



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 21:39

“Great Lion of God - The Early Years - I: The Man of Tarsus”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we come to Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the testimony that the Apostle Paul has given us and for the many things that have come to us through the faithfulness of this grand apostle called by Thy grace to minister the Gospel to the gentiles. We are so thankful that by Thy grace Thou hast also included us in the flock of God. We thank Thee for the privilege of thinking some of Paul's thoughts after him. And we pray Lord above all else that the things that we see in him, in his life and ministry, may be things that will be influential in our lives and in our ministries to as Christians.

Give us something of the same spirit of the apostle and may the dedication and devotion to the things of God that he manifested be something of the dedication and devotion that Thou dost give to us. We pray that Thou wilt by Thy grace make us, as a result of the study of the life of Paul, better Christians and better servants and better witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ. We commit these hours Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon them through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Message] Our subject in this series of messages I have given in the bulletin as "The Great Lion of God: a historical doctrinal and devotional study of Saint Paul's life and

ministry". And so we're going to study Paul and we're going to study or try to study at least his life and his ministry and do it not only historically and not only doctrinally, but also devotionally. So from time to time as the subjects make it proper, we want to emphasize all three of these aspects of the life and ministry of Paul.

Tonight we want to look at the first of two studies on the early years. And the subject for tonight is "The Early Years -I - The Man of Tarsus". And I'd like to begin with a few words by way of introduction and then we want to look at Paul's city, at Paul's family, and at Paul's schooling so that we'll have some idea of the background of this magnificent servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many are the estimates of the Apostle Paul. Some are enthusiastically laudatory. Some are mildly so. Some are just mild. Some are critical. And some are demonically critical. For example, one of the enthusiastically laudatory comments concerning Paul was made by Martin Luther who said, "In the scholastics I lost Christ but found him again in Paul." In one of the mildly laudatory comments concerning the Apostle Paul, James Denny the great well known classico theologian said, "It always does me good to see a man enjoying Saint Paul." Thomas Aquinas, the preeminent Roman Catholic theologian said, "Paul is the professor among the apostles.

For those who were not so laudatory about the apostle, primarily by the philosophers and also some politicians like Thomas Jefferson. Ian Whitehead, a well known relatively contemporary philosopher, has said, "The man who I suppose did more than anybody else to distort and subvert Christ's teaching was Paul." J.S. Mill, also another older philosopher said, "I hold Saint Paul to have been the first great corruptor of Christianity."

Now, you can see from these latter two men that their idea of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is an ethical gospel. They think of Christianity as being nothing more than a system of ethics and a series of commands by which we are to live or lives with not gospel, no cross, no blood, no bodily resurrections, no second coming, no inspired

Scripture or anything like these things. It's not surprising that these men say the things that they say. Well, you can see from this that the Apostle Paul is a man who is admired and also a man who is castigated by those who do not like his doctrine. Perhaps that's why Adolph Dismon said, "There has probably seldom been anyone at the same time hated with such fiery hatred and loved with such strong passion as Paul."

The great emphasis of the Apostle Paul, of course, is on the good news of the free grace of Jesus Christ; one at much cost. And in the letters of the apostle, this is the great theme of those letters, the apostle in Galatians chapter 1 makes statements concerning the gospel that I think may be made of Paul's entire preaching ministry. He said, "But though we or angels from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." That expression in the original text, as I've said more than once to you, is one of the strongest expressions that could possibly be made. It's very much like, and I think perfectly equivalent, to our expression, "Let him go to hell." And then as if to be sure that you got his point he said, "As we've said before so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you then that you have received let him be accursed."

Now, you can see from this that he thought very deeply about the gospel of the Lord Jesus, and in the Galatian epistle you can see that he thought very deeply about the grace that characterizes that gospel. And anything that compromised the grace of the gospel was something that came under the apostle's anathema. In the second chapter in verse 11 through verse 16 in his encounter with Peter and others in Antioch he wrote,

"But when Peter was come to Antioch I withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came James, he did eat with the gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not

uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel I said unto Peter before them all, If thou being a Jew livest after manner of gentiles and not as do the Jews why compilest thou, the gentiles, to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Lord but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law. For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

