Saul of Tarsus

Saul of Tarsus was the most famous Jew of his day. He was also the most religious person of his day. Saul was born a Jew and a Roman citizen in the city of Tarsus. Saul was his Jewish name. Paul was his Roman name. It was his Roman name, which benefited him the most as the apostle to the Gentiles.

The Lord Jesus Christ sent him to the Gentiles and not the Jews. The other eleven apostles were sent to the Jews but Paul was sent to the Gentiles in order to evangelize and establish new local assemblies of believers throughout the Roman Empire.

Tarsus was the principal city of the Roman province of Cilicia in southeast Asia Minor, which is now Turkey (Acts 9:11; 22:3). Tarsus was located on the Tarsus River and 12 miles from the Mediterranean coast.

The earliest historical reference of Tarsus is with the Assyrians under Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) and some scholars believe that the Ionian Greeks also had connections with the city. It held great strategic importance in the ancient world because of its commanding location at the southern end of the Cilician Gates, which is the only major pass in the Taurus Range. The pass when properly defended militarily was virtually impregnable. The pass was so narrow in Alexander’s day that when he passed through with his army the pack animals had to be unloaded before they could pass through it.

In 401 B.C., Xenophon, a soldier in the Greek army and an author, records the famous retreat of the Greek army through the Cilician Gates after rebelling against Persia and its puppet king, Syennesis.

In 333 B.C., Alexander the Great came through the Cilician Gates on his way to his great victory at Issus. Alexander’s empire passed into the hands of 4 generals called the Seleucids after his death. Tarsus under the rule of the Seleucids brought an abundance of Greek culture. It rebelled against Antiochus Epiphanes in 175-164 B.C.

Antiochus Epiphanes was a notorious persecutor of Jews in Palestine because of their rebellious attitude toward Hellenistic culture, which he wanted to establish.

Tarsus embraced Hellenism and thus was not treated harshly for the rebellion. In fact, he made a major concession to the Jews in Tarsus and gave them their own quarter in the city for their toleration of Hellenistic ideas. Many Greeks and Jews arrived in the city during this period and more than likely Paul’s ancestors.

With the decline of the Greeks, Tarsus soon came under the influence of the Roman Empire with temporary incursions of Mithridates VI of Pontus and
Tigranes of Armenia before Pompey reorganized the East in 64 B.C. Many Jews at this particular time were major players in finance and commerce and were leading citizens. The Roman province of Cilicia was originally a sphere of duty rather than a territorial division, which intended first to suppress piracy and to secure the sea routes to the Levant.

Cicero occasionally resided there when he was governor in 51 B.C. The city also welcomed Gaius Julius Caesar with open arms when he visited it in 47 B.C. After the assassination of Caesar, Antony gave Tarsus the status of a free city in 42 B.C. and it was also the scene of the famous meeting between Antony and Cleopatra.

Its free city status meant that Roman citizenship was to be given to the leading citizens of the community, which of course meant many of the Jews. Paul’s ancestors at this time probably received their Roman citizenship at this particular time.

Under the Roman Emperor Augustus, Tarsus came under the influence and rule of philosophers. Augustus sent his former tutor, the Stoic philosopher Athenodorus who was himself from Tarsus, to establish a new constitution in the city and rid it of the corrupt Boethus. Athenodorus was succeeded by the Academician Nestor. Tarsus soon became important in the Roman Empire as a university city.

Tarsus was a center of Greek culture, ranking next to Athens and Alexandria. The people of Tarsus were known for the zeal for learning and philosophy surpassed only by Athens and Alexandria. Under the Athenodorus the city sponsored classes by qualified and approved lecturers. Tarsians who studied in their own city were known for completing their education abroad and then making their home in Rome or elsewhere rather than returning to Tarsus. Strabo lists many notable scholars from Tarsus (Geog. 14.5.14f) with the greatest being the apostle Paul.

Saul the Jew

In Philippians 3:5-6, the apostle Paul gives a composite character sketch of himself prior to salvation, which marked him out as the top young rising star in Judaism.

Philippians 3:4-6, “Although I myself having confidence in the flesh, if anyone of the same race (i.e., Jewish) claims to have confidence in the flesh and some claim to have confidence in the flesh, I more. With respect to circumcision: eighth day, descended from the nation of Israel, a member of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew (speaking Jew) from Hebrews (Hebrew
speaking parents), legally: a Pharisee, zealously persecuting the church, self-righteously religious: I conducted myself irreproachably!"

Philippians 3:5-6 is a pre-salvation character sketch or composite picture of the apostle Paul. He is in effect presenting his pre-salvation resume or credentials as a Jew. Paul lists seven pre-salvation credentials, which form this composite picture of himself before salvation: (1) Peritome oktaemeros (περιτομὴ ὀκταήμερος), “with respect to circumcision: eighth day.” (2) Ek genous Israel (ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ), “(descended) out from the nation of Israel.” (3) Phules Beniamin (φυλής Βενιαμίν), “a member of the tribe of Benjamin.” (4) Hebraios ex Hebraion (Ἐβραῖος Ἐβραίων), “a Hebrew (speaking Jew) from Hebrews (Hebrew-speaking parents).” (5) Kata nomon Pharisaios (κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος), “legalistically, a Pharisee (an interpreter of the Mosaic Law).” (6) Kata zelos diokon ten ekklesian (κατὰ ζῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν), “zealously persecuting the church.” (7) Kata dikaiosunen ten en nomo genomenos amemptos (κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἀμεμπτος), “self-righteously religious: I conducted myself irreproachably.”

The apostle Paul goes to the trouble of stating his pre-salvation background in order to refute the Judaizers claims that the means of serving God or spirituality is based upon racial background and strictly adhering to oral traditions of the Pharisees, which were simply their own interpretations of the Law. He is in effect saying, “if you want to talk about racial background and conduct in relation to the oral traditions of the elders and the Mosaic Law, I am superior to all of the Judaizers, and this is my resume to prove it!”

