

## **GALATIANS INTRODUCTION Handout      From Saul to Paul**

Saul is born in Tarsus Acts 22:3, Phil 3:5 when it is under Roman control (making him a Roman citizen with benefits) Acts 22:28 . He is mixed heritage, Greek and Jewish, bilingual and literate. These 5 factors come into play in God's plan. He is descended from the tribe of Benjamin - Numerous times in Old Testament and of all 12 tribes, the Benjaminites are 'The Special Forces' warriors, even in their losses. Fortitude is 6th value-added feature in God's plan and we begin to see God's infinite wisdom in why Saul is chosen to lead a particular part of the known world to freedom by our Lord.

He was schooled in Jewish history, law and tradition by none other than one of THE greatest of Jewish teachers, Gamaliel. Acts 22:3 (Gamaliel, a member of the Sanhedrin and a grandson of Hillel the Elder who helped develop the Mishnah and Talmud) (**SEE WHAT SADDUCEES, SANHEDRINS AND PHARISEES ARE - attach 1**). It is vital to not lump a Jew into "good" or "bad" but to understand what groups of Jews each belong to understand the deadly push back motives. (Jealousy is a small part in a big picture).

**Saul became a Pharisee and ultra orthodox. (SEE: TANNA- attach 2 for criteria) Phil 3:5**

He grows up tent making in the family business. This skill later supports him in missionary journeys as it requires only a few small hand tools and Apostles had been instructed to travel light Matt. How's that for divine use of resources?

As a deeply devout Jew, his anger rises over a new and quickly growing religion which is luring away his race. Saul sets out to violently protect his people from this expanding Christian "cult". **The "cult" is taking with it his Jewish brethren in Damascus!** He sees Jews are, once again and against Mosaic law, mixing with Gentiles! Saul clearly knows Jewish history and is calculating how this is going to end. He is determined to save his people by eliminating the Christian threat. **He'd personally Benjamin** them. The brewing civil unrest secures for Saul approval from Jewish authorities to stop it.

He cruelly persecutes Christians and personally witnessed the martyrdom of Stephen. Acts 7:58, 8:1 **Jesus had already been crucified** when Paul is heading to Damascus to destroy the latest and wildly successful crop of Christians. (**SEE: WHY JEWS COULD MURDER STEPHEN BUT NOT JESUS - attach 3**) But a light and voice stops Saul in his tracks. **Saul meets Jesus after His ascension** and who blinds him in order to lead him. Conversion happens right there. Acts 9:1-9 Saul is now on a very different mission as he continues to Damascus.

The Lord prepares for Saul's arrival, calling on disciple Ananias, "...in the home of Judas, look for a man from Tarsus named Saul... he's praying. He has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so he would see again."

Ananias is rightfully scared. Everywhere, everyone seems to know Saul, who hates and persecutes The Way. But the Lord tells him, "...he's My chosen instrument to carry My name to unbelievers, to their kings and to the descendants of Israel. ...I'm going to show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." Ananias faithfully trusts and Saul's sight is restored by the Almighty Lord through the Holy Spirit and Ananias. Saul is baptized Acts 9:10-18

### **GOD DOESN'T CHOOSE PERFECT MEN - HE CHOOSES MEN PERFECT FOR THE JOB**

**Saul Begins His Ministry.** Saul preaches in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. Gentiles, Christians and Jews scratch their heads that Saul could possibly be so radically changed Acts 9:19-22. **Everyone knows of him.**

Apostles had been in synagogues and in the Jewish community. (Win over the Jewish brethren using

their own Scriptures, which they know well, to reason with them. Then **turn them into disciples!**)

He escapes a murder plot by Jews in Damascus. Some **Jews, just like Saul had been, are willing, to squash this blasphemous new faith violently.** The shoe is on the other foot. 9:23-24

**Note** When Christianity first got its legs, Gamaliel attempted to appeal to the Jews 'If this is naught, it will come to naught'. Gamaliel is the quintessential 'library of Judaism'. Yet he is not a disciple? Why did he not convert? If I make it to heaven, I'll ask God 'bout it.

