



# TEEN TREE OF LIFE THE APOSTLE PAUL

Part 1

December 31, 2017

**BEFORE we begin, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, take a moment to name your sins to God the Father. This will allow you to be filled with the power of The Holy Spirit as you read this booklet (EPH 5:18 & 1JO 1:9). IF YOU HAVE never believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have that opportunity right now. Simply tell God the Father that you are believing on His Son Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. If you make that decision, you are now a believer and will always be a child of God! When you die, you will spend eternity with Him forever in heaven! (JOH 3:16 & ACT 16:31).**

We are about to study the life of one of the greatest men who ever lived. He was born as Saul of Tarsus: **“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.” (ACTS 22:3)** The name Saul means, “asked for” which is an interesting name for him! He was born to Jewish parents in the city of Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, a Roman province in southeast Asia Minor. He was the son of a Pharisee and became a Pharisee himself as we read in **ACTS 23:6: But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, “Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!”**

In the book of Philippians, he states that he **“was a Hebrew of Hebrews and from the tribe of Benjamin.”** Scripture also tells us Paul had a sister who had a son: **But the son of Paul’s sister heard of their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul. (ACTS 23:16)** Saul’s other relatives are mentioned in **ROM 16:7: Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.**

At a young age, he went to Jerusalem and studied at one of the great seminaries of his day and was taught by the well-known Rabbi Gamaliel (See **ACTS 22:3** above). Paul did extremely well in his studies as we learn in **GAL 1:14: and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.**

Paul knew a great deal about Greek culture and their way of thinking. Because he had had a Greek education, he was also very familiar with many Greek sayings from

both classical and contemporary writers. Paul had also been taught the trade of tent-making as a youth: **After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, 3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers. (ACTS 18:1-3)** He supported himself during his missionary journeys as a tentmaker.

Paul was a Roman citizen, being Roman born: **But when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?" When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and told him, saying, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman." The commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" And he said, "Yes." The commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born a citizen." Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains. (ACTS 22:25-29)**

Paul's zeal as a religious Jew led him to eagerly persecute the early church and admitted to it in **GAL 1:13: For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.** In his persecution against male and female Christians, he traveled with letters of arrest from the high priest, from city to city, to destroy the church of Jesus Christ. He said this in his own words: **And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. (ACTS 26:10-11)**

It was on one of these missions of persecution, that Saul was converted to true faith while on the road to Damascus: **While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'** (ACTS 26:12-18)

Our Lord knew that Paul was uniquely qualified to be the one chosen to carry the message of the Gospel to the Gentiles, as Paul could easily say: **"I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some."** (1 COR 9:22)

So, Paul admittedly, energetically and consistently persecuted the church of Jesus Christ. But one day, while on the road to Damascus, Paul had an encounter with the Glorified, Resurrected Christ! As you can imagine, this dramatically changed his life. He had denied the Christian claim that Jesus was The Messiah, The Son of God. Also, he did not believe that Christ had risen from the dead as Stephen had proclaimed when he was being stoned to death in **ACTS 7:56: "Behold, I see the heavens opened up, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."** But when The Lord spoke to Saul on that road in Damascus, he knew that Stephen had been right and that he had been wrong. Jesus was The Messiah, He was alive, and He was the Son of God! Soon after that, in the synagogues of Damascus, he proclaimed Christ as Savior!

But Paul did not go out right away to evangelize the early church. It was many years after his conversion that He began his full ministry: ***But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."*** (GAL 1:16-23)

He spent three years in Arabia during which time, he was personally taught by Our Lord. Then, he returned to Damascus and he began to preach the gospel.

Then according to **GAL 1:18**, he went to Jerusalem, because he was being persecuted, and stayed there for fifteen days, before persecution there chased him away. Look at **ACTS 9:20-30: ...and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."** ***All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ. When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket. When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death. But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.***

{to be continued}