Philippians 3:4-6 is antithetical with Philippians 3:3 since before salvation Paul served God through strict adherence to the oral traditions of the Pharisees rather than through the filling of the Spirit. Before salvation as a Pharisee he placed his confidence in the old sin nature rather than the new nature, i.e., the Christ-nature. He was religious and legalistic rather than grace oriented and spiritual.

The 1st four pre-salvation distinctions were inherited by Paul through physical birth: (1) Peritome oktaemeros (περιτομὴ ὀκταήμερος), “with respect to circumcision: eighth day.” (2) Ek genous Israel (ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ), “(descended) out from the nation of Israel.” (3) Phules Beniamin (φυλής Βενιαμίν), “a member of the tribe of Benjamin.” (4) Hebraios ex Hebraion (Ἐβραῖος Ἐβραίων), “a Hebrew (speaking Jew) from Hebrews (Hebrew-speaking parents).”

The last three were the result of his own actions. The apostle Paul goes to the trouble of stating his pre-salvation background not in order to boast, but in order to refute the Judaizers claims that the means of serving God is based upon racial
background and strictly adhering to oral traditions of the Pharisees, which were simply their own interpretations of the Law. He is in effect saying, “if you want to talk about racial background and conduct in relation to the oral traditions of the elders and the Mosaic Law, I am superior to all of the Judaizers, and this is my resume to prove it!”

Paul is stating his superiority over the Judaizers in terms of birth and conduct but then here in Philippians 3:7 he gives us his post-salvation assessment regarding his pre-salvation distinctions.

Before salvation he regarded these distinctions as kerde, “assets,” but then after salvation he adopts an antithetical attitude towards them and concludes that they are zemian, “a liability.”

Paul’s pre-salvation credentials or characteristics follow a definite progression and are arranged in ascending scale: The due performance of the rite of circumcision shows that his parents were neither heathens nor sons of Ishmael. But as this is consistent with their being proselytes, he specifies his direct Israelite descent.

Again, his ancestors might have been descendants of Israel and yet have belonged to a renegade tribe; therefore to guard against this accusation he states that he is a member of the faithful tribe of Benjamin. Many of those, whose descent was unimpeachable and who inherited the faith of the Mosaic Law, yet as living among heathens adopted the language and conformed to the customs of the people around them, yet this was not the case with forefathers of Saul of Tarsus for they were all Hebrews from 1st to last. He also was a Pharisee, a leader of the people, an interpreter of the Mosaic Law, strictly adhering to the oral traditions of the Pharisees, which are now embodied in the Mishna.

If that wasn’t enough he ignorantly assumed that zealously persecuted “the Way,” or those who followed Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, was a means of serving God.

Lastly, he was thoroughly steeped in the traditions of men, self-righteously, legalistic, religious, a man-pleaser, a hypocrite, conducting himself irreproachably in the sight of men.

Philippians 3:4 states that Paul was the most religious person of his day since he states that he was superior to all those who belong to the Judaizers who were in fact the most religious people of their day.

Religion is antithetical to Biblical Christianity since the former seeks to gain the approbation of God by a system of ascetic taboos, rules and regulations not found in the canon of Scripture. Biblical Christianity acknowledges the fact that in order to have a relationship with God it must be through the Person and Work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and no one else.
The Judaizers based their relationship with God upon their racial background and that in order to maintain that relationship one must strictly adhere to the many traditions and laws of the Pharisees. Biblical Christianity maintains that a relationship with God is achieved through faith alone in Christ alone and that once saved always saved. It also maintains that one’s relationship with God is maintained by God Himself through the Person and Work of Christ, Who is the Great Divine Provision for all mankind.

Philippians 3:3 states that spirituality is based upon obedience to the Holy Spirit who speaks to the believer by means of the teaching of the Word of God. It states that the operational omnipotence of the Holy Spirit is the means of spirituality, which enables him to live the Christ-life or function in the new nature.

The new nature is the same spiritual life that the impeccable humanity of Christ in hypostatic union utilized during His Advent and that has been graciously passed down to the believer living in the dispensation of grace, the church age.

Therefore, Philippians 3:4 presents a stark contrast with Philippians 3:3. It presents 2 opposing groups: (1) Those who choose to live independent from God. (2) Those who choose to be dependent upon God.

Philippians 3:3 presents to us a group of individuals who rely upon the power of the Spirit and the new nature or new man, the Christ-life and Philippians 3:4 presents to us a group of individuals who rely upon the power of the old sin nature or the old Adamic nature.

The apostle Paul identifies himself with the Judaizers in the concessive clause and acknowledges the fact that before salvation he was superior to his Jewish contemporaries in relation to racial background and conduct according to the traditions of the elders, the Pharisees. He does this in order to defeat their erroneously claims that in order to serve God one must be a Jew by race and adhere to the many oral traditions and laws of the Pharisees. He is setting the Judaizers up here in verse 4 and will present in verses 5 and 6, evidence that in fact he far exceeded his Jewish contemporaries in terms of racial background and conduct in relation to the oral traditions and laws of the Pharisees.

Paul is saying in effect, “if you want to base serving God upon racial background and conduct in relation to the traditions of the elders, I far exceeded all of you and now I’m telling you that this is nothing but piles of human excrement (cf. Phlp. 3:8).” He is identifying with the Judaizers here in order to defeat their claims that serving God is based upon being a Jew by race and adherence to the many oral traditions of the Jewish elders passed down through several 100 years.

Paul is entering into retrospective exposition here in Philippians 3:4 and he will further expand upon his claim that he far exceeded his Jewish contemporaries in
terms of racial background and adherence to the oral traditions of the elders in verses 5 and 6.