You can see that the apostle felt very deeply about the free grace. I don't like to use that term "free" with grace because grace means free, and free means grace. But nevertheless, it does stress the fact that the important thing in Paul's ministry was the grace that characterizes the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, this is the great theme of Paul's writings. He talks about salvation, but it's a salvation in grace. And in fact, I think all of Paul's teaching can almost be gathered around the expression, "Salvation by grace." Now, we don't have time to talk about that but I think I could defend that so far as Pauline theology is concerned. Now, it is of course historically true that the Christian church has had difficulty with the doctrine of the grace of God. In fact, Paul's teaching lost ground immediately after the apostles passed from the scene. When you read the apostolic fathers the one thing that stands out is their weak apprehension of the grace of God. It's not long after John the apostle passes from the scene before they are talking about regenerating people through water baptism and things like that. Their teaching is no longer the teaching of the grace of God but is a grace that is mingled with law works, which in Paul's mind left it not a gospel at all.

Very few of the fathers understood Paul. But down through the years occasionally the Apostle Paul's teaching of grace has been recovered. In many ways Augustine, in the 4th and 5th centuries, recovered the doctrine of the grace of God. He did not fully understand all of the aspects of that grace so far as it pertained to the sacramental system

of Rome, but he certainly came to understand something about the grace of God. In fact, it is from Augustine that I've taken the title "The Great Lion of God" because he said concerning the Apostle Paul that, "He was a veritable lion, a red lion, the great lion of God." So you can see that Augustine thought very highly of the Apostle Paul and no doubt from Paul learned the doctrine of the grace of God with which he so effectively answered the apologias and those also who had leanings towards semiapologianism.

Then the gospel of the grace of God again faded into obscurity and for centuries with only a little light here in there. Until the time of the Reformation the grace of God was largely lost. Oh, there are instances individuals. There are instances of small isolated movements but it was not until the time of Luther, and Calvin, and others, and perhaps a few just before them that the gospel of the grace of God became characteristic again of the mainstream of Christianity. And that has been the picture down through the years. In fact, one can go over to the Old Testament and see the same thing there with reference to the message of the grace of God in the Old Testament. For let us not forget that the Apostle Paul claimed that he got his message from the Scriptures. So he did not invent this, it was something he found in the Old Testament. We know that he relied very heavily on the texts from the books of Genesis, and the Book of Habakkuk, and many of the other passages of the Old Testament. Isaiah was one of his favorite books in which this same grace of God was set out before the Lord Jesus Christ came.

We're very fortunate in studying the life of the Apostle Paul because we do have two excellent sources for the life of Paul. We have, of course, the autobiographical source of his own letters. And if you want to really understand Paul, of course, you cannot understand him if you do not read his letters. Now, we're taking the position that his letters are the letters that are commonly called the epistles of Paul and that the Epistle to the Hebrews is not one of the letters that Paul wrote. That epistle does not have any indication in it that it came from Paul in my opinion. It does not claim to be Paul. It does not sound like Paul. When one reads it in the Greek text it does not read. Some

have seen some comparisons with Paul in the thirteenth chapter, but beyond that there is no evidence of Pauline authorship. And there are certain things in it that argue very strongly against Pauline authorship. And so we're taking the view that this is not an epistle of Paul.

Of course, the author of that epistle was a great man and the very fact that his book managed to become one of the books of the New Testament cannons even though he was not apostle. He says in the second chapter that he learned his teaching from ones who had been taught by the apostles. The fact that he was not an apostle is a tribute to the fact that the early church thought the Epistle to the Hebrews was so great that they nevertheless included it in the cannon. So it's a great epistle but it just did not come from the hands of the Apostle Paul. I know there are people who claim that it came from Paul and I respect their claims but I just don't think they have any sufficient grounds. And so we're taking it that the epistle to the Hebrews was written by an unknown outstanding author of the first century. So we'll concentrate on the letters that we know were written by the Apostle Paul.

The secondary source for Paul's life is the Book of Acts; written by a friend of his. But one gains the impression as he reads through the Book of Acts that the author of the acts was not all that acquainted with the epistles that Paul wrote. So it is something of an independent source. We have these two sources; the Book of Acts and also the epistles of the Apostle Paul. They are mutually independent sources. One is something like a self-portrait, like a painter who sits down before his portrait and paints his own portrait. Whereas the other is the unconscious portrait made by a close friend who knew something about him and who also knew something about his ministry, and was associated with him to some extent in his ministry, too. Of course, when we think of the source of the life of the Apostle Paul we shouldn't stop with the Epistles and we shouldn't stop with the Book of Acts because both of those writers stressed that the source of spiritual life is not here on earth at all. The source of the stream of Paul's life just like the

