

Paul – A Legal Case Study
Chapter 2
The Initial Interview

Sometimes it happens in jail, other times it happens in the office, but regardless of location, the initial interview of the client is critical. During this interview one gathers information that sets the lawyer on course for further work.

I have multiple goals in the interview. First, I learn areas that need further investigation and research. In addition to getting the information that will help me proceed with handling the case, I use the interview as a chance to find points of connection. I need to know where I can relate to the client. I also need to know the blind spots where I don't relate well.

The interview also begins the case-long process of discerning the client's honesty. It is important to an interview that a client tell you the truth. A client may not be fully informative, or a client may remember things differently at times, but any deliberate tying or deception must be ferreted out. That what is true, time and hard work will disclose that. The initial interview is a chance to get basic information and set up a road map of where case development best proceeds.

The initial interview generally serves also as an "assignment interview. By that I mean it is the interview where I learn what the client's real desires are. I want to know why the client did what the client did that led to the legal difficulty, but I also want to know what the client wants from me. Is the goal a trial and vindication or is it a plea bargain with the smallest punishment possible?

Notes are extremely important during an interview. In my notes, I am especially attentive to keeping a "TO DO" list. I frequently return to this list as I work on the case. I also document where information or evidence comes from. In a sense, I "footnote" my notes. Sources are extremely important in a case, and they are maintained with care. Lawyers must keep up with where information comes from so that they are able to use that information later. It does me no good to remember some key fact in a case if I can't remember where that fact comes from when I go to prove it up at trial.

In this case which I approach as if I am Paul's defense lawyer, I am going to need to do the same, albeit with a slightly different form. My plan to keep this readable is to provide major citations ("sources") in footnotes while in real life I would more likely scrawl them onto the side of the legal pad.

Even though Paul's arrest was over 1900 years ago, I am able to access most of the important information I would seek in the initial interview. Some information I'd like

has been lost to time, but not enough to thwart the goal of this study. Even with living clients, there are often huge holes in what I learn, and the history can be lost in many areas. My job is to take the information available and work with it. That is what I will do here in Paul's "initial interview."

I break the interview into sections. I start with background and move on from there into areas of concern. As noted, I keep a "TO DO" list on an alternate page as I interview. Here, I will generally bring the results of my "TO DO" list into the narrative of the text. This will become apparent to the reader.

Background

One summer I taught a law school class on jury selection. In the class, I taught the prospective lawyers not only the rules and mechanics associated with jury selection, but also a bit of the art. Selecting a jury involves trying to determine what jurors might be favorably disposed toward your client and case, and what jurors carry a deep-seated bias that would preclude them from being fair and impartial.

One day, I brought in one of my mentors, Ernest, to speak to the class. Ernest came by his name honestly. His genuineness was never doubted by anyone who spent much time with him. That was one feature that made him a strong lawyer. Another was his perspective on jury selection ("*voir dire*" is the proper legal term).

Ernest explained his key to *voir dire*. "I want to know about people's past. I want to know the road they've walked. If I can figure out the road people have walked in their lives to get to the present, I can reasonably predict what they will do and where they will go in the future."

Personal history is very important to trial lawyers. It would be a major focus in my initial interview with Paul/Saul. As I probe Paul's background, I want to see the road he walked before his arrest. As best as I can, I need to know his life story. Who we are is determined not only by our DNA, but by the events of our lives. We become who we are from our interactions with our families, friends, enemies, and strangers. How we think, our interests and beliefs, are formed by these interactions as well as our upbringing and education.

Paul was arrested as a rabble-rouser. I need to know, was this a routine problem for him? If I represent someone accused of driving while intoxicated, I want to know if she or he had DWI's in the past. Is he or she a member of Alcoholics Anonymous? Has alcohol been a problem in any way? These questions about the past are important. I need to know Paul's background. Background information is where I start my interview.

Name:

Everyone needs to know the name of the client, and it is no less different with Paul. My legal team includes a “trial scientist.” We call him Dr. Bob. Dr. Bob is a lawyer, but before going to law school, he was a clinical psychologist. Dr. Bob explained to me long ago that we need to always be careful with people who change their names! Often a name-change happens when someone has something to hide or when one is trying to escape one’s past.

What about Paul? Most people know he was also “Saul,” and many people believe that Paul changed his name when he “became a Christian.” I.e., before his “conversion” (not a word Paul would use) Paul was Saul. Afterwards, it was as if the Christian transformation was so total and complete, that Paul chose a name that was “close” to his original name, but was different.

This inference is not a fair inference, and our initial interview would have rectified it. The inference comes from an inadequate reading of the New Testament as well as a deficient understanding of Roman society and culture in the first century.

The New Testament can be divided into four different kinds of writings: gospels (four of them), a history of the church (commonly called “Acts”), letters (also called “epistles”), and an apocalyptic piece called “Revelation.”¹ Paul features in the history book called Acts as well as the ascribed author to 13 of the letters. In the letters, each of which is written to churches in the mission field, the author self-identifies as “Paul.” In Acts, Paul is “Saul,” until he goes out into the mission field. Then he is “Paul.” The exception comes later in Acts when Paul is recounting the events of his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road. There Jesus calls him “Saul,” and Paul uses that name when retelling the story to the Jewish audiences in Acts 22 and Acts 26.

Names are closely tied to culture. Today, most western names are simple. For example, my name is William Mark Lanier. I have a first name, William, which was also my father’s first name. My middle name, Mark, is my familiar name that my parents have called me since birth (to distinguish me from my father). My last name, Lanier, is my family name, and all the people in my family share that name.