The apostle Paul gave the Philippians in verse 2 a 3-fold warning to be in a constant state of readiness or preparedness to respond appropriately to the Judaizers and gives the reason in verse 4 why they should be avoided since they do not depend upon God’s power but their own human power to serve God. God cannot only accept that which is His or that which is perfect; therefore He can only accept the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit and the Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Here in verse 4 Paul acknowledges the fact that before salvation he was himself a Judaizer, therefore he knows first hand the dangers of being involved with this group of religious, self-righteous, arrogant, hypocritical individuals. He is telling the Philippians that he knows through experience all about this group whose viewpoint originates from the cosmic system of Satan.

The apostle doesn’t want them to become entangled in their system of thinking. Paul commands the Philippians to avoid the lie in verse 2 because they live in the truth, which is expressed in verse 3. Here he enters into retrospective exposition identifying and acknowledging the fact that before salvation he was a member of the Judaizers and he identifies with them here in order to defeat their arrogant claims that serving God is based upon a Jewish racial background and strict adherence to the many traditions of the elders, e.g., circumcision.

Philippians 3:5 contains the 1st 5 pre-salvation credentials of the apostle Paul, aka, Saul of Tarsus: (1) Peritome oktaemeros (περιτομή ὀκταήμερος), “with respect to circumcision: eighth day.” (2) Ek genous Israel (ἐκ γένους ᾿Ισραὴλ), “(descended) out from the nation of Israel.” (3) Phules Beniamin (φυλῆς Βενιαμίν), “a member of the tribe of Benjamin.” (4) Hebraios ex Hebraion (Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων), “a Hebrew (speaking Jew) from Hebrews (Hebrew-speaking parents).” (5) Kata nomon Pharisaios (κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος), “legalistically, a Pharisee (an interpreter of the Mosaic Law).”

These pre-salvation credentials follow a definite progression and are arranged in ascending scale. Paul employs the figure of asyndeton in order that the Philippians will carefully consider each of these five pre-salvation credentials, which give a composite picture of the apostle before salvation.

The 1st credential mentioned is “with respect to circumcision: eighth day” demonstrates that Paul’s parents were neither proselytes nor descendants of Ishmael. It refers to the literal ritual surgical procedure performed on a Jewish boy 8 days after his birth and signifies that Paul and his parents were members of the new racial species called the Jews.
The 2\textsuperscript{nd} credential mentioned is “\textit{(descended) out from the nation of Israel}” demonstrates that Paul was a member of the 1\textsuperscript{st} client nation to God, Israel. It emphasizes that he is a direct descendant of Jacob who was later given a new name by the Lord, “Israel.” The phrase is a title of nobility and denotes Paul’s theocratic privileges as a citizen of the 1\textsuperscript{st} client nation to God.

The 3\textsuperscript{rd} credential mentioned “\textbf{a member of the tribe of Benjamin}” denotes the fact that Paul was a member of the one of the greatest warrior tribes from the nation of Israel. It also produced the 1\textsuperscript{st} king of Israel, “Saul”.

Benjamin was the 1\textsuperscript{st} tribe to oppose the Philistines. It produced the 1\textsuperscript{st} of the judges or dictators that emerged in Israel after the Canaan invasion whose name was Ehud. This tribe joined with Judah after the death of Solomon and the Exile.

The 4\textsuperscript{th} credential mentioned “\textbf{a Hebrew (speaking Jew) from Hebrews (Hebrew-speaking parents)}” denotes the fact that Paul was an orthodox Jew. It denotes the fact that he spoke Hebrew and distinction to his fellow countrymen who were Hellenized and strictly spoke Greek. The phrase distinguishes Paul from his fellow Hellenized countryman and also denotes that his parents spoke Hebrew as well.

The 5\textsuperscript{th} pre-salvation credential mentioned “\textbf{legalistically, a Pharisee}” denotes the fact that Paul was an interpreter of the Mosaic Law.

Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines the noun legalism, “\textit{strict adherence, or the principle of strict adherence, to law or prescription, especially to the letter rather than the spirit}.”

Paul’s pre-salvation experience as a Pharisee was one of strict adherence to the letter of the Law! He was \textit{Parash} or a Rabbi and thus a mark of distinction among his countrymen.

Philippians 3:5-6 is a pre-salvation composite picture of the apostle Paul or Saul of Tarsus, as he was known among his fellow Jewish countryman. Paul presents this composite picture in order to point out to the Philippians that not only did he share the same background with his opponents the Judaizers, “the mutilation,” but also it was in fact superior in every respect. It emphasizes the fact before his salvation Paul was a Jewish patriot, an orthodox Jew.

Paul’s background or resume was superior to his opponents the Judaizers in every respect, meeting all the criteria of a national celebrity or hero. The Judaizers could not attack his background since it was superior to theirs. His resume refutes the accusations made by the Judaizers that he was a traitor and not a patriot!

So Philippians 3:5 lists the 1\textsuperscript{st} five of these pre-salvation credentials of the apostle Paul and here in Philippians he lists the last 2.

Before salvation Paul performed a meritorious, legalistic system of works, which he presumptuously thought gained the approbation of God and after
salvation he functioned according to a non-meritorious system of perception called faith. This meritorious system of works is defined as legalism, whereas the non-meritorious system of perception faith is in accordance with grace.

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Paul’s pre-salvation experience as a Pharisee was that of strict adherence to the letter of the Law rather than the spirit of the Law. Grace and legalism are antithetical concepts. The former gives credit to the Creator and the latter to the creature. Satan is behind creature credit and God is behind Creator credit.

Paul pursued a relationship with God through legalism because He did not know the Lord Jesus Christ Who is end of the Law for everyone who believes in Him (Rm. 10:4). He did not know the Lord Jesus Christ as His Savior; therefore, he was opened to the deception of the kingdom of darkness resulting in his zealous persecution of the church of Christ. The Law cannot justify an individual before God (Rm. 3:20-28; Gal. 2:16). It could not provide eternal salvation for men (Gal. 3:21-26). The Law could not solve the problems of the old sin nature (Rm. 8:2-3).

