

## Paul

My name is Paul. I was born Saul to a Greek father and Jewish mother. That made me both ethnically Jewish and a Roman citizen. I did not have any idea of how important that would be but God did.

I was a serious child and studied at the synagogues to learn the Jewish law. I was a disciple of one of the greatest teachers of our time, Gamaliel. With a zeal usually associated with chariot races or gladiator's combat, I determined to be the most righteous person in the world. I now see the pride at the root of it but at the time was convinced that becoming a "Pharisee of the Pharisees" was the proper way to honor God.

So single-minded was I that when the sect of Jesus began to gain in popularity, it never crossed my mind that they might be right and I might be misguided. I used my considerable energy, influence and training to plot the elimination of this threat to everything sacred.

When I later wrote that I was the "chief of sinners," some interpreted it as false humility or rhetorical hyperbole. Yet it is the bald-faced truth because in my blindness I persecuted and even killed those who spoke and lived the truth that I had not yet apprehended.

The resurrected Jesus got my attention, however, on the road to Damascus. I was struck blind, heard the Divine voice and was instructed to go and ask for prayer from a humble believer in Jesus. After that, the Lord showed me things that had been obvious but were veiled to my spiritually blind eyes and which my proud heart would not even consider though the proof was obvious.

The Scriptures were opened to me as never before. Abraham and all the patriarchs were unworthy by human standards – their lives revealed in gruesome detail by Moses. Yet they were justified in the sight of God by faith. And their faith was ultimately in the Messiah whom they never saw with their human eyes, **and now He had come.**

I turned around, quicker than any charioteer and began going full speed in the opposite direction – the right direction. The church in Antioch, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, set me and Barnabas apart for evangelism of the Gentiles. Of course, the believers had trouble accepting me, thinking this to be an elaborate plot, but I persisted.

It was never easy and as my good friend Luke recorded, there were constant challenges and setbacks. But having seen the light, I would never turn away from it. When Peter, companion of Jesus, wrote that my letters were "Scripture" I was

astonished. Yet, by preparing me intellectually and spiritually, especially through suffering, the Holy Spirit did indeed make sure that for those documents, the words of Paul were also the exact words of God.

Acts 7 – 9, 13 - 28; 2 Peter 3:15-16