Paul in Context

1. Saul the Pharisee
2. Apostle to the Gentiles
3. When I am weak then I am strong
4. Poured out like a drink offering
A controversial figure

- Wrote half of the New Testament, yet rejected by some Christians — now and in his own lifetime.
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  2 Thessalonians 2:2
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  - 2 Thessalonians 2:2
- A Jew, a Roman citizen, a Christian.
Saul of Tarsus

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Saul used up to Acts 13:9; Paul used thereafter.
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- Saul is a common Hebrew name (named after king from same tribe)
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- Saul used up to Acts 13:9; Paul used thereafter.
- No evidence that he changed his name. More likely, he preferred his Roman name when preaching to Gentiles.
What did he look like?

Acts of Paul 1:3 (AD 160)

... a man little of stature, thin-haired upon the head, crooked in the legs, of good state of body, with eyebrows joining, and nose somewhat hooked, full of grace: for sometimes he appeared like a man, and sometimes he had the face of an angel.
What did he look like?

Rublev
(Russian artist. c.1400)
What did he look like?

Vanni
(Italian artist, c.1400)
What did he look like?

Vanni
(Italian artist, c.1400)
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Rembrandt
(Dutch, 1600s)
What did he look like?

Tissot
(French, 1800s)
What did he look like?

Computer reconstruction
Tarsus


- Pop’n: about half a million
Tarsus


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- Known for its educational and philosophical schools
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- Strabo describes Tarsians as being avid in the pursuit of culture.
- A university town, noted as the home of several well-known philosophers, especially of the Stoic school.
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Acts 22:28

- Paul born a Roman citizen
Paul the Roman

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- Citizens enjoyed right to a fair public trial, exemptions from some types of executions and punishments, a right to have one’s case heard before the emperor, freedom to travel throughout the empire.
Hebrew of the Hebrews

- Philippians 3:4–6
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- To be a “Hebrew” probably meant that he spoke Hebrew (not just Aramaic and Greek).
Jewish heritage

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His Jewish ancestry was a big part of his personal identity.
School began at age 6 at local synagogue (Beth Sefer = house of the book).

- First learnt Shema, other passages from the law, the Hallel Psalms (Ps 113–118), Creation (Gen 1–5) and the ceremonial law (Lev 1–8).
- At age 12 or 13, he became "a son of the law".
- On Sabbath nearest his 12th or 13th birthday, he would be taken to synagogue where he had to read the scripture lesson. Tested on his knowledge. Thereafter he was a man.
- Best male students continued in Beth Midrash (= house of learning), taught by a rabbi.
- Very best students left home and travelled with famous rabbi as a talmid.
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Saul the Rabbi

- Galatians 1:14; Acts 22:3

- Study would last until he was about 21. Then he was a qualified Rabbi.
- No Rabbi allowed to be paid for teaching, or to make money out of his students.

Gamaliel I

- Had a famous grandson of the same name.
- He was grandson of Rabbi Hillel.
- Still considered one of the greatest teachers in Jewish history.
- Had many talmidim (500 or 1000?)
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- Acts 18:3; 20:34; 1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 11:9; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8.
Saul the Pharisee

Acts 23:6

Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees.”
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Sanhedrin: Jewish parliament of 70 elders plus high priest.
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- Acts 7:58
- Acts 26:10
- To be a member of the Sanhedrin, a man must be married and a father.
Saul the persecutor


- Acts 8:3: Tried to destroy the Christian church.

eluμaineto = elumaineto = eliminate.


Galatians 1:13,23; 1 Corinthians 15:9; 1 Timothy 1:13

In all this, Saul acted in "good conscience" (Acts 23:1)

The persecution was a natural consequence of his zeal for God.
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- What was Ananias to do?
- Would you have preached first in the synagogue?
In Damascus
In Damascus

Straight Street
<table>
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<th>A.D.</th>
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<td>Galatians from Antioch (49)</td>
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- Why did Barnabas support him?
- Then to Tarsus via Antioch (Acts 9:30; Gal 1:21)
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