

# A Brief Introduction to Paul and His Early Life

# Paul and His Early Life

- **1. A Major Cultural and Intellectual Center**
  - Paul (then **Saul**) was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, around **AD 5–10**. During the Roman period it was one of the most important cities in the eastern Mediterranean.
  - Ancient writers describe it as a **cosmopolitan university city**.
  - The Greek geographer Strabo wrote in *Geography* (14.5.13):  
“The people of Tarsus have devoted themselves so eagerly to philosophy and the whole cycle of learning that they have surpassed Athens and Alexandria.”

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- **2. A Cosmopolitan Roman City**

- Tarsus was strategically located on a trade route connecting:
  - Syria, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia
- It sat on the Cydnus River, which allowed ships to reach the Mediterranean.
- Important historical notes:
  - The city had Roman provincial status.
  - Many inhabitants, including Paul's family, possessed Roman citizenship.

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- **3. A Strong Jewish Community**

- Although Tarsus was heavily Greek in culture, it had a large Jewish diaspora population.
- Paul describes himself as a “A Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee.” Philippians 3:5
- His family likely belonged to a strict Pharisaic tradition, which is why Paul was later sent to Jerusalem to study under the famous rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).

# Paul the Worker

- **Did Paul have a trade?**
  - Yes. Paul worked as a craftsman, specifically a tentmaker or leatherworker.
  - Scriptural Evidence
    - Acts 18:3
    - “Because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked, for by trade they were tentmakers.”
  - In Corinth, Paul worked alongside Aquila and Priscilla.

# The Recap

- Paul was raised as a Jew in a city heavily influenced by Greek culture and under Roman rule
- Paul's educational background along with cosmopolitan influences probably helped him to relate to Gentile believers
- Despite his robust educational background and social status, Paul humbled himself by working a trade and not burdening local churches
- Acts 20:17-38