school of Gamaliel.
 - 1. Gamaliel was the most famous rabbi mentioned in the New Testament.
 - 2. The religious school of Gamaliel was mainly oral.
 - 3. The school had a bias against any book but the Scriptures.
 - 4. During a regular school session learned men met with the students and discussed the Scriptures.
 - 5. The students were encouraged to question, doubt, and even contradict the teachers.
 - e. It is probable that Saul returned to Tarsus in his mid-twenties.
 - f. It can be easily said that Paul not only became well versed in the Old Testament, but in the traditionalism of rabbinical interpretation as well.

C. Paul's Character

- 1. Paul was a man of zeal.
 - a. **Philippians 3:6** – “. . . Concerning zeal, persecuting the church . . . “
 - b. **Galatians 1:14** – “. . . Being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions

of my fathers.”

2. Paul was faithful to his beliefs. **Philippians 3:6** – “. . . Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”
3. Paul could admit his mistakes. **1 Timothy 1:12-13** – “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry,
13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”
4. Paul was conscientious. **2 Timothy 1:3** – “I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did”

D. Paul's Appearance

1. The Bible is silent as to Paul's physical appearance.
2. Judging from an uninspired second century description of him, Paul's bodily size and appearance may have been against him: “He was a man of little stature, partly bald, with crooked legs, of vigorous physique, with eyes set close together and a nose somewhat crooked.”