source of a stream here in this life is not to be sought when it arises in some high mountain or among the hills of a mountain where there is a little spring, and the water begins to flow down, and other waters flow into to it. And finally we see a large stream and the large stream flows into another until we have a mighty river, which eventually flows into the ocean. No, the source of that little stream up above is really to be found in the mighty seas, drawn upwards in evaporation or in the clouds that condense the cold slope of the hills. So it is with the life of God within us and the life that the Apostle Paul had, which is manifested in his letters and also portrayed by Luke in his great history of the early church; is a life that came to the Apostle Paul from God himself. His life did not originate in his own will and choice of spiritual things. It originated in God and one can see that in Paul's writings. And one also can notice that the apostle, when he talks about his life, he talks about the grace of God as being the source of his life. "By the grace of God I am what I am," he says. So we'll never understand Paul if we do not understand that.

One of the things characteristic of believers who have been believers for some time is that they finally come to that. When they're young Christians they like to get on the roster and talk about how they made a decision for God or for the Lord Jesus Christ, and why they are doing this and why they are doing that. And then as they get older in faith and they read the Bible a little more and reflect on their own experiences in the light of the Scriptures, study the Scriptures, still further become more knowledgeable of things that tell us exactly what we are. And as they by the Holy Spirit are taught the things of crowning they talk less about their own decisions, their own acts of their will, and they talk more about the Lord God. And it's not long before you hear them saying, "Well, I love him because he loved me first." And they will say, "Before I knew God," or rather, "before I was known by God," just like the Apostle Paul did. And as they grow older in the faith well they just become more comfortable with the doctrine of the grace of God. And one can see that, I'm very sure, in the life of the Apostle Paul.

Well now, let's for a moment think about the man that the Scriptures set forth as the man of Tarsus. And I'd like for you to turn with me to a passage in Acts chapter 21 in which the apostle gives a defense of himself; one of his several defenses of himself. And in it he makes a statement concerning himself that we want to spend the rest of our time talking about. Acts chapter 21 and verse 31. The apostle is defending himself now in Jerusalem and he says, verse 39 Acts 21, "I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people." Tarsus is referred to five times in the New Testament, five times here in the Book of Acts; Acts chapter 9 verse 11, verse 30, Acts chapter 11 verse 25, Acts chapter 21 verse 39, and then again in verse 3 of the next chapter. "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 Gamliel and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers and was zealous towards God as ye all are this day."

It's our Lord who calls him a man from Tarsus. Back in chapter 9 when reference is made to the apostle and to seeking out this man the Lord Jesus calls him "a man from Tarsus". What kind of a city was Tarsus? Let me say a few words about its history. Tarsus was a city with a long past, even in Paul's day. It has been successively under Persian, Greek, and Roman rule. Many Jews came there during the reigns of the Seleucid in northern Palestine after the death of Alexander. It became the capital of Cilicia and I know if you have a Bible with a map it might help you to look at the map. But Cilicia is just around the corner from Syria on towards Asia Minor. And so it was maybe a couple of hundred miles from Antioch in Syria. Tarsus became the capital of Cilicia when the Romans took it in 66 B.C. Antony gave the city the Rites of *civitas liberot et immunis* or "A free and duty free city". Among the famous people who visited the city were Cicero who also served there for a while as a procounsul. Julius Cesar visited the city in 47 B.C. And, of course, here is the place where the memorable meeting between Antony and Elizabeth Taylor, or Cleopatra took place. She was rode up the Kitnos River in a boat and



incidentally she was in the guise of Aphrodite. And those who study the life of Cleopatra and Antony know the significance of that meeting. Tarsus is still a city in Cilicia today. It's now in Turkey, of course, but it is a city of about seventy-five to a hundred thousand people. The geography of the city; it has a magnificent scenery because it lies on the plain just before the Taurus Mountains.

The apostle never mentions how beautiful the city of Tarsus was because he wasn't interested in the geography of the place from which he came. Its culture may be described in this way; it was a center of Greek culture. It was a university city. But we must not think that many people came from all over Asia Minor and perhaps even from the land of Palestine to go to the University of Tarsus. They did not. Most of the people who attended the University of Tarsus were citizens of that city. So it was a somewhat isolated university but nevertheless it was a university town. Its prosperity was based up the fact that it was a center for the manufacturer of linen cloth and from some flax that was grown nearby in the plain. There was also a local material made from goat's hair, which was very useful in covering from cold and wetness. When we read in the New Testament that the apostle was a tent maker it's possible that that was the trade that he'd learned and that it had something to do with this particular kind of material, which was called cilician, from Cilicia.