Faith alone in Christ alone can only justify an individual before God because only Christ has merit before God. Faith alone in Christ alone is the only means of providing salvation for all men (John 3:16, 36; Acts 4:12; 16:31; Eph. 2:8-9).

Only the new nature, the Christ-nature received at the moment of salvation can provide an alternative to functioning in the old sin nature and thus solve the problems of the latter.

The phrase *kata zelos diokon ten ekklesian*, “zealously persecuting the church” indicates before salvation Paul or Saul of Tarsus belonged to the strictest sect of the Jews, the Zealots and thus reveals his uncompromising patriotism.

Before salvation as a Pharisee, Paul thought that the means of salvation and spirituality was based upon a meritorious system of works. Paul’s pre-salvation experience was based upon this meritorious system of works was a strict adherence to the oral traditions of the Pharisees, which were the interpretations of the Law, Torah. His post-salvation experience was based upon the non-meritorious system of perception called faith. Before salvation as a Pharisee Paul pursued a relationship with God through a system of legalism, whereas after salvation he pursued it through faith in Christ (cf. Rm. 9:31-32). He ignorantly and presumptuously thought that he could serve God by zealously persecuting the church of Jesus Christ (cf. John 16:2; Rm. 10:2-5).

The legalism of the Judaizers is described in Scripture as “leaven” (Mt. 16:6, 11-12; Mk. 8:15; Lk. 12:1. Cf. 1 Co. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9). It is also described as “hypocrisy” (Mt. 23:13, 23, 25, 27; Lk. 12:1). Legalism is hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1).
Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines hypocrisy, “a pretense of having a virtuous character, moral or religious beliefs or principles, etc., that one does not possess; a pretense of having some desirable or publicly approved attitude.

The hypocrisy of the Pharisees was based upon the fact that they were men-pleasers rather than God-pleasers. They loved the approbation of men and each other. Because they were men-pleasers rather than God-pleasers they therefore, lived according to a list of oral traditions rather than the Scripture itself! God-pleasers live according to the divinely inspired Scriptures, whereas men-pleasers live according to the traditions of men.

In context the definite article *tes* plus the prepositional phrase *en nomo* denotes the fact that Paul was a religious person before salvation. This interpretation is further substantiated by the participial phrase *genomenos amemptos*, “I conducted myself irreproachably (in the eyes of men).”

Webster’s New Universal Dictionary gives the following definitions for the word adjective religious: (1) Of pertaining to, or concerned with religion (2) Imbued with or exhibiting religion; pious; devout; godly (3) Scrupulously faithful; conscientious (4) Pertaining to or connected with a monastic or religious order (5) Appropriate to religion or to sacred rites or observances

Before salvation, the apostle Paul or Saul of Tarsus as he was known among his Jewish countryman was scrupulously faithful and conscientious in adhering to the oral traditions of the Pharisees.

Theologically, religion is the antithesis to Biblical Christianity in that it is the ignorant, presumptuous, vain and arrogant attempt by man to gain the approbation of God by depending upon a legalistic, meritorious system of human works rather than the impeccable Person and Finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the ignorant, presumptuous, vain and arrogant attempt by man to gain the approbation of God through the function of the old sin nature.

Biblical Christianity and religion are antithetical concepts since the latter is man’s presumptuous, ignorant and vain attempt to gain the approbation of God through a meritorious, legalistic system of man-made oral traditions. Biblical Christianity is a totally antithetical and is based the non-meritorious decision to believe in the impeccable humanity of Christ in hypostatic union and after salvation, it states that a relationship with God is through many non-meritorious decisions.

Religion is sponsored by Satan and the kingdom of darkness and is his ace trump. It is man’s arrogant reliance upon self, whereas biblical Christianity is man’s reliance upon Who and What God is and What He has provided through the impeccable Person of Jesus Christ in hypostatic union.
In Philippians 3:6, the apostle Paul acknowledges that prior to salvation he was a violent persecutor of the church.

Philippians 3:6, “zealously persecuting the church, self-righteously religious: I conducted myself irreproachably.”

Acts 7 presents Paul as a leading in the execution of Stephen, the first martyr of the church. Acts 8 records Paul heading to Damascus Syria with authority from the Jewish leaders to persecute Christians and imprison them.

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**Roman Citizen**

Paul was the greatest Roman citizen of all time with Gaius Julius Caesar coming in 2nd. Paul’s spiritual impact made him greater than Caesar. Paul was the only apostle who was a Roman citizen thus our Lord sent him to the Gentiles.

Paul was born a Roman citizen so therefore; his father was a Roman citizen. His father probably acquired his Roman citizenship through his trade as a tentmaker.

Quite possibly his father or grandfather was granted Roman citizenship by one of the Roman generals, namely Pompey or Antony. A *skenopoioi*, “tentmaker” was very useful to a Roman general such as Pompey or Antony.

Paul’s native Cilicia fell within the province of both Pompey and Antony during the 1st Century B.C. Both these generals were invested with *imperium* by Roman law and could grant Roman citizenship to whom they desired to give it to. Thus, we can deduce that this probably was the case with Paul’s father or grandfather.

Paul as a Roman citizen had 3 names: (1) *praenomen* (first name), *nomen gentile* (family name), *cognomen* (additional name).
Only his *cognomen* Paullus is known. New Roman citizens commonly assumed their patron’s *nomen gentile* but Paul has no need to do so since he was a Roman citizenship from birth.

His Roman citizenship was quite useful in his ministry and he appeals to his rights as a Roman citizen on more than one occasion during his ministry. Because Paul was born a Roman citizen, his father would make a declaration in the appropriate record office that his child was a Roman citizen. This was called *civem Romanum esse professus est* in the Latin.

