



Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

Advanced Study 009: Character Study 4: Paul

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Read Acts 22:3-15

Introduction. The Lord told Ananias that Saul (so named at that juncture) was His “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15); this said at a time when Saul was passionately engaged in persecuting the Church. Clearly the Lord saw a potential in Saul that was not apparent to Ananias, nor indeed to other Christians of the time. The aim of this study is to probe why Paul was chosen by God and prepared for his calling; and perhaps gain some insights as to how God has chosen and prepared, or is preparing you, for your calling.

1. His Background. Acts 22 recounts Paul’s address to a hostile crowd in Jerusalem, in which he tells something about his background. Consider or find out about the following (using a Bible dictionary or commentary) and assess how each circumstance might have shaped Paul’s life for his ministry as an apostle/missionary to the Gentiles? (You can relate these to various situations and actions of Paul that you know about from the Book of Acts and Paul’s letters.)

- Brought up in the Greek city of Tarsus, “No mean city” (21:39).
- Born a Jew.
- Taught by Gamaliel (Can you relate this to Gal 1:14?).
- Became a Pharisee (23:6).
- A Roman citizen.

2. His Conversion. Paul’s conversion experience on the road to Damascus was unusual to say the least. Why do you think the Lord spoke to him in such a fashion, and how might this have influenced his future ministry?

3. The Silent Years. What happened to Paul in Tarsus between his conversion and the start of his apostolic mission (Acts 9:30 & 11:25 – thought to be about 10 years) is not revealed. What do you think Paul might have been doing during this time? What might Barnabas have recognised in Paul that prompted him to bring Paul to Antioch?

4. Meeting the Leading Apostles. In Gal 2:1-10, Paul recounts a discussion with the leading apostles in which he checks the validity of the Gospel as he had been preaching it to the Gentiles, and to seek their approval. What (at the time) might have been controversial about what he was preaching?

Self-examination: Consider your own background. How have these situations and experiences shaped *your* life for what you are doing, have been doing or hope to do for the Lord?

For Further Thought and Study: Read about Paul in a Bible Dictionary or similar. Can you discern anything about his personality that made him a fit “vessel” for his calling?