Its commerce may be described in this way; it was a thriving city and its thriving character came from the goat's hair-felt, from which blankets and clothing and tent cloth perhaps were made. Remember in Acts chapter 18 and verse 3 Luke lets us know that he was a tent maker. We read there in verse 1,

"After these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because the Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome and came unto them. And

because he was of the same craft he abode with them and wrought for by their occupation they were tent makers."

So this is Tarsus. This was the city of Paul. There is some tradition to the effect that Paul was born in the land in a little town in Galilee by the name of Gishala [ph25:53]. But most scholars feel that the statements about Tarsus are statements about his birth. We don't know the exact time of Paul's birth. It was sometime between the years of about 4 A.D. to about 13 A.D. It's difficult to be any more certain than that. Some of have said he was born in 3 A.D. but it's better to keep it broadened because we really do not know more than that.

Now, let's think for a moment about Paul's family. We can piece together some very significant things about Paul's family which will help us to understand something about him. And I think it would be helpful for me to read for you Philippians chapter 3 verse 4 through verse 6 to bring before your mind again some of the things that he himself said about himself. He's talking about whether he can have confidence in the flesh, verse 4 of Philippians 3, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he have whereof he might trust in the flesh I'm more: circumcised the eight day, of the stock of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, and Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law of Pharisee. Concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless."

The history of Paul's family from the New Testament itself goes back to at least his father. The apostle says in a place in the Book of Acts that he was born a Roman citizen. Now, if he was born a Roman citizen then his father was Roman citizen. So at least his father, perhaps his grandfather or his great grandfather; we don't know. But at least he enjoyed Roman citizenship and that was a great benefit to him, and in fact in Paul's case may have saved his life.

He was from the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was the small tribe located down near Judah; came to be associated almost with Judah. He was a Benjaminite. Saul was the great Benjaminite and it's possible that his Hebrew name, Saul, was given to him for that reason. It is rather interesting that we have in the Lukan account in the Book of Acts and in the account of Paul himself a kind of remarkable undesigned coincidence. In the Book of Acts his name is given as Saul, but in the Book of Acts it is never said that he is a Benjaminite from the tribe of Benjamin. And therefore, the connection with Saul of the tribe of Benjamin the great Jewish king is not made by Luke in his history book. It's the Apostle Paul who tells that he is of the tribe of Benjamin. But he doesn't tell us his name is Saul. He tells us his name is Paul. So in the Book of Acts we have reference made to the fact author Paul is Saul or Paul is Saul, but it's interesting that these two accounts manifest their independence in that one makes mention of his tribe and the other makes mention of his name.

Now, he says that he is a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Now, that has special meaning and we have to say a word about that. There were two kinds of Hebrews. There were Hebrews who were Hellenists and there were Hebrews who were Hebrews. The distinction between was simply this; those who were Hellenists were Hebrews who had gone out to live among the gentiles and they had lost a great deal of their language knowledge and other things; their religious relationship to Hebrews in the land. They had their own synagogues. We have reference to them in Book of Acts; synagogues of the Hellenists. Many of them spoke Greek, did not know Hebrew or Aramaic, and so they were individuals who did not celebrate the feast. They did not use the language. But then there were those Hebrews who were Hebrews of the Hebrews. That is they retained their knowledge of the language; Hebrew and Aramaic, they also observed the law of the Old Testament as the Jews at the time of our Lord understood that it was to be observed. So the apostle makes the claim that he is a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He would be the more orthodox kind of Hebrew.

One gains that impression from reading the apostles' letters because it's obvious that he has a deep knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. It's also likely that the Apostle Paul had money because he tells us in chapter 22 and verse 3 of the Book of Acts, the passage I read a few moments ago, that he was brought up in the city of Jerusalem. Now, that evidently means that he was there before he began his real studies under Gamliel. He says, "I'm verily a man which am a Jew born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamliel and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers." I don't have time to talk about the original text at this point but there is indication there to indicate that it seems to say that he speaks of being brought up in Jerusalem as a bit distinct from then his studying under or at the feet of Gamliel.