The declaration was recorded in the official register and his father would receive a copy in diptych form, which was more than likely certified by witnesses. Paul more than likely carried this declaration around with him in written form to substantiate his claims of Roman citizenship.

**The Scholar**

Paul’s excellent education in Tarsus and in Jerusalem coupled with his tremendous study habits and genius IQ made him a great scholar. He was fluent in Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek and Latin. His genius can be deduced from his tremendous vocabulary, which he displays in his epistles along with a complete command of the Greek in all its dialects.

Paul communicated in: Doric Greek, Ionic Greek, Aeolic Greek, Attic Greek, Hellenistic Greek, and the *Koine* Greek. His epistles also display Hebraicism’s and Latinism’s. He was a classical Greek scholar as witnessed to the fact that he quotes 2 minor Greek poets in Acts 17:28 and a Cretan poet in Titus 1:12.

Quoting Plato or Homer was not significant but quoting minor poets reveals a comprehensive knowledge of Greek literature. His hometown of Tarsus was known for its great universities and scholars during the period of the Roman Empire. It was a center of Greek culture and philosophy ranking next only to Athens and Alexandria.

Paul was also a Hebrew scholar. He studied alongside the greatest Rabbi in Israel in his day, Gamaliel, who taught in the famous Hillel school.

**Conversion to Christianity**

Paul’s conversion to Christianity took place on the road to Damascus. He had letters of extradition signed by the high priest and was bent on arresting Jewish Christians and taking them back for trial and punishment.

Paul thought he was serving God by persecuting Christians (1 Tim. 1:14). His plans to go to Damascus to persecute Christians were upset when he encountered
the risen Jesus (Acts 9:1-16). He was called as an apostle to the Gentiles by the
Lord Himself and not the other apostles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:16).
He knew the other apostles (Gal. 1:17) and knew Peter and John by name (Gal.
2:9). He knew our Lord’s brother, James (Gal. 1:19). He saw the risen Christ on
the road to Damascus therefore qualifying him to be an apostle.

He was blinded by the Lord for 3 days and Ananias took him into his home. Paul
recovered his sight and spent several days with the disciples in Damascus
(Acts 9:18-19). He immediately began preaching Jesus in the synagogue that He is
the Son of God (Acts 9:22).

The Jews then plotted to kill him and he had to be let down in a basket outside
the walls of the city so that the Jews would not see him leaving (Acts 9:23:25). In
Jerusalem, he tried to associate with the disciples there but they were afraid of him
because of his reputation as a violent persecutor the church (Acts 9:26). Barnabas
finally acted as a mediator and brought him to the disciples (Acts 9:27).

He did not go to the other apostles to receive instruction upon his conversion
but went to Arabia where he studied the Scriptures (Gal. 1:16-17). He received
direct revelation from the Lord Himself (Gal. 1:12).

The Christian

Paul wrote half the New Testament. He is the principle expounder in the Greek
New Testament of the mystery doctrine for the church age. He had four missionary
journeys during his ministry. He had three before his 5th trip to Jerusalem (Acts 13-
21:14), and then had another after his 1st Roman imprisonment. He was the most
well traveled man in the Roman Empire not to mention the Church.

Paul’s evangelistic ministry is responsible for numerous churches rising up
throughout the Roman Empire. Paul is greatly responsible for a great Pivot being
established in Asia or what is now known as Turkey. The great churches of Asia
such as Ephesus and Colosse along with the churches in Philippi in Macedonia
contained a tremendous Pivot of mature believers, which sustained the Roman
Empire for generations to come. He studied more than the other apostles and thus
knew the mind of Christ better than any of them (1 Cor. 15:10). He suffered more
for Christ than any of the apostles (1 Cor. 11:24-33). He was persecuted more than
any of the apostles.

He was the greatest apostle. Paul was caught up to the third heaven and saw
things that no human being has ever been privileged to see (1 Cor. 12:1-10).
Because he received such tremendous revelation from God there was a demon
assigned to him to protect him from arrogance (1 Cor. 12:7-10). The apostle who
never walked with the Lord turned out to be the greatest.
First Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14)

Paul had the greatest evangelistic ministry of any of the apostles. Paul’s partner in the early years of his ministry was with Barnabas. Their first missionary journey began in Antioch. From there they journeyed through Salamis and preached in the Jewish synagogues there along with John. They went to Paphos and had an encounter with the magician Bar-Jesus. From there they went to Perga in Pamphylia where John left them and from there they left for Pisidian Antioch.

Paul presented the gospel to the Jews in their synagogue on the Sabbath. Many of the Jews became believers at that time and eventually the whole city listened to both Barnabas and Paul communicate the Gospel.

Eventually the leading Jews of the city instigated a persecution against them and they left. They left for Iconium where many of the Jews and Gentiles believed in Christ upon hearing their Gospel message.

The city became divided over them and they consequently left that place also to travel to Derbe and Lystra to begin work there. The citizens of Lystra became enamored with Paul and Barnabas and sought to make them gods upon seeing them heal a cripple.

The Judaizers followed him there and convince the multitudes to attack Paul and they stoned him and left him for dead but he arose and the next day went to Derbe. After preaching the gospel in that city they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch to appoint pastors over the churches that they had began. They then met with the apostles in Jerusalem to settle the circumcision issue with the legalistic church in Jerusalem.

Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15-36-18:22)

Paul and Barnabas then set out once again to see how the churches they started were doing. They had a quarrel over Mark and split. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus. Paul chose Silas and traveled to the churches in Cilicia and Syria.

He returned to Derbe and Lystra and found Timothy there and took him with him. They passed through Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia and Troas. From there Paul received a vision, which bid him to go to Europe and in particular Macedonia.

He traveled to Philippi and began the great church there. Paul’s first convert there was a woman named Lydia. He cast out a demon from a young slave-girl and was tossed into prison for this deed.
While in prison, a great earthquake took place whereupon the Roman jailor and his family became converts to Christianity. He left there for nearby Thessalonica and reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue with the Scriptures.