**Saul arrives in Jerusalem, Acts 9:26-29, Gal 1:18 to finally meet his apostle-brethren and become one with that body. But they appear unaware of his current work and, with his old reputation preceding him and, with reason, fear meeting him.** (A Jew who was notoriously brutal to Christians). Even if they do know what he's currently doing, they must wonder **why didn't he immediately seek them after conversion? Either way, makes him awfully suspicious and they are cautious of him. But he** appears to want to report to, and commune with, his unmet fellow apostles. 9:26

Why don't they already know about his ministry!? *Possibly* the existing communications:

- Travel time between Jerusalem and Damascus is 6 days.
- Persecution is reaching a fevered pitch in Jerusalem, making it a less-than-tourist destination for converts from Damascus.

But Barnabas (also, known as Joseph, a Levite, prophet and Apostle) and Saul go way back together as fellow students, believes Saul's recount of conversion and makes the introductions.

Saul meets **Peter (also, known as Simon or Cephas Jn.1:42)** and James, but for so short a time that he could not have met *Jewish standards for learning/teaching*. (This becomes an important rebuttal later)(**SEE: PHARISEES, SADDUCEES AND SANHEDRINS - attach 1 and SEE: TANNA - attach 2**).

Acts 11:28-30, Saul and Barnabas carry the first famine relief funds to Jerusalem from Antioch in Syria. He preaches while in Jerusalem and debates some Hellenist and Jews to the point of their anger. They join to plot his murder.

Saul is sent off to Caesarea and on to Tarsus, his Greek home, then later returns to Jerusalem. 12:25

### **First Missionary Journey**

Christian persecution by Jews is ramping up in Jerusalem. Saul joins the diaspora in Antioch where the Apostles in Jerusalem had already sent Barnabas. This is where the word "Christian" begins. It is the Christian center. The Holy Spirit moves the church leaders to send Saul and Barnabas to Seleucia. Without Barnabas, we might not have Paul's ministry.

Then in town of Salamis, Cyprus he preaches. Word reaches a Jewish procouncil who wants to listen. The procouncil's attendant is a deceptive weasel and magician who tries to prevent the meeting. Saul has the Lord blind him. Procouncil successfully converts.

Saul moves on to another city named Antioch (smaller than the first) in Pisidia. The listeners hear a recount of Jewish history and the failures of Jews in being obedient to the Lord and tells them of the life of Jesus Acts 13:26. **He explains forgiveness and justification and issues a warning to the disbelievers who he knows is there.**

Saul becomes Paul as he begins spreading the Gospel in Roman controlled Greece and is renamed Paulus. **Paul has the language skills to raise or lower his communication level to that of his audience. It didn't hurt that he, also, had our Lord's blessing**

Some Jews are pushing back hard (defensive, accusatory, defamatory) 13:44. 'Okay, I'll move on to the Gentiles then.' is Paul's response. The Gentiles are excited to receive the Word. And the Jews run him out. Acts 13:50

Iconium is the next destination and **Paul scores so many converts among both Jews and Greeks**. Here, too, unbelievers (**both Jews and Greeks**) twist his words, claim falsehoods against him and disparage him. It confuses the converts. In the city, the rift grows between those who do and those who won't believe Paul. The 2 groups of disbelievers band and conspire to attack and stone him.

They flee to Lystra and Derbe (in Lyconia). In Lystra, Paul cures a cripple and it sends shock waves. (not literal). Surely these two are gods in flesh! The crowds want to bring animal sacrifices to them and one in the crowd is a pagan priest bringing extra animals for the people to sacrifice! 14:13

Paul sets them straight and explains that, back in the day, **God let Gentiles to do as they wanted. But that God never left them AND provided their temporal needs. He, also, watched for their good deeds. Now God is ready to have them join Him and His chosen people.** And the ecstatic crowd can hardly be stopped from again trying to offer sacrifices. 14:16.