We know that the apostle did have some relatives in the city of Jerusalem. In Acts chapter 23 and verse 16 we read, "And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait he went and entered into the castle and told Paul." So Paul had a sister living in Jerusalem and he also had a nephew there. He may have had someone else there. So it's possible that his father who was himself a Pharisee, for Paul calls himself a son of the Pharisees, a Pharisee and a Hebrew of the Hebrews; wanted his son to imbibe all of the Jewish background that he possibly could. And it's possible, we're not certain about this, it's possible he sent him to Jerusalem. He may even have stayed with his sister in the city for a while before he became one of the pupils of Gamliel. So that is something; I should also mention that it's likely then if that is true that the apostle's father had a little bit of money.

So the apostle while he learned a trade like all Jews were to do, learn a trade, was nevertheless an individual who came from probably a solid middle class kind of home but yet an orthodox Hebrew home. The character of Paul's family, therefore, is of an urban character because he was brought up in the city. Contrary to our Lord who was brought up in the country, Paul was brought up in the city. Jesus was a man of the fields. Paul is

a man of the city. His metaphors reflect it. He speaks of buildings. He speaks of slave markets. He speaks of people huckstering when he talks about false teachers huckstering the gospel of Jesus Christ. We've got a lot of huckstering today of the Gospel of Christ in evangelicalism. They are huckstering everything in evangelicalism. Everything is superficial, light, and trivial. But the apostle knew all about that in the city; the huckstering. He knew also about the games. He talks about the games. He talks about triumphal marches that the Romans would make. So he was a person who grew up in the city and was what we would call a city boy, not a country boy.

Well, I kind of like that you know because I was brought up in the city. I always feel somewhat handicapped when people who grew up on a farm start talking because I don't understand a great deal of what they're talking about. And so they can see, "Well the Lord Jesus grew up in little small town like we did." Well, Paul has to be my hero for that because I am a city boy and so was Paul. Some say the apostle proves that he was a city boy when he tells the illustration olive tree in Romans chapter 11 because there, so they say, he manifests that he doesn't understand how you graft branches onto the stock of a tree. Well we don't have to go into that but those who say the apostle doesn't understand that are usually professors who've never done any grafting themselves. The apostle understood very well. It's the professors who don't understand. But then, of course, you've had professors talk to you and so you don't expect them to understand. Do you ?

What shall we say about Paul's appearance? Well, evidently the apostle was not an impressive looking fellow. Now, he says that when he preached to the Corinthians he was in their midst in fear and much trembling. So he was a fellow who would get very nervous when he preached before people who might be very antagonistic to his message. Now, you don't have to be afraid today because people don't do the things that they did to the Apostle Paul then because they would drag him before the authorities and put him in jail. They don't do that today. They just sit and look at you and make you think that

they're listening when they're not really listening at all. So the kinds of persecution that preachers have to bear is slightly different now. The apostle was a man who was in the midst of the Corinthians in much fear in trembling.

There are some other things that indicate that he was not a very impressive looking physical specimen either. In 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 10 the apostle refers to some of the things that were said about him. These are some of the thing, "His letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible." So others were saying things like that about the Apostle Paul. We don't know how he looked. There is apocryphal writing called the Acts of Paul written some time later than New Testament times, and in it there is a description of the Apostle Paul, "A man little of stature, thin haired upon the head," that's another way in which I'm like Paul, "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." A Southern Baptist preacher, a very well known one, about a year or two ago, made a comment concerning Jews that he would like to forget now but he said publicly, "Jews are people with funny noses." Well, "The Apostle Paul," it says here, "had a nose somewhat hooked." There is nothing wrong with that. Many people are embarrassed about their nose. I would change mine if I could but it's too late now. And in that, too, I may be like Paul, three points like Paul. [Laughter]

Paul's traditions are not Greek. He was no philosopher. He did not know Pagan writers except only as one who shared the atmosphere of his time. He was not a student of philosophy. He thought there were things more important than philosophy. Oh someone might say, "Well, does he not quote several ancient writer?" Yes, he does. He quotes several; about four to be exact. But after all, if you quote only four it's obvious you don't know anything more about them, so far as your writings are concerned, than that which any intelligent person of the time might now about them. He does refer to Epimenides. He refers to some other people. But nevertheless, so far as really knowing

literature or philosophy there is no evidence that he did. He was trained as a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He spoke Hebrew. He spoke Aramaic. And he also could speak Greek. His letters were written in Greek, not a bad Greek. It's the kind of Greek that you might expect someone who was a Hebrew of the Hebrews to write; very good considering that. His Bible was probably the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, because it was so familiar with the people of his day. And as one studies the quotations that he makes from the Old Testament more of them come from the Septuagint, or the Greek translation of the Old Testament, as a source than from Hebrew texts. But it's evident he knew the Hebrew texts. Sometimes he mingles them. Sometimes he uses a tradition not found in either one of those texts. So he was a fellow who was knowledgeable in the writings and at the same time he was intellectually awake. That's clear.