Many joined Paul and Silas but once again a persecution arose and a riot took place. They were sent away by the Thessalonians to Berea where they were received with open arms and many believed the Gospel.

Paul had to leave there when word got to Thessalonica that he was preaching the Gospel of Christ to the Bereans. Silas and Timothy remained in Berea while Paul went on alone to Athens.

Paul gave his great sermon on Mars Hills while in Athens but very few believed. From Athens, he went on to establish the church at Corinth. He worked as a tent maker in Corinth while studying and teaching the Corinthians. When Paul and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself to the study of the Word.

The leader of the synagogue in Corinth along with his family became believers. Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and six months. He left Corinth after another persecution arose and sailed for Syria.

In Cenchrea, he took a vow and cut his hair. He then came to Ephesus but left even though they requested for him to stay. He came to Caesarea and returned to Antioch.


Paul spent some time in Antioch and then set off on his 3rd missionary journey. He passed through the Galatian and Phrygian regions strengthening the churches in those provinces. Paul returned to Ephesus and stayed there for 3 years as the Pastor.

Ephesus became the holy city and not Jerusalem because it had the greatest concentration of mature believers. He taught daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years. He also performed many miracles there to establish his apostolic authority among the Ephesians and the cities in that territory.

A great riot took place in Ephesus in theater. Paul’s ministry was taking away a considerable business from the idol makers there and they decided to run Paul out of town. He departed for Macedonia and then went on to Greece. He sailed to Philippi and onto Troas where he stayed for 7 days. From there he went to Miletus. Paul had a pastor’s conference with the Ephesian pastors. From Miletus, he went to Tyre where he was warned by God the Holy Spirit that he would suffer imprisonment at the hands of the Jews in Jerusalem.

Paul’s fourth missionary journey ended in his first Roman imprisonment, which occurred between 60-62 A.D. In Philippians 1:13 Paul reveals that he was imprisoned because he proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:12, “Now, at this particular time I want all of you to thoroughly understand royal family that my circumstances have resulted to an even greater extent in the propagation of the proclamation of the gospel.”

Philippians 1:13, “So that as a result my imprisonment because of the proclamation of the gospel of Christ has become well known throughout the entire Praetorian Guard and all the others.”

Acts 21-27 records that Paul was imprisoned because of his proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Jews in Jerusalem. There has been and continues to be a great debate among Bible students and scholars as to whether or not Paul was in the will of God by going to Jerusalem. One of the reasons for this is Acts 21:4.

Acts 21:4, “After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.” (NASU)

“Through the Spirit”: (1) Preposition dia (διὰ) (2) Genitive neuter singular definite article tou (τοῦ) (3) Genitive neuter singular form of the pneuma (πνεῦμα), which is pneumatos (πνεῦματος).

The preposition dia with the genitive can denote “agency” thus Acts 21:4 would be telling us that these disciples “through the Spirit” told Paul repeatedly not to set foot in Jerusalem.

Also, the preposition dia with the genitive can also denote “cause” thus Acts 21:4 would be telling us that the disciples repeatedly told Paul not to set foot in Jerusalem “because of” what the Spirit told them about Paul, that he would suffer. This interpretation would mean that these saints were correct in understanding that Paul would be bound in Jerusalem, but they were wrong in their conclusion that Paul should not go since they were emotional and did not want to see someone they love suffer.

In Acts 21:4, the Holy Spirit revealed only the fact of Paul’s fate, and that the conclusions drawn from this were not those which came from the Spirit, and were not the will of God for Paul but rather expressions of personal love and affection for Paul. What is happening here with Paul happened to our Lord with Peter.

Matthew 16:21, “From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”

Matthew 16:22, “Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.’”
Matthew 16:23, “But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.’”

If we compare other passages with Acts 21:4 we see that through other prophets the Holy Spirit did “not” say that Paul should not go to Jerusalem but simply that Paul would suffer if he did go there.

Acts 20:22, “And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.”

Acts 20:23, “except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.”

Acts 20:24, “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.”

The Lord commanded Paul in Acts 22:18 to get out of Jerusalem but that pertained to that particular period of his life right after he got saved and need not be interpreted as a prohibition governing the rest of his life.

While it is true Paul avoided Jerusalem, it is also true that he returned there on other occasions: (1) Famine relief (Acts 11:27-30) (2) Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:1ff). (3) 2nd Missionary Journey (Acts 18:22). It is also hard to believe that Lord would give Paul encouragement in Acts 23:11 if he were not doing what the Lord commanded him.

Acts 23:11, “But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, ‘Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.’”

Paul was given a very clear understanding of the will of God for his life, including his calling to go to Jerusalem to suffer for the sake of the gospel.

Acts 19:21, “Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’”

The Lord Jesus Christ prophesied to Paul that he would suffer for the Lord’s sake.

Acts 9:15, “But the Lord said to him (Ananias), ‘Go, for he (Paul) is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.’”

The prophecies that Paul would suffer was not to stop Paul but rather would reveal that Paul’s suffering was to be for the advancement of the gospel, and due to his obedience, not his sin. It was according to the will of God that Paul go to Jerusalem since if he didn’t go, he would never have been imprisoned and if he
never was imprisoned, he would not have been able to present the gospel to Felix, Festus, Agrippa and then finally to Caesar and his household, the Praetorian Guard and all of Rome. The disciples did not see that God’s will is accomplished through suffering.

Luke 9:23-24, “And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.’”

2 Corinthians 12:9, “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

2 Corinthians 12:10, “Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults (people testing), with distresses (thought testing), with persecutions (system testing), with difficulties (disaster testing), for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Another reason why there are many who believe Paul was out of the will of God is the fact that he took a vow, which is recorded in Acts 21:17-26.