Well guess who is on Paul's heels. Jews from Antioch and Iconium who are winning back the crowd. The finale: they drag Paul out of the city and stone him to death. But he is from the tribe of **Benjamin** and just warming up. Before his followers' eyes, he stands and goes right back into the city. There's Jews and Gentiles to save!

Returning to Lystra, then Iconium, and (little) Antioch Paul does a welfare check on the new Christians and encourages them to keep faith. After prayer and fasting, he appoints church leaders for each of the churches.

He passes through Pisidia to stop at Perga and Attalia. They then return to (original, big) Antioch to submit their progress report and it is very good.

Galatians are so grateful and excited to finally become a member in God's family, not a god such as they'd known in the past, one or many who acted on temperamental whims, but one which loves each individual among them equally. They didn't know this God of Abraham nor Jewish history. No longer will they stand outside of Jewish services trying to find a piece of *that* God for themselves. They are now included as beloved through the sacrifice Jesus made for them! The One who will guide them as a father and give them everlasting life. And they rejoice. Paul loves these converts and jealously protects them for the sake of their salvation.

In Antioch, Paul gets disturbing news from Galatia. The local Judiazers there are preaching something dangerous in the churches. Judaizers are teaching them that salvation includes keeping Mosaic Law. They claim that Gentiles must practice the act of circumcision before earning their righteousness and salvation from our Lord and **before they could fellowship with the Jewish believers**. Imagine Paul thinking, 'I leave you for a short time and just look what happens'. (SEE: **CIRCUMCISION, ABRAHAM AND US - attach 4**)

Paul is set on finding out where this is coming from. And he does. It's coming from Judiazer Home Office, the seat of authority, in Jerusalem. **Most Pharisaic troublemakers are out of Jerusalem and Judea. And they are and have been going out (past Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia) into Galatia. So Paul hammers their home base.** He wants to chat with them to 'clear up a few things'. Time for a meeting. In person. Thus, **Paul returns to Jerusalem to settle this in the Jerusalem Council. these Pharisees are a tough crowd.**

**These Pharisees are a tough crowd who are pushing the concept of revelation, typical of Second Temple, and are doing it from Jerusalem, where Rabbi Jesus had left His disciples (the**

Jerusalem apostles) to carry on their line of tradition.

The Judaizers accuse him of **failing in his duty to transmit the exact words of Jesus' tradition as it had been mediated to Paul by the apostles**. Such "iterative incompetence" was viewed as one of the gravest offenses according to ancient rabbinical rules (e.g., m.'Ed. 1.3; b. Sabb. 15a; 'Avot 3:8 and 6:6).

The Judaizers felt **their job was to correct and 'fill in' what Paul missed sharing in the Jesus gospel among the Galatians**. (SEE: TANNA - attach 2). But these were previously resolved issues. So why are they resurfacing?

<https://docslib.org/doc/2875047/who-were-pauls-opponents-in-galatia>

Paul's final visit to Jerusalem (between A.D. 54 and 57) may have been as as many as 8 years after the Jerusalem Conference Acts 15. It demonstrates the power of the former Jews in the Jerusalem church. These same Jewish Christians, "zealous for the Law," caused this trouble in Antioch a few years earlier. "And some men came down from Judea..."

"But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses'".

While being home to these Pharisaic Jewish Christians, the **Jerusalem Church disavowed any authorization of them or their teaching**. This is the problem in Galatia Acts 15 and 21 the Galatian troublers are part of a much bigger group of the ritually strict Jewish Christians. Some Jewish believers still need convincing. And it mostly comes out of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem Conference is convened to settle the issue of circumcision (SEE CIRCUMCISION, ABRAHAM AND US - attach 4) using Paul's logic and Christ's words. The decision is against circumcision. James, leader of the Jerusalem church - issued a statement that **Gentile believers do not have to be circumcised**.

