

## Paul Means The Little One

What do we know of Paul before His conversion? Paul says of himself in Acts 22:3, “I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and* taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.” He proceeds in Philippians 3:5 “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee.” He was born a Roman citizen according to Acts 22:25 – 28. According to Galatians 1:14 He “...profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.” He was Present at Stephen’s death and consenting of it according to Acts 7:58 and 8:1.

After this He persecuted the church as we read in Acts 8:3 and 22:4 and 5:

Act 8:3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

Act 22:4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

Act 22:5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

Paul’s original name was Saul (Acts 13:9). His parents gave him this name because they hoped he would be as great as King Saul (Saul means desired). After Paul conversion (Acts 9) Saul changed his name to Paul, which means little one. This was to contrast his name in his life without Christ. After Christ he no longer pursued greatness, but was content to consider Christ as the great One and he, Paul, was a small one compared to Christ. Indeed, He called himself the least of the Apostles and all saints (1Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8), the chief of sinners (1Timothy 1:15), and a wretched man (Romans 7:24).

This is very paradoxical, as the things of God often are. The little one and least of all of the Apostles can be considered from our human our perspective as the greatest apostle of all. He was the evangelist. He was also a very successful church planter. Also, Paul was the most prolific letter writer.

How did Paul do it? We could argue that technically he did not. It was the Holy Spirit through him that accomplished all these things. Paul completely gave himself to the Holy Spirit’s control. He was a man of prayer. There are 32 references of prayer in Paul’s epistles. The Bible says Paul was full of the Spirit (Acts 13:9). Elsewhere Paul talks about following the directions of the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6).

Many want to be like Paul, but are unwilling to yield as Paul. Many want to plant churches, but are unwilling follow the Holy Spirit’s direction. Many want to preach and baptize, but are unwilling to let the Spirit speak through them. Many complain that the tithes and offerings are low; Paul became a tent maker to not burden the brethren (Acts 18:3). The question is which group do we belong to? Is it the group that as Paul lives by faith or the other that lives by works?