Acts 21:17, “After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.”

Acts 21:18, “And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.”

Acts 21:19, “After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things, which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.”

Acts 21:20, “And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law.’”

Acts 21:21, “and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.”

Acts 21:22, “What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.”

Acts 21:23, “Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow.”

Acts 21:24, “take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law.”
Acts 21:25, “But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication.”

Acts 21:26, “Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.”

In 1 Corinthians 9:19-20, Paul gives us insight into why he did what he did in Acts 21. Paul was not out of fellowship by venturing into legalism but rather he was simply practicing a spiritual principle that he taught his churches.

1 Corinthians 9:19, “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.”

1 Corinthians 9:20, “To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law.”

Acts 21:21-36 records the riot that ensued when some of the Jews accused Paul of desecrating the Temple. In Acts 21:37-22, Paul is rescued from the mob by the Roman military and then presents his defense to the mob. In Acts 23 Paul gave his defense before the Sanhedrin and avoids assassination. In Acts 24 the apostle Paul gives his defense before Felix and Festus who succeeded Felix as governor. In Acts 25-26 Paul gives his defense before one of the most famous men of Paul’s time, namely, King Agrippa.

Paul Appeals to Caesar

Paul finally appealed to the Emperor before the Judean procurator Porcius Festus with the words, Kaisara epikaloumai meaning “I appeal to Caesar” (Acts 25:10-12). We know from Acts 22:28 that Paul was “born” a Roman citizen and as a Roman citizen Paul had the right of appeal. He exercised this right of appeal when he appeared before Porcius Festus who had replaced Felix in A.D. 59 as Roman procurator. Festus had inherited Paul’s case from Felix.

Festus did not find Paul guilty of any wrongdoing but in order to gain the favor of the Jews, he kept Paul in prison (Acts 24:27). Problems with the Jews in Judea prompted Nero to replace Felix with Festus in the first place. Therefore, in order to keep both Rome off his back and the Jews quiet, Festus kept Paul incarcerated even though he was innocent. If he released Paul, Festus ran the risk of agitating the Jews and inciting them to further rebellion. Rome wanted Judea quiet and so did Festus. So when Paul exercised his right of appeal as a Roman citizen, Festus was quite relieved. Festus was now free of the case once Paul appealed to the Emperor.
The Roman citizen’s right of appeal (prouocatio ad populum) to the Emperor originated back to Republican times where the will of the people was sovereign. The Romans considered the prouacatio as the palladium of the liberty of the citizen.

In 30 B.C., Octavian as Emperor was granted the right to judge on appeal. During this period the “Julian law on the public use of force” (lex Iulia de ui publica) was enacted. This law forbade any magistrate vested with imperium or potestas to kill, scourge, chain, or torture a Roman citizen. This is why the Roman commander did not dare touch Paul when Paul informed him that he was a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:28).

The word “magistrate” comes from the Latin word magistratus and denotes the governing office. The Romans used it to refer to all political officials, from the consuls on down. These magistrates possessed what is called in the Latin, potestas, meaning “authority.”

There was a further power described as imperium in addition to the potestas that every magistrate possessed. This was invested in the three highest officials in Roman government, the dictator, the consul and the praetor. This power originated and was found in the military sphere.

Imperium meant that you had absolute power as commander in chief to issue and enforce orders. This power existed with respect to the soldiers under the officials command as well as to the population in the area of military operations.

Imperium was authority to take any measure of coercion the commander saw fit to take which included corporal and capital punishment. The magistrate’s authority was unlimited. They could issue and enforce by fines any order, which in their opinion was fit to achieve their purpose up to a legally fixed limit. They could only be stopped by the veto of a colleague, a higher official, or a tribune of the plebs.

Even with the authority that he had, the magistrate was still under the authority of the populus Romanus, the Roman people. Therefore, the magistrate’s power to impose fines was from very early times in the Republic restricted by law.

A magistrate was forbidden from sentencing a Roman citizen, “in the face of an appeal” (aduersus prouocationem), or preventing him from going to Rome to issue his appeal there within a fixed time. He could suffer corporal or capital punishment himself for scourging a Roman citizen.

The New Bible Dictionary quotes A. H. M. Jones in his Studies in Roman Government and Law concerning this law: Mr. Jones writes, “The Julian law on the public use of force forbade any magistrate with imperium or potestas to kill, scourge, chain or torture a Roman citizen, or to sentence him (aduersus proucationem) in the face of appeal, or prevent him from going to Rome to lodge his appeal there within a fixed time. A Roman citizen anywhere in the empire was
protected against summary magisterial punishment (*coercitio*), although the provincial magistrate might deal with cases which involved a plain breach of established statute law which was not the case with Paul.”

Paul’s case quite obviously was not a plain breach of established statute law but was in fact related to the Jews and their law. Paul was in fact being accused of profaning the Jewish temple by bringing a Gentile into the holy place (Acts 21:28). So therefore, Luke’s biblical account in Acts of Paul’s appeal as a Roman citizen to the Emperor is a historically accurate one.

We know this to be the case since the account given by Luke concerning Paul’s appeal matches up with what we know about Roman jurisprudence in the 1st century.

So Paul’s appeal to Caesar therefore brought him to Rome in A.D. 61. Luke tells us in *Acts 28:30-31*, “he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”

Paul was not in a dungeon at this time and was specifically not imprisoned in the infamous Mamertime dungeon. He was not hindered from communicating the Gospel or mystery doctrine. He could receive visitors and had his own rented quarters according to Acts 28:30-31. Paul was allowed to live by himself with a Roman soldier (Acts 28:16). He was chained to a Romans soldier according to Ephesians 6:19-20. In fact, he was living quite comfortably in Rome for two years while in the custody of Burrus the equestrian politician who was head of the Praetorian Guard.