**Church leaders record the decision and address the Gentiles** of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia v. 23, **purposely distancing themselves from the troublers**. "*We have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls*" v. 24.

The Gentile believers welcome the decision of the Jerusalem Church, but **right after James's decision is received, Peter visited Antioch and appears to have changed his mind** Gal 2.11-12! He wouldn't eat with the Gentile believers in Antioch, afraid of offending the Jewish Christians. They believed that the Gentile believers were ritually 'unclean' without circumcision, and Jewish believers would become unclean by eating with them Acts 10:28, Peter, uncomfortably, faced this issue before. Can Paul ever catch a break?

Even Barnabas appears swayed by this view and, to Paul's amazement and disgust, by refusing to eat with the Gentile believers Gal 2.13. This causes Paul and Barnabas and to quarrel enough that it **contributed to their splitting up before Paul's second missionary journey** Acts 15:39-40. And why Paul retold the churches of Galatia about the public shaming of Peter and Barnabas in Antioch Gal. 2:11-21. He argues that the **Judaizers' view had already been rejected at one of their prior stops, Antioch of Syria! Home of the Gentiles' very first churches!** What is Paul thinking right now? "Didn't we already discuss this a while back and we were all onboard?? So WHAT are you doing?!" This causes Paul and Barnabas and to quarrel enough that it **contributed to their splitting up before Paul's second missionary journey** Acts 15:39-40.

He argues that the **Judaizers' view had already been settled earlier in Antioch of Syria! Home of the Gentiles' very first churches!** What is Paul thinking right now? "Didn't we already discuss this a while back and we were all onboard?? So WHAT are you doing?!" He shames them publically.

Pharisaic Judaizers made these claims against Paul:

1. Paul and they are unified, but he *watered* the gospel to please his hearers 1:10... .

2. He received his **gospel from the same Jerusalem authorities who supported the mission!** 1:18-2:9 and 1:11... .

3. Paul only **represents** of the "pillars" (of Jerusalem where the Judiazers are centered) 1:12, 15-19, and that Paul **began a work which they had come to complete** 3:3.

Paul's rebuttal

1. **public in scope**
2. **apostolic in authority** (involving both Peter and Paul through Jesus Himself),
3. **accepted as legitimate** (otherwise Paul would not have claimed it as authoritative).

### **Dramatic Fears and Anger**

Pharisaic Jews, converted or not, have arguments and motives to want to challenge Paul.

- If Pharisees were truly devout, then they believe their people are being misled.
- They are so consumed with that belief that they refuse to believe the Messiah has come and commissioned Paul. Even with Paul's rebuttals, backed by their own Scriptures!

There are so many references in the Old Testament which prophesied The Coming. And it takes willful blindness to not see the life and death of Jesus fulfills that. Further, that The Coming brings closure to Abraham's Covenant and opens The New Covenant. And that there is a distinction to be made between Abraham's Covenant and Mosiac Law. Mind you, God's Moral Law remains. But the Laws meant to separate God's chosen people from all the rest by making them different ('set apart', free of Gentile/pagan/other influences) ceases now that God offers everyone His greatest gift to them; freedom, Salvation and His love through the sacrifice of Jesus.

- Possibly it was a hurtful ego issue that Jesus hadn't spoke to or dropped in on them!
- Paul fabricated and is trying to win a popularity contest by "making" salvation "too easy" for Gentiles.
- **'We sent Paul out to preach because WE are the authority and as The Authority we have the last word on how to obtain Salvation. And WE say he left out important pieces which we are attempting to correct.'**
- In a less spiritual side, Jewish leadership stood to lose status and wealth within the Jewish communities. What *job* would they now have as Christians?

Was this an attempt to "blend" two religions? Jews had tried that in the past (they should check their history - this never ended well).

Was this a way to convert Gentiles to Judaism? Not likely, Jews were never known for evangelizing. God had always ordered them to maintain a separation.