During the time of Paul, each Roman citizen also had three names.² The three Roman

¹ How one divides the New Testament can differ. Some use a fifth division and consider the book of Hebrews a “sermon” rather than an epistle or letter.

² Actually, people would frequently have more than just three names, but three names were required for registration of a Roman citizen. Wilson, Stephen, *The Means of Naming – A Social and Cultural History of Personal Naming in Western Europe* (London: Routledge 2004) at 4.

names were not set up like names in Western civilization today. The Roman process of three names died out with the Roman Empire in the 5th century,³ but history has left evidence to understand the naming at the time of Paul clearly. To understand the Roman naming system, consider the example of Gaius Julius Caesar. The first name⁴ (Gaius) was the “personal” name. Frequently, this is the name people would use to refer to a person either alone or in combination with one of the person’s other names. The second name (Julius in this example) typically denoted one’s heritage or clan affiliation (Caesar came from the Juliae clan). The last name was generally a nickname or sometimes a family name passed on. If you saw Gaius Julius Caesar on the street, you might call out, “Hail, Caesar!”

We do not know all three of Paul’s Roman names. We only know his third Roman name, *Paullus* (in Latin, meaning “little”) and in Greek, *Paulos* (Παῦλος). This name would be common and a label people would use for the apostle. Because the name was a word with an actual meaning, our English loses something when we translate the sound of the name, but without the meaning. In a real sense, Paul was nicknamed, or called, “Shorty” or “Little.”

Paul would have had the three Roman names as part of his registration as a Roman citizen, but Paul would also have had an additional name. Being a Hebrew who was born into a devout family, Paul would have had a Hebrew name that was used in Hebrew circles. Paul’s Hebrew name was שׂאֵל. If we put those letters into English, we get the sound “Sha’ul.” The Hebrew word conveys the verb “to ask.” Greek did not have an “sh” sound, so Paul’s Hebrew name would have been difficult for a 1st century Greek speaker to pronounce. When writing Paul’s name into Greek letters, the Hebrew letter *shin* becomes a Greek *sigma* (a simple “s” sound). The Greek spelling used to pronounce Paul’s Hebrew name varied in the Bible. His name is spelled Σαοῦλ (“*Saoul*”) in some places and Σαῦλος (“*Saulos*”) in others.

Paul’s different names were not an alias, or name-change associated with his new-found belief that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. In Hebrew circles, Paul was called Sha’ul, given in our English translations as “Saul,” from the Greek. This explains the alternate usage. A close look at Acts shows Luke using Paul’s Hebrew name past his conversion up to the time where Paul (Saul) and Barnabas are on their first missionary journey. On the island of Cyprus, before explaining Paul’s interaction with a magician, Luke writes,

³ With the Germanic invasion, most people had one name after the fall of Rome. Over time, that expanded with second/family names becoming common in the 11th and 12th centuries. Middle names were added after the Renaissance. For a full history on the naming process, see Wilson’s book cited above.

⁴ The Latin term for this first name was *praenomen*. The Latin term for the second name was *nomen* or *gentilicium*. The Latin for the third name was *cognomen*.

“But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said...” (Acts 13:9). After that, Luke uses Paul’s Roman name exclusively except when quoting Paul’s description of his conversion (Acts 22:7, 13; 26:14).

Appearance

We’ve all heard the adage, “You can’t tell a book by its cover.” That doesn’t change the fact that we readily form impressions about people by visual cues. Almost subconsciously, we note how people look. We consider their dress, mannerisms, and behaviors, and we make assumptions about the person. Our further interactions then bear out our initial impressions or cause us to modify them. Appearance and first impressions are important. I must see my clients, and not just talk to them over the telephone.

One judge before whom I have spent a good bit of time refers to people who get “sentencing haircuts.” He explained that almost every time, whenever a person appears before him for sentencing (the hearing where the judge assesses what sentence a criminal will get), the person has a brand-new haircut, looking clean and good. It is common for lawyers to “clean up” their clients because looks matter.

I can’t really describe what Paul looked like. Knowing his missionary success, some might think he was a striking fellow, overpowering in demeanor with an ability to wow and impress folks. I don’t think that assessment is right, however. His letters intimate that he wasn’t overpowering and that his enemies used that to trumpet their own credibility over Paul’s.⁵ Paul’s message had power *in spite* of his appearance.

Our best assessment of Paul’s appearance comes from outside the Bible. Our earliest non-Biblical writing on Paul comes from the later part of the first century (some scholars date it in the second century), in a book titled the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. The book received wide circulation in the church of Paul’s missionary efforts and hometown.

While detailing the interactions of Paul with a young woman named Thecla, the book contains our oldest description of Paul. Paul is described in chapter 1, verse 7 as,

⁵ For example, in 1 Corinthians 3:2, Paul spoke of his initial time with the fledgling church as one where his presence was “in weakness and in fear and much trembling.” In his second letter to that church, Paul would call himself a “jar of clay” seeking to proclaim Jesus as Lord rather than himself (2 Cor. 4:5,7). He also spoke of his physical life as a “burden” of this earthly “tent” (2 Cor. 5:1-4). Later in that chapter he compared himself to those who have cause to boast about their appearance. Finally in 2 Corinthians 10:10, Paul wrote that some in Corinth mocked him saying, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.”

a man of middling size, and his hair was scanty, and his legs were a little crooked, and his knees were projecting, and he had large eyes and his eyebrows met, and his nose was somewhat long, and he was full of grace and mercy; at one time he seemed like a man, and at another time he seemed like an angel.

