



## A Portrait of Paul

August 19, 2021

**Dear Heavenly Father, the Apostle Paul said, “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.”** (2 Timothy 3:1f) We are there. Our hearts break for our brothers and sisters around the world, but we are one *kedoshim*, one family in You. Although imprisoned at the end of his life, Paul said, **“but the word of God is not imprisoned.”** (2 Timothy 2:8) There is a glorious picture of lights shining up from the globe as the Gospel of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah goes forth from the plains, the mountains, the prisons, the suffering, and the pain. The Lord reigns! Adonai wins!

Thank You Great God and Lover of our souls for the precious saints who have gone before us and fought the good fight! Strengthen us to be like them, full of the Spirit and Joy! They rejoiced in their suffering. May we do the same.

## Introduction

I am fascinated by Paul’s life! I am in awe of his perseverance, passion, initiative, love, and willingness to suffer for the Gospel, all driven by the Holy Spirit within him! He wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament and influenced over half of it.

Paul had been highly trained and educated in the Torah (the first five books), the Writings, and the Prophets. His foundation had been firm – firm enough to think he was serving God by imprisoning and killing Christians. Then, suddenly in a moment at the sound of Yeshua’s voice and the blinding of the light on the road to Damascus, he put aside everything he had always believed and trusted to listen to the Holy Spirit’s revelation! Can you imagine him starting from scratch – re-reading the scrolls, scrutinizing them in his hungry pursuit of Messiah?!

Since God called Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, he would be astounded by the joy to receive the revelation... the answers to questions, such as: What place does the Law have now? How do I speak to people who know nothing about the Law and God? How is this Good News explained to the Jews so ingrained the Law? Paul knew that just as *he* could not see without God’s revelation, the people, too, would need the Spirit of the Living Lord to receive his message.

**...but we preach Messiah crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Messiah the power of God and the wisdom of God.**  
(1 Corinthians 1:23-24)

The detailed, accurate understanding of the Gospel conveyed in Paul’s Epistles is the fruit of the years he spent away from the other Apostles. Being fully assured of the Truth, he answered to no one, often correcting the other disciples. His teaching pierced into the atmosphere with the pure clarity of the two-edged sword of the Word of God. (Hebrews 4:12)

I am most amazed when I survey the chronology of Paul’s journey just after his conversion and before his missionary journeys, how he **“went away”** for years without consulting anyone who knew Yeshua.

## A Chronology of Paul's Journey

- After the resurrection of Yeshua, as Paul (Saul) journeyed toward Damascus, a light from heaven shone around him, Yeshua spoke to him, and he was blinded. (Galatians 1, Acts 9, 22, 26)
- **Damascus – 3 days.** He was blind for three days in Damascus and neither ate nor drank. God sent Ananias to lay hands on him to receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- **Arabia – at least 3 years.** Paul “did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor go up to Jerusalem to those who were Apostles before him, but he went away to Arabia.” (Galatians 1:16b-17) This was mostly likely to the surrounding desert. We don't know how far into Arabia he went.
- **Damascus – 3 years.** He returned to Damascus for three years and preached in the synagogues. He left because of death threats.
- **Jerusalem – 15 days.** Then, he went to Jerusalem and stayed with Peter for 15 days. During this time, he only saw Peter and James, the Lord's brother. (Galatians 1:18-19)
- **The regions of Syria and Cilicia – 14 years.** The city of Tarsus is in Cilicia. Paul came here but left because of threats. (Galatians 1:21-2:1)
- **Jerusalem.** He went to Jerusalem with Barnabus and Titus because of a revelation. Because of death threats, the brethren brought him back to the coast to Tarsus. (Galatians. 2:1-2, Acts 9:27; 11:25-26)