Now, let me say just a word or two about his schooling. We do not have a great deal of information about the schooling of an individual like Paul; what it would have been like since the details of the tradition were collected somewhat later than New Testament times; not collected and written down until the 2nd and 3rd century. We know that it was common, at least one of the missiona tractates says this, called the sayings of the fathers, that at five a boy began to read the Bible. At ten he began to learn the missiona. At thirteen he had his Bar-Mitzvah in which he was obligated thereafter to keep the commandments. At fifteen he began his study of the Talmud. And then at eighteen he was mature enough for marriage. At twenty he was supposed to be self-supporting. And as I mentioned, Acts chapter 22 verse 3 and Acts chapter 26 verse 24 seem to imply that he went to Jerusalem at an early age.

In Judaism a father had to teach his son three things. He had to teach him the law. He had to teach him about circumcision. And he had to teach him a trade in order that he would not make of his study a spade, as they said. That is he wouldn't make his calling just a way of earning a living. He would need a trade later on because the apostle

had to be dependent upon his own tent making and his other types of work that he did. The churches were unable to support him and the apostle did not want their support. He wanted to render his service to the Lord as a free will offering. Oh, the Philippians and the others gave him gifts for which he was thankful, but Paul did not hesitate to work with his hands. In fact, he gloried in that because it indicated that he was not concerned so much for what he would get but for what he would give to those to whom he ministered.

Now, there is so far as we can tell the apostle traveled that path and he learned his trade. He was taught the law by his father by the way, not by his mother. So far as his schooling was concerned the essential characteristics of Orthodox Judaism and Pharaseeism were inculcated in him. They believed that the traditions of the Jews contained the whole truth from God. They believed there was no new revelation. They believed in externalizing man's duty to God and that's what they did. They believed in glorying in good works. They had legal notions of the relationship between the human being and the diving triune God, or the God that they believed in. They did not understand the grace of God. As a matter of fact, they rebelled against the grace of God. They thought of the relationship between men and God as essentially a legal one. And consequently there is in Judaism of the time of Paul a hardness that is always manifested in those that do not understand the grace of God.

The apostle received one thing from his Hebrew training which was very valuable to him and that was his love for, "It is written." He had a facility and the use of the Old Testament that was no doubt to be traced to some of the familiarity that he obtained in those early years. Well as I look back over this I think I can understand several things about Paul in the light of his early life. First of all, his conviction of and love for divine continuing providence over his life. He talks about that in Galatians in chapter 1 and verse 14 through verse 16. He says he profited in Jews religion about many his equals in his own nation being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers. "And



when it pleased God who separated me from the time of my mother's womb and called me from His grace to reveal His son in me." The apostle had a deep conviction that God's sovereign continuing providence was guiding all of his steps.

And as you look back over his life, his schooling, his family, his city you can see how it all contributing to the kind of man that God wished to have to be the preeminent messenger of the Gospel to the gentiles. He was sovereignly prepared by God in order that he might do the works that had been sovereignly prepared for him. Paul will say in the Ephesian letter that, "We are saved by grace through faith that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." And then he will go on to say in the tenth verse, "For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus, for those good works which have been before prepared that we should walk in them." And the apostle was convinced that the things that he was to do were prepared by God and that he was prepared by God for what he was to do. Therefore, he had no difficulty in believing we and our works are necessary for the doing of the will of God but that these things have been given us by God. He felt, as one of the writers says that, "His keel was caught by current emanating from the purpose of God." That's characteristic of Paul, a man from Tarsus. Well, our time is up. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this magnificent man of God prepared by Thee to give us these marvelous epistles which have so wonderfully unfolded the grace of God in Christ to us. We give Thee thanks. We thank Thee

[RECORDING ENDED ABRUPTLY]