

THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL PART 1
ACTS 7:58.

...and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Introduction:

1. We are introduced to the man Saul, who's name was later change to Paul, in this report of the death of Stephen.
 - A. The name "Saul" in Hebrew means "desired", but in Greek can mean "demanded, lent, ditch, death."
 - B. The name "Paul" means "small, little."
2. Paul was the second greatest missionary in history, the first being, of course, Jesus.
3. What was it that made Paul completely sold out to Jesus? Why don't we see any today with that same love and zeal?

I. PAUL'S EARLY LIFE.

- A. Though of purest Hebrew blood he called himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews. **Philippians 3:5** *circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews;*
- B. Paul, like his father, was a Pharisee. **Acts 23:6** *But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"*
- C. He was born in the Gentile city of Tarsus.
- D. In Tarsus there was a celebrated school of Greek history and culture. Here he acquired the knowledge of Greek authors and philosophy literature which qualified him for dealing with learned Gentiles and appealing to their own writers.
- E. It was in Tarsus where he learned the trade of making tents of the goats' hair cloth called "cilicium" **Acts 18:3** *So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.*
- F. Jewish custom required each child, however wealthy the parents might be, to learn a trade.
- G. He possessed the Roman citizenship from birth, and when he started ministering among Gentiles, he preferred to be known by his Roman name Paul rather than by his Hebrew name Saul.
- H. His main education (probably after passing his first 12 years at Tarsus, was in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel. **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.*

II. PAUL'S LIFE AS A PHARISEE.

- A. The three elements of the world's culture had a great influence upon him.
- B. These were Roman citizenship, Greek culture, and Hebrew religion.
- C. Gamaliel's teaching included toleration but his teaching of strict pharisaic legalism produced in Saul's spirit a persecuting zeal against opponents. **Acts 8:3** *As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.;*
Philippians 3:6 *concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

III. PAUL'S IGNORANCE OF GOD.

A. But God's grace intervened in Paul's career of blind fanaticism. **1Timothy 1:12-16** *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.*

B. There is a huge difference between mistaken zeal for the law and willful striving against God's Spirit.

C. His ignorance gave him no claim on God's mercy, but put him within the range of it.

D. The positive ground of mercy is solely God's compassion. **Titus 3:5** *...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

IV. PAUL'S CONVERSION TO JESUS.

A. We have three accounts of his conversion, one by Luke (Acts 9), the others by himself (**Acts 22:26**).

B. Following the adherents of "the (Christian) way he was on his journey to Damascus with authoritative letters from the high priest empowering him to arrest and bring to Jerusalem the followers of Jesus so they could be put to death.

C. Look at Paul's account of his salvation. **Acts 22:6-9** *Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.*

D. Jesus' statement to Paul. **Acts 9:5** *And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."*

E. Saul response. **Acts 9:6** *"Lord, what do You want me to do?"*

F. Here is the unreserved surrender of himself to the Lord in four parts. **Cf. Romans 12:1-2** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

1. What (is Your will for my life).

2. Do You (the God who loves me and has given me a purpose of life).

3. Want me (I want to give You my all).

4. To do (the work you allow me to perform on Your behalf).

V. PAUL'S CALLING.

A. The Lord might act directly, but He chooses to employ people in His work.

B. Such was a man named Ananias whom He sent to Saul, after he had been three days without sight and neither eating nor drinking, in the house of Judas. **Acts 9:11** *So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.*

C. Ananias, whom Saul would have seized for prison and death, is the instrument of giving him light and life.

- D. God had prepared Ananias for his visitor by announcing the one sure mark of his conversion, "behold he is praying."
- E. Ananias had heard of him as a notorious persecutor, but obeyed the Lord's direction.

F. In **Acts 26:16-18** Paul condenses in one account, and connects with Christ's first appearing, subsequent revelations of Jesus to him as to the purpose of his call. ***But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.***

Conclusion:

1. Paul understood what he was before he came to know Jesus as his Savior. **1 Timothy 1:15** ***This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.***
2. Like all of us, Paul was born a sinner and would die a sinner unless he repented and trusted in Jesus.
3. Because Paul understood what he was, he also understood that Jesus deserved all of his life, not just a part.
4. How much, if any, have you given of your life to Jesus? or are you still "kicking against the goads"?