I think it likely that this description is fairly accurate. Let me explain why. The storyline in the book is made up, but the book wasn't written as fiction. It *was* fictional, but was written in an effort to convince people it was valid history.⁶ That is key for me. If I were writing a fictional account about someone, but wanted people to believe it, I would certainly describe the person accurately. Importantly, some of the readers of this fictional work likely knew Paul personally. Today no one would believe my account of Ronald Reagan if I described him as a short, bald fellow with a limp when he walked. If you wish to sell a story, your chances are greatly diminished if you give the wrong physical data about the man you write up!

One might think that with all the success Paul had on the mission field, that he was someone that drew people in with his magnetism and physical beauty. Ultimately as a lawyer, however, I safely assume that Paul was not an overly impressive physical specimen, but one whose strength and believability stemmed from his convictions and his message, not his debonair appearance.

One final physical note about Paul, it seems he had poor eyesight later in life, perhaps like people who suffer macular degeneration today. The basis for this comes from several sources. First, Paul dictated his letters rather than writing them himself. For example, in the letter Paul wrote to the church in Rome, we read in the 16th chapter, verse 22, that a man named Tertius was the writer. Using a secretary (called an "amanuensis") was not uncommon, but for someone as literate as Paul, it wasn't necessary.

In an effort to prove a letter's authenticity, Paul would always sign his own name to the letter. As Paul told the church in Thessalonica,

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write (2 Thess. 3:17).

⁶ The early church leader (and lawyer) Tertullian wrote around 190AD that the work was falsely named as "Acts of Paul," and that "the elder who compiled that document, thinking to add on his own to Paul's reputation, was found out, and though he professed he had done it for love of Paul, was deposed from his position." *De Baptismo Liber 17* (Evans' translation 1964).

In one letter, however, Paul makes a point out of how large his letters were in signing his name, perhaps an indication of vision difficulties.

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand (Gal. 6:11).

Some believe that Paul was indicating that he had written the whole letter, but that would not be normal. Paul often took the pen at the end of the letter and wrote out his final words.⁷ Those who believe Paul suffered visually point out the “large letters.”

More indicative to me is the fact that when Paul was called before the Sanhedrin, Paul did not know the person speaking at one point was the High Priest. The High Priest certainly would have worn distinguishing garb. When Paul was rebuked for talking back to the high priest, he explained he was unaware that the person who spoke out was in fact the high priest. In our age of glasses, contact lenses, and surgical techniques, we often fail to realize how poor vision, macular degeneration, cataracts or other conditions contributed readily to functional blindness in visual details.

Family history, childhood, and education

I can draw a good bit of the information I would get in an initial interview by looking *closely* at the basic storyline given in Acts 21-23, considered in the first chapter. There are notable comments about Paul’s personal life. Here are the passages with underlined comments revealing Paul’s family history, childhood, and early education:

In Acts 21:37, when Paul said to the arresting officer (the Roman tribune), “May I say something to you?” The tribune was startled to hear Paul speak to him in Greek. He asked Paul, about his Greek and in Paul’s reply we learn of his past. Paul said, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city.”

After Paul got permission from the tribune to address the Jewish masses that were assaulting Paul before the tribune interrupted by arresting Paul, Paul shifted from Greek to Hebrew as he addressed the Jews. Paul told them, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel...” (Acts 22:3).

Paul then recounted his Damascus road experience where he learned that Jesus was the long-awaited Jewish Messiah. When Paul added that God had sent him to share the news

⁷ See, for example, Philemon verse 18-19, “If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.”

of Jesus as Messiah to the Gentiles, the crowd erupted in anger. The tribune, who doubtlessly didn't understand Paul's Hebrew speech, was intent on knowing what Paul had said to incite the crowd. The tribune ordered his men to examine Paul under torture (flogging with whips).

This may seem extreme to us today. I would certainly want to know why the tribune was making such a big deal out of a riot. Later I will detail this information in another section of this study, but for now simply note that one of the biggest challenges of the Roman tribune and other Roman authorities in the region was that of keeping the peace. The time of these events are a decade out from the Jews full-on rebellion against the Roman government, and the discord had already been simmering for some time.

Immediately before the torture began, Paul stopped it by telling the soldiers he was a Roman citizen. (That made the torture illegal.) The Tribune had come and asked Paul about Paul's citizenship when we read Paul's claim, "I am a citizen by birth." Later, the tribune set Paul before the Chief Priest and ruling council of the Jews. During Paul's discussions with the council, Paul explained, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (Acts 23:6), providing insight into Paul's parents. A bit later, the council plots to ambush Paul and the attempt is thwarted because "the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush" (Acts 23:16).

Sometime later, as Paul appeals through the Roman judicial system he makes an appearance before King Agrippa in Caesarea. Paul begins his defense telling Agrippa, "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews" (Acts 26:4). It is during this speech to Agrippa that Paul confesses, "I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them" (Acts 26:10).

Paul also gives us some insight into his upbringing in his letter to the church at Philippi. In Phil. 3:5-6, Paul writes that he was, "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people 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 righteousness under the law, blameless."

Implications

From these passages, I learn a great deal about Paul's life:

- Paul was born a Roman citizen (which tells us Paul's parents were also Roman citizens);
- Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia. Paul was a citizen of Tarsus as well as a Roman citizen;
- Paul's father was a devout Jew belonging to the Pharisee party;

- Paul was not an only child, having at least one sister (and through her a nephew);
- Paul spoke Greek fluently as well as Hebrew/Aramaic and Latin;
- Paul moved to Jerusalem at some point and continued his studies under Rabbi Gamaliel;
- Paul’s family kept their heritage and could trace their lineage to the tribe of Benjamin throughout the centuries, even through the Jewish captivities and dispersions; and,
- Paul cast his vote against saints of the church; likely indicating Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin.

The “TO DO” list

From this interview, I would have made a number of notes for areas that needed research. I would use my lawyers, my private investigators, and my legal assistants to go to work “scrubbing” these facts to see what I could fairly learn from other sources.

Tarsus

If I sent someone to research Tarsus, which Paul called “no obscure city,” it would produce some useful information. Tarsus was an ancient city, already several thousand years old at the time Paul was born. It was located near what is now the southeast coast of Turkey.

An ancient geographer named Strabo (c.64BC – c.25AD) wrote 17 books on ancient cities and places, including Tarsus. Strabo gave general descriptions, and often added political and historical data on the cities. His work is particularly helpful in researching this subject.

Strabo noted that Tarsus was built on the outlet of the Cydnus River (today called the “Berdan River”). The river flowed through the middle of Tarsus and into a broad lake connected to the Mediterranean Sea. That lake served as a naval station for the Romans.⁸ Although historically Jewish people in Israel were not typically seafarers, Paul was from an area where the sea was seen as a natural resource for transportation and commerce.

Tarsus had a storied past. It had seen the Assyrian King Shalmaneser in the 800’s BC as well as King Sennacherib in the 600’s BC. Alexander the Great had saved the city from burning in 333 BC, although he got seriously ill supposedly by swimming in the cold

⁸ Strabo, *Geographies*, book 14, ch. 5.10.

waters of the Cydnus River. Julius Caesar spent time in Tarsus, and it was Tarsus where Cleopatra, dressed as Aphrodite, sailed in to meet Marc Antony in 41 BC.

Tarsus was famous for its gymnasium, built by the banks of the Cydnus river. Even more famous was Tarsus's educated citizenry. Strabo wrote,

The people of Tarsus have devoted themselves so eagerly, not only to philosophy, but also to the whole round of education in general, that they have surpassed Athens, Alexandria, or any other place that can be named where there have been schools and lectures of philosophers.⁹

In a sense, Tarsus was a universal city. While other cities hoarded their scholars, Tarsus would educate people and then send them abroad to “complete their education.”¹⁰ The city with the greatest number of Tarsians was Rome. Strabo said, “It is *full of Tarsians!*”¹¹

As a cultural and educated city, Tarsus had an early influence on Paul such that one is not surprised that Paul was able to converse with the educated philosophers of Athens. No doubt even the most important Greek philosophers in Athens would have respected Paul's educational roots in Tarsus. Paul's “resume” would make him worthy of any scholar's listening. Paul could quote Greek poets from memory and understood the implications of the latest Greek philosophies.¹² He also used athletic and gymnasium analogies over and over in his teaching and writing.¹³ Paul would easily come by this knowledge as well as great dexterity with the Greek language in Tarsus.

Strabo also said that Tarsians were famous for an ability to “instantly speak off hand and unceasingly on any given subject.”¹⁴ Tarsus was the perfect place for one who was to grow up and take the gospel to a Greek world.¹⁵

⁹ *Ibid.*, (Loeb Classical Library, H.L. Jones transl.).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, at bk 14, ch. 5:15.

¹² See Acts 17:16-34.

¹³ For example, 1Cor. 9:24 – “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.”

¹⁴ Strabo, *Geographies*, book 14, ch. 5.15.

¹⁵ Some scholars argue that Paul moved from Tarsus to Jerusalem in infancy, or at such an early age, that any Tarsian influence on Paul is unlikely. See e.g., W. C. van Unnik, *Tarsus or Jerusalem, The City of Paul's Youth*, (Epworth Press 1962). I find these arguments

Knowing Tarsus as a philosophy and rhetoric center with a strong influence on Paul (Paul also spent time there after his conversion – Acts 11:25-26) puts emphasis behind Paul’s comments on philosophy and rhetoric. In one of Paul’s letters to the church he started in Corinth, Paul wrote,

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech [*rhetoric*] or wisdom [*philosophy*]. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

Paul knew the power of rhetoric and philosophy. He also knew something he considered much stronger.

Citizenship

Paul was a citizen of Tarsus as well as a Roman citizen. These two citizenships came about through different manners, and both citizenships are important areas for research.

In the United States of America, if you are physically born in the country, you are automatically a citizen of the U.S.A. States and cities inside the U.S. do not have unique citizenship. In Paul’s day, the laws of citizenship were quite different. Being a citizen of Rome did not make one a citizen of Tarsus and vice-versa. Paul’s dual citizenship (Roman and Tarsian) came about through different means and had different associated rights and privileges.

Tarsus

The best evidence explaining Paul’s citizenship in Tarsus comes from his contemporary Dio Chrysostom (c.40AD – c.120). Dio was a well-travelled rhetorician. In other words, he travelled around the Roman Empire giving speeches on public affairs and political issues. In our age, that is not something we readily have, we can get opinions and news by watching television or reading the Internet. In Dio’s day, it was a notable profession. We have many of Dio’s “discourses” we can read today. Two of those discourses were to the people of Tarsus.

unpersuasive in light of the exegesis other scholars offer of the Acts passages noted above as well as the clear non-Jerusalem influences shown in Paul’s life.

From Dio's second discourse, I get general insights into Tarsus, as well as specific information about citizenship. Generally the information includes the Tarsian affection for sports and music, both topics and analogies frequently used and referenced by Paul.¹⁶ Dio also gives insight into why Paul would tell the Roman tribune that he was a citizen of "Tarsus, no obscure city." Dio pointed out the superior role and status of Tarsus in his speech saying,

For, men of Tarsus, it has come to pass that you are foremost among your people, not merely because your city is the greatest of all the cities of Cilicia and a great metropolis from the start, but also because you beyond all others gained the friendly support of the second Caesar [Augustus].¹⁷

Then, as Dio urged the Tarsian council to expand the roles of citizenship, he explained that citizens should not be only men who can afford it, but also men who genuinely care for the city.

For it cannot be that by the mere payment of 500 drachmas [1 ½ years of wages] a man can come to love you and immediately be found worthy of citizenship.¹⁸

With Tarsian citizenship costing a year and a half of normal income, it certainly wasn't cheap. Furthermore, with Paul's father and mother already being Roman citizens (more on that below), the reasons for paying such a sum and gaining Tarsian citizenship are worth considering.

The principle value in Tarsian citizenship was involvement in community life. Tarsian citizens were community leaders. Such a man (at the time, women could not be citizens of Tarsus) made decisions for the city, was able to sit on councils, and was generally expected to fund community activities. It is apparent that Paul not only came from a family of some wealth, but that even before his missionary efforts and calling, Paul and his family did not live as exclusivist Jews who had nothing to do with the non-Jewish world.

Some might be shocked at the idea of a first century Jew taking a level of civic involvement in a pagan/Gentile city; however, many Jews were not exclusivists. They would readily interact with Gentiles, especially outside of Palestine. More of this is considered below in the discussion of Gamaliel.

¹⁶ Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 34.1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, at 34.7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, at 34.23.

Rome

As for Paul's Roman citizenship, Paul explained he was born a citizen. Research on the significance of Roman citizenship can be difficult. Over the near 1000-years of the Roman legal system, the laws of citizenship varied tremendously. Defending Paul, I would research the breadth of the timespan, but would focus mainly on the period of Paul's life and that of his parents.

As noted earlier, being a citizen of a city or territory within the Roman Empire did not make one a Roman citizen. Rome was not a "nation" the way most think of nations today. At its roots, the "Roman Empire" was the *city of Rome* and its owned territories. As Rome expanded its control over the Mediterranean, various city-states were allowed to continue with their own forms of government, all sworn in allegiance to Rome. By the time of the Caesars, Rome's control was almost absolute. Still cities like Tarsus maintained their own councils, laws, rules of citizenship, and more.

The citizens of Rome were those who voted for the Roman Senate and those who could hold public office. Initially this citizenship was only for certain men in Rome and the surrounding areas in parts of Italy. By Paul's time, Roman citizenship extended to most freedmen in Italy. Outside of Italy there were still citizens, but not nearly as extensive. Some Caesars, including Augustus, were quite narrow in granting citizenship in the city of Rome to those outside Italy. That is what "Roman citizenship" was at its core – citizenship in the *city of Rome*. It enabled one to vote in affairs of the city of Rome, its officers, and its policies that radiated out and affected the Empire at large. As a practical matter, the citizens of Rome living outside of Italy, rarely voted (one was required to be physically present in Rome to vote), but they also held other important rights.

At Paul's time, most people received their citizenship by birth, especially if living outside or Italy. If one's mother and father were citizens of Rome, then upon birth, one "inherited" citizenship. Citizenship could also be purchased, under certain circumstances or given out as a reward for special service to the state. This makes sense of how Paul's parents might have gotten their citizenship while in Tarsus. Tarsus was a key city for Pompey (c.106 – c.48BC) and Julius Caesar (c.100 – c.44BC) in the fifty years before Christ. For a time, the city even bore the name "Juliopolis" in honor of Julius Caesar. The Roman emperor at the time of Christ's birth and likely Paul's as well was Augustus. This was the Caesar that Dio noted was especially fond of Tarsus. The city had supported Augustus in his efforts to consolidate the Roman Empire, and it was also the home of August's tutor, Athenodorus Cananites. Augustus was hesitant to grant citizenship in Rome to many foreigners, but it makes sense he would have done so in Tarsus to those who were particularly helpful.

As one weighs the impact of Paul's citizenship in the City of Rome when Paul was outside the city, it is necessary to understand a broad societal difference between the Pauline era of Roman culture and modern America. The United States is a society that holds up rags-to-riches stories as a manifestation of "the American Dream." It is not uncommon to hear proclamations of successful people declaring their humble or impoverished beginnings. Not so with ancient Rome.

In the first century Roman Empire, society existed in clear hierarchical structures. People belonged in a certain social stratum, and there they stayed. They married in that stratum, had children in that stratum, and rarely was movement made from one level to another. The social status was closely tied to legal status.

Legal status was comprised of three different components: (1) Was one a slave or free person? (2) Does one possess and citizenship? (3) Does one have a position in a "Roman" household? A Roman citizen had all three components, being free, a citizen and a Roman household. Those who were free and had citizenship in a provincial city like Tarsus, but not Rome, were of a lower class, having only met two of the three components. If one had no component, and was a slave (being neither free, nor a citizen anywhere, nor of a Roman household/citizen) then one was at the bottom of the social strata, holding the legal status of "property" or "chattel," not unlike a horse or cow.¹⁹

Even among Roman citizens, those who met all three criteria, there were divisions of hierarchy. Two worthy of note centered on whether one was born a free person or whether one's freedom was bought or obtained in life. In the societal pecking order, those born free (citizens by birth) were considered a clear cut above those who purchased or acquired citizenship.²⁰

Having done this research would help me understand certain events in Paul's life as well as the events surrounding his arrest. Interviewing Paul, I would learn that Paul's Roman citizenship served him well in his ministry. The New Testament records three times when Paul invoked his rights as a Roman citizen. Acts 16 reports Paul's imprisonment with Silas in Philippi, after receiving beatings at the hands of the local magistrates.²¹ Around midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing, an earthquake shook open the jail, offering Paul and the others freedom. The jailer, who no doubt should not have been sleeping without a watch over the prisoners, awoke to the discovery of open

¹⁹ See, generally, *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Law and Society*, (Oxford 2016), at 872 (electronic page).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Paul could have invoked his citizenship and prevented the beatings, but for reasons we do not know, Paul chose not to.

doors. Fearing the prisoners had fled, and knowing his own life would be forfeited, the jailer started to kill himself. Paul shouted for the jailer to stop, telling him no one had fled. This led to the jailer's conversion along with that of his household.

The next day, the magistrates ordered Paul's release, but Paul refused to leave the cell! Paul said, "They [the magistrates] have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out" (Acts 16:37). The magistrates were fearful over their deeds and came to Paul with apologies, giving Paul a personal escort out of town.

The second time one reads in Acts of Paul invoking his Roman citizenship came in Jerusalem during the arrest at issue in this study. After Paul's arrest, as the Roman tribune was having Paul taken into the barracks to lock him up, Paul told the tribune of his Tarsian citizenship, asking to speak to the people. Paul was letting the tribune know Paul was at least of a social stratum more significant than might have been surmised by Paul's appearance.

Interestingly, Paul left out his Tarsian citizenship and status in the Gentile world when he spoke to the Jewish crowd in Hebrew. It makes sense because it would mean nothing to them, and might even make it look like Paul cared more about his status than his message. For Paul, his status was used before the tribune, much like a wise person uses money. It was used sparingly to achieve an end. It was not flaunted. Paul said only as much as necessary to get to address the crowd.

Talking to the crowd, once Paul reached the point where he spoke of the Lord sending him to Gentiles, the crowd erupted in a riot. The tribune responded by sending Paul to be interrogated by flogging. Even though the tribune hadn't understood Paul's Hebrew address, he had full intentions of finding out what Paul said. As Paul was being stretched out to receive the flogging (a bloody horrible torture that often left people maimed or dead), it became necessary for Paul to spend more capital! Paul told the centurion overseeing the punishment of Paul's citizenship in Rome.

Had the centurion, a lower social class man, allowed the flogging, it would have meant disaster for the centurion. Stopping immediately, the centurion informed his commander the tribune about Paul's status. The tribune was also a citizen, and he approached Paul seeking to establish the social order between them. The tribune had purchased his citizenship. Not Paul. Paul was a freeborn citizen. This struck fear in the tribune. It meant that Paul had rights that were violated (you couldn't bind a Roman citizen without trial). It likely meant that Paul had influential and powerful family. It also meant that Paul "outranked" the tribune in society. All of this left the tribune trying to figure out what to do.

The third instance Paul used his citizenship in Rome occurred about two years later. Luke gives an account of Paul before the rulers Festus and Agrippa. Festus had intended to send Paul back to Jerusalem where some of the Jews were waiting to kill him. Instead of returning, Paul declared, “I appeal to Caesar!” That was the right of any citizen of Rome. They had a right to have their case heard in Rome before the seat of Rome’s government – the seat of Caesar. With that automatic right of appeal, Paul was shipped off to Rome, taking the gospel with him.

Pharisee

Paul repeatedly says that he was a Pharisee. While Paul speaks of his past in Acts 26:5 saying he “lived as a Pharisee,” Paul also uses the *present tense* in Acts 23:6 saying, “***I am*** a Pharisee.” Notably Paul was not a first-generation Pharisee because he also called himself a Pharisee of Pharisees, specifying his lineage in that sect of Judaism.

Paul knew his Pharisaic heritage was significant in the ears of his Jewish listeners. Why? This is important to Paul, and I would immediately send someone to research Pharisees to see what Paul meant when he made such a claim. This investigation would reveal a lot.

Josephus explained that the Pharisees were one of the main powerful sects within Judaism in the first century. According to Josephus, Pharisees had been influential for two centuries before Paul and Christ as they sought to ensure the Jewish way of life against external and internal forces.²² Josephus noted that after the death of Herod (4BC), the Pharisees were scheming for power in Herod’s replacement. Josephus writes,

for there was a certain sect of men that were Jews, who valued themselves highly upon the exact skill they had in the law of their fathers, and made men believe they were highly favored by God.²³

This perception of the Pharisees is consistent with what we read in the gospel accounts. The Pharisees were concerned that Jesus ate with the unholy (Mt. 9:11; Mk 2:16; Lk 5:30); the Pharisees were consistent with fasting (Mt. 9:14; Mk 2:18; Lk 5:33); the Pharisees took offense at indications they were less than appropriately holy (Mt 15:11-13); the Pharisees sought to challenge Jesus on issues of the law and custom (Mt. 19:3; Mk 2:24; 10:2; Lk 6:2); the Pharisees tithed down to the very herbs they harvested (Mt 23:23; Lk 11:42); by all outward appearances, the Pharisees seemed pure and holy (Mt. 23:27); and they would always wash their hands before eating (Mk 7:3, 5).

²² Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 13 §288-298.

²³ *Ibid.* 17 §41.

This effort to ensure the Jewish law and way of life among the Pharisees also led to tension between some members and Jesus. Jesus was concerned with the tendency of some Pharisees to elevate the law and its finer points over people. For example, Jesus points out to the Pharisees who were upset over his disciples plucking grain to eat on a Sabbath that, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:23-28).

Jesus was also concerned that some Pharisees had a tendency to externalize their religion into the list of do’s and don’ts that forgot the need to purify and live holy in the heart. In Matthew, we read Jesus saying:

You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Mt 23:26-28).

Yet, not all interactions with the Pharisees were negative in the gospels. Some Pharisees would have Jesus over for dinner (Lk 7:36; 11:37; 14:1; 17:36); and while some plotted to kill Jesus (Mt 12:14; Mk 3:6; Jn. 7:32), other Pharisees warned Jesus about death threats (Lk 13:31). It was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, John tells us, that came to Jesus by night and got to hear the wonderful words of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” This same Pharisee Nicodemus brought expensive treatments for the body of Christ following the crucifixion (Jn 19:39).²⁴

Josephus also sets out basic beliefs of the Pharisees. According to Josephus, Pharisees believed in life after death and a resurrection for reward and punishment. Josephus contrasted this belief with that of the Sadducees who did not believe in such a resurrection with corresponding rewards/punishments.²⁵ Hand in hand with their belief in the afterlife, Pharisees firmly believed in the world of hierarchy among demons and angels, in contrast to the Sadducees who held no such beliefs. Pharisees also were believers in God’s divine provision (we might use the term “predestination”) that

²⁴ In Acts 15:5, we read that in the Jerusalem conference, some of the Pharisees in the church believed that Gentiles needed to first convert to Judaism before becoming Christians. “But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.’”

²⁵ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.8.14, “the Pharisees ... say that all souls are incorruptible; but that the souls of good men are only removed into other bodies, -- but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment. But the Sadducees ... take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades.” (Whitson translation).

somehow combined with man's free will while the Sadducees emphasized the free will of man and human responsibility.²⁶

This is consistent with what scripture relates about the Pharisees, at least as far as believing in the resurrection of the dead and the hierarchy of demons. The Pharisees accused Jesus as working under "Beelzebub, the prince of demons" when casting out demons (Mt. 12:24). In the last chapter I referenced Paul using the Pharisees' views on the resurrection to incite a shouting match over the issue between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. As Luke told the story:

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. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial." And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. (Acts 23:5-8)

We see this confirmed when we probe the rabbinic sources on Pharisees.²⁷ In the "Babylonian Talmud" (a discussion of legal debates on the law finally put into final form around 700 A.D. but dating back several centuries before), we read of seven types of Pharisees, almost all of which are not praiseworthy! Only the Pharisees who study the law out of love, out of fear, or simply because it is the law of God are praiseworthy.²⁸

In Pharisees, as in other religious groups, we have a wide variety of people. But, we find people who are convinced that God is holy, that God is to be obeyed, that a resurrection follows death, that reward and punishment are found in the resurrection, that angels and

²⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.5.9, "Now for the Pharisees, they say that some actions, but not all, are the work of fate, and some of them are in our own power, and that they are liable to fate, but are not caused by fate... And for the Sadducees, they take away fate, and say there is no such thing, and that the events of human affairs are not at its disposal; but they suppose that all our actions are in our power, so that we ourselves are the cause of what is good, and receive what is evil from our own folly." (Whitson translation).

²⁷ The rabbinic literature about the Pharisees is subject to significant scholarly debate. Many of the references to 1st century Jewish laws and customs some scholars deem appropriately understood as that of the Pharisees. Others dispute these conclusions. There are a few times, however, when early Jewish writings actually reference the Pharisees by name. The dates of these entries are also subject to heated debate.

²⁸ See the Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 3:4. There are seven types of Pharisees: One who does the right thing for the wrong reason; one who walks with exaggerated humility; one who does right to his own hurt; one who does right to the hurt of others; one who does right out of duty; one who does right out of love; and one who does right out of fear.

demons are working on earth in the lives of humanity, and that the hand of God is active in protecting and providing for people. The variations come from motives and finer points of “doctrine.” No doubt many Pharisees acted out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, envy, or even rivalry. Yet, those same motives Paul found among those carrying the Christian gospel message, with no Pharisaic affiliation whatsoever (Phil. 1:15-17). I dare say, we could probably find it in the midst of most Christian groups even today.

So we see Paul, who was raised a Pharisee, but who has no trouble calling himself a Pharisee deep into his years as a Christian. Paul carried the core Pharisaic beliefs. He not only believed in the resurrection for humanity, but he also knew he had witnessed a resurrected Lord. Paul says without that resurrection, Christians “are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor. 15:19).

Gamaliel

From Acts 22:1-3, it is clear that Paul studied under one named Gamaliel. Paul says this with clear pride, expecting it to have an impact on the listeners. This would be important to Paul’s defense, and I would send a researcher or two to investigate who Gamaliel was, and what his students might have learned from him. It would not be hard to gather a lot of information about Gamaliel. Both the Bible and ancient Jewish non-Biblical writings give a lot of information about Gamaliel.

Research would quickly show that there were at least six sages in Hebrew history named Rabbi Gamaliel. Paul’s mentor was the oldest one, “Rabban Gamaliel ha-Zaken,” OR Rabbi Gamaliel the elder.” Paul’s Rabbi Gamaliel was so famous, that one epitaph for him is recorded in Jewish writings we still have today. The sages that followed Gamaliel wrote,

When Rabban Gamaliel the elder died, the glory of the Torah [the Jewish Law books commonly called Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy] ceased, and purity and saintliness perished.²⁹

To more fully understand Rabbi Gamaliel, it is helpful to understand his heritage. Shortly before Gamaliel, during the turn of the era from BCE/BC to CE/AD, there were two prominent rabbinic schools of thought in Jerusalem. One was that of Rabbi Shammai; the other was Rabbi Hillel’s. These two rabbis debated many different positions which we can still read today. Not only were these two scholars pinnacle figures in interpreting the law, but their students became famous as well.

²⁹ *Sotah*, 9:15.

Shammai was the stricter of the two; Hillel the more accommodating. Jewish writings kept an example of the difference in approach to conversion between Shammai and Hillel. In the Babylonian Talmud,³⁰ we read of “a gentile who came before Shammai.” The gentile says he will convert to Judaism if Shammai can teach him the whole law while the gentile stands on one foot. Shammai drives the gentile off with a stick. The gentile then goes to Hillel with the same offer. Hillel tells the gentile, “What is hateful to you, to your fellow don’t do.” Then, Hillel adds, “That’s the entirety of the Torah; everything else is elaboration. So go, study.”³¹

Paul’s mentor and teacher Gamaliel was Hillel’s grandson³² and, after Gamaliel’s father, became the head of Hillel’s school. Gamaliel, like his father and like Hillel his grandfather, carried the honorific title from Jewish rabbis of “the Elder.” Hillel, Gamaliel, and Paul were all devout Pharisees, and one can readily see the teachings and approaches of them interlace.

Like Hillel, Gamaliel brought a more pragmatic and moderate view towards life and faithful practice than that of Shammai. Some examples of Hillel’s “laxity” are found in teachings on the Sabbath. Since the law allowed an ox to be taken out of the ditch on the Sabbath, Hillel believed that one could eat an egg that a chicken laid on the Sabbath.

Gamaliel took a similar pragmatic approach as recorded in Acts 5. Peter and the apostles were called before the High Priest and council for questioning. The reaction of the council and priests was murderous rage. But Gamaliel entered the picture with words of practical advice. As Luke records it, Gamaliel says,

take care what you are about to do with these men...keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” (Acts 5:33-39)

The importance of Gamaliel’s views on Paul becomes apparent from looking at Gamaliel’s teaching. McRay perceives an example of Gamaliel’s influence on Paul in the issue of divorce in mixed marriages. McRay writes,

³⁰ The Jews kept oral traditions and commentaries for decades and centuries before finally reducing them to writing. The Babylonian Talmud was such a written product. Scholars debate the final dates of the Babylonian Talmud, but it was finished in different sections starting around 200 A.D. and finished likely by 500 A.D.

³¹ *b. Shabbat*, Chapter 2, I.12 (Hendrickson Publishers 2005) Neusner translation.

³² *Babylonian Talmud*, b. Shabbat, Chapter 15:1, II.16G.

Gamaliel, was a representative of the Hillel point of view, and Paul's approach to Jewish law seems to have been the same. In dealing with the question of divorce among believers, Paul could draw on Jesus' teaching to Jews, and so he wrote: Now this says the Lord, not I (see 1 Cor. 7:10). But in dealing with mixed marriages, those in which one of the partners had converted to Christianity, Paul could only say, as Gamaliel or Hillel would have said: 'To the rest I say, not the Lord...' (1 Cor. 7:12). Jesus never taught on the subject, since marriage outside the Jewish religion was not permitted (Ezra 10:11; Neh. 13:25). Paul, facing a new situation, the inclusion of the Gentiles in the new faith, which the law did not envision, had to make the necessary adjustments to embrace the new circumstances.³³

Gamaliel's influence is not surprising because Gamaliel stressed the importance of the teacher-student relationship.³⁴

Alan Segal, a Jew who has written on Paul, notes that Paul's placement in the school of Hillel/Gamaliel put him in a Pharisaic branch that was supportive of and even seeking Gentile conversion into Judaism.³⁵ This made it an easy step for Paul to understand his own mission to fulfill the words of Jesus,

And he [Jesus] told me, "I will send you far away to the nations/gentiles"
(Acts 22:21).

Apparently, the school of Shammai was in power and prominence during the ministry of Jesus and subsequent years of Paul's ministry. Hillel's school was in the minority.³⁶ This explains not only the violent opposition Paul faced, but also some of the more intense run-ins the Pharisees had with Jesus and the apostles during Christ's ministry years.

Before leaving our investigation of Gamaliel, there are three other facts that are relevant in my hypothetical legal work for Paul. Each of these facts bear on Paul's work, and how he was "trained" for it, even before he changed his mind on whether Jesus was the Messiah.

First, Gamaliel reached out to the Jews beyond the area of Jerusalem. The Jewish Talmud has preserved three different letters that Rabbi Gamaliel sent to Jews who were

³³ John McRay, *Paul, His Life and Teaching* (Baker Academic 2003) at 45.

³⁴ *Babylonian Talmud*, 'Abot R. Nat. A.40; 'Abot 1:16; Pe'a 2:6; 'Or. 2:12; Yebam. 16:7.

³⁵ Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert, the Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (Yale 1990) at 96-105.

³⁶ See discussion and footnotes of W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (S.P.C.K. 1955) at 9.

outside Jerusalem. Two of those letters were sent to Jewish communities in Galilee, northern Israel. One of the letters we still have Gamaliel sent to Jews in the broader Mediterranean community. He addressed it to, “our brethren of the exile of Babylon, the exile of Media, and the other exiles of Israel.”³⁷

This becomes something I would note in Paul’s files for later use. It would explain why Paul was also well-versed in letter writing to the faithful outside of his immediate presence. We have a number of Paul’s letters preserved in the New Testament. It also explains why Paul so readily received an audience in the many synagogues he visited throughout the Mediterranean world. Those were Jews who had received letters from Paul’s mentor, the great Gamaliel. They would naturally be ready to hear from the prize student.

Second, Gamaliel was tolerant of Gentiles, much as Hillel sought to make Gentile conversion into Judaism an easy matter.³⁸ I would note this for later as Paul frequently explained his calling to be a missionary to the Gentiles.

Finally, “Gamaliel stood almost alone in