Burrus was one of the most famous men in Rome. Sextus Afranius Burrus was the Prefect of the Praetorian Guard during the reigns of Claudius and Nero. Burrus was an important advisor and key figure in Nero’s reign.

An inscription claims that he came from Vasio in Gaul. He had a tremendous military career as he served as tribune, and then as procurator for the empress Livia and later for Tiberius and Claudius. He met Agrippina the Younger through Claudius.

Livia found him to be a trusted advisor and in 51 A.D. she recommended him as sole prefect of the Guard. The prefect would perform Agrippina’s interests, which were to put her adopted son Nero on the throne as Claudius’s heir over her own son Britannicus.

In 54 A.D., Claudius died and Burrus presented Nero to the cohorts of the Praetorians. Burrus became Nero’s advisor offering him wise counsel along with the philosopher Seneca. The two men preserved and protected the Empire from Nero’s failures as a leader. They also managed to break Agrippina’s hold on her son.
In 59 A.D., Nero murdered Agrippina. From that point on, Burrus and Seneca’s influence on Nero faded. Burrus was accused of plotting to overthrow Nero in 55 A.D.

In 62 A.D., he tried to dissuade Nero from divorcing Octavia. He became ill probably poisoned by Nero in 62 A.D. He was a man with character and integrity, something that Nero lacked.

Tacitus writes that Burrus was an officer of high reputation, and he was generally considered to be an excellent soldier and a brilliant administrator and an honorable man.

Dio writes that once when Nero asked him a second time for his opinions, Burrus responded: “When once I have spoken, do not ask me again.”

This same Burrus put Paul up in the fine accommodations of the Praetorian Camp. The Praetorian Guard was always garrisoned in Rome, although part of it would have provisionally accompanied the Emperor abroad.

Several Greek inscriptions use the word “praetorian” in a personal sense to designate the Praetorian Guard of the Emperor in Rome. The ancient Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius refer to the Praetorian Guard as being the Emperor’s personal military escort.

The Jewish historian Josephus refers to the Praetorian Guard as the “Emperor’s guards,” and the “purest part of the army” (Ant. 19.3.1). We also know from internal evidence that Paul wrote from Rome while in the Praetorian Camp.

Philippians 1:13 states that the whole Praetorian Guard knew of the reason behind Paul’s imprisonment and that the gospel had enjoyed great progress in Rome. The Praetorian Guard itself had to be where the Emperor was, and for the days of Paul this implies nothing but Rome.

Other internal evidence is found in Philippians 4:22 in which Paul mentions “Caesar’s household.” This is a reference to Nero’s court, which served the Emperor and his family. So therefore, we can conclude that in A.D. 62 Paul wrote Philippians from Rome while awaiting his trial before Nero in the pleasant accommodations of the Praetorian Camp.

Paul, the Overcomer (Acts 23:11-28:31)

During these two years of unjust treatment at the hands of Felix, Paul was advancing as a believer and the gospel. Paul went through system testing under the unjust treatment of the Roman legal system. He went through people testing because of his encounters with Felix and the antagonistic Pharisees who wanted him put to death. He went through the thought testing and did not become bitter or enter into self-pity because of his adverse circumstances. He also suffered disaster
testing when he went through the shipwreck on the island of Malta. He passed all of these tests, which were for his own spiritual advancement and the advancement of the gospel.

The Lord turned the curse of his imprisonment into a tremendous blessing. Paul did not become bitter or enter into self-pity, nor did he get discouraged about his circumstances for he knew that God had a plan for his life. Felix was recalled by Nero and was replaced by Festus.

Paul presented his case to Festus and also witnessed to 2 of the most famous people in Paul’s day, Bernice and Agrippa (Acts 25). He appealed to Caesar under Festus and was granted his appeal. Paul was sent to Rome where on the way he suffered a shipwreck and a snakebite in 60 A.D. (Acts 27). He arrived in Rome and stayed there for 2 years under house arrest awaiting his trial before Nero.

From 60-62 A.D. he was imprisoned in the Praetorian camp as a prisoner of Burrus, one of the most famous men in Rome in Paul’s day. During this Roman imprisonment, he wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, which contain the delineation of the mystery doctrines for the church age. He was not suffering in the infamous Mamertime prison but was in the excellent accommodations of the Praetorian Camp under the Brigade Commander, Burrus (Acts 28:30-31).

For two years in the Praetorian Camp he had his own rented quarters and was able to receive visitors and to study and teach mystery doctrine. Paul is released in 62 A.D. and later goes on to Spain before he is incarcerated again and beheaded under Nero in 68 A.D during his second Roman imprisonment.

Paul was a spiritually mature individual during his trials of Acts 21-28 and his first Roman imprisonment. A spiritually mature believer is defined as a member of the royal family of God who executes the plan of God by enduring undeserved suffering. He is an invisible hero who is having an invisible impact on human history and is glorifying God to the maximum in the rebuttal phase of Satan’s appeal trial. He has passed people testing, thought testing, system testing and disaster testing on the road to spiritual maturity. He equates time with eternity, adversity with prosperity (Phlp. 4:10-13). He was not threatened by his circumstances. He suffered for blessing. He dealt in objective reality (Bible Doctrine) and not subjective reality (his circumstances). He had a strong personal sense of destiny (Phil. 1:25). He glorified God in His body (Phil. 1:20-21).

As he was awaited his execution during his second Roman imprisonment in 68 A.D., Paul expressed to his protégé Timothy his joy that he would be rewarded by the Lord Jesus Christ for his faithfulness.

2 Timothy 4:6-8, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have
finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

So we have seen that Paul began a religious, self-righteous, murderous hypocrite who murdered and persecuted Christians. Yet, we see that he died a champion of Christianity and in fact became the greatest Christian who ever lived and suffered more than any other for his faith in Christ. Paul, formerly Saul of Tarsus, therefore stands as the greatest trophy of God’s grace!

1 Corinthians 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”