## Paul lived in three worlds that shaped him perfectly for his calling.

- **Paul was Jewish**
  - Paul was raised in a strict Jewish home in Jerusalem. He was “circumcised the eighth day of the nation of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness in the Law, found blameless.” (Phil. 3:5,6)
  - Paul said, “I am a Jewish man, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, trained strictly according to the Torah of our fathers.” (Acts 22:3) Paul had to have a complete knowledge of the Old Testament to teach Yeshua as its fulfillment.
  - Paul said, “I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.” (Galatians 1:14) He viewed himself as God's agent to cleanse God's people. Violence was acceptable. (Philippians 3:6)
  - Although Paul was taught by Gamaliel (Hillel), he followed Shammai who believed in:  
*Monotheism* – one true God; *Election* – Israel is the one people of the one true God; and *One Future* – for the entire world – the one true God will reveal Himself; defeat evil (throw off Roman rule, rebuild the temple); and rescue and vindicate His people.
- **Paul was Greek**
  - Paul was born in the city of Tarsus in the region of Cilicia. Since he was in Jerusalem as a young boy, he may have learned most of his Greek after his conversion when he withdrew to Tarsus.
  - Tarsus was the great seaport of the northeastern Mediterranean, a town entrenched in Stoicism (an ancient Greek philosophy that taught that virtue is based on knowledge). It would become necessary for Paul to combat this philosophy.
- **Paul was Roman**
  - Paul's fathers acquired Roman citizenship, which Paul used twice to his benefit. This citizenship could be acquired by being born a citizen; or by earning it in battle; or by buying it. Acts 22:25 tells us that Paul was born a citizen. Therefore, he was free to travel (and preach) throughout the empire and to be protected by the Roman army.

## A Portrait of Paul from 1 and 2 Corinthians

- **Paul said he was:**
  - A tutor and a father through the Gospel
  - An apostle by the will of God
  - A preacher from the power of God
  - A wise master builder
  - A steward of God’s mysteries
  - An ambassador
  - Trustworthy
  - A judge of those inside the church
- **Paul:**
  - Did everything for the sake of the gospel.
  - Ran with aim.
  - Said, “Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.”
  - Labored more than all of them by God’s grace.
  - Died daily.
  - Had the testimony of his conscience that he conducted himself in holiness and godly sincerity.
  - Was bold in speech for the gospel.
  - Commended himself to everyone’s conscience.
  - Was controlled by the love of Christ, was pure, patient, kind, and genuine in love.
  - Wronged no one, corrupted no one, took advantage of no one.
  - Was overflowing with joy and honorable.
  - Took every thought captive to Christ.
  - Had deeds that matched his profession.
  - Never asked for money.
  - Was caught up into the third heaven and saw surpassing great revelations.
  - Performed signs, wonders, and miracles.
- **Paul’s Adversity. He was:**
  - unskilled in speech.
  - in weakness, fear, and much trembling when he came to the Corinthians.
  - a spectacle to the world, a fool for Christ, without honor.
  - hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated, homeless, reviled, persecuted, slandered, scum, and the dregs of all things.
  - brave. He fought with wild beasts.
  - burdened excessively beyond his strength, despairing even of life, afflicted, in anguish of heart.
  - perplexed, struck down, decaying, groaning, and burdened.
  - often in hardships, distresses, and beaten times without number.
  - imprisoned.
  - in tumults, labors, sleeplessness, hunger, and dishonor.
  - sorrowful, poor, depressed, and in danger of death.
  - beaten. He received 39 lashes five times from the Jews.
  - shipwrecked three times and at sea in the deep for the night.
  - in dangers from rivers, robbers, on the sea, from false brethren, and from cold and exposure.
  - daily concerned for all the churches.
  - persistently, continuously annoyed by a thorn in the flesh.

## Paul's View of the Saints

Paul's view of the *kedoshim* becomes crystal clear in the books of 1 and 2 Corinthians. The influence of this pagan city was in the church. Paul bravely pleaded with this diverse, wayward church to herd them into the truth of their new identity. It was a massive job that took every ounce of strength – not for himself but for the sake of the truth of the gospel in their lives.

Although Paul confronted many of them about being jealous, fleshly, arrogant, immoral, wrongfully boastful, unclean, defrauders, divisive, and sensual, he also called them to arise into who they were in Messiah. When Paul spoke of them, he called them:

- Sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling
- Grace receivers
- Not lacking in any gift
- Called into fellowship
- Paul's beloved children
- Washed, sanctified, justified, sealed
- The temple of Holy Spirit
- Not their own, bought with a price

## Paul's Influence Beyond the New Testament

- [Augustine](#) was born again in 36 A.D. through Paul's letter to the Romans (13:14).
- [Martin Luther](#), a 1513 Augustine monk, was born again while reading Romans.
- [John Wesley](#) listened to Luther's preface to Romans and his "heart was strangely warmed."
- [Charles Wesley](#) was born again in 1738 while reading Paul's letter to the Galatians.
- [Karl Barth](#), a German theologian, was born again in 1918 through Paul's letter to the Romans.
- [John Calvin](#) said, "Romans is the key to understand the Bible."

## In Closing

Everything about Paul's life served one purpose – the Gospel of Yeshua the Messiah. At the end of his life, he wrote to his son, Timothy, "...I know Whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." (2 Timothy 1:12b)

And:

"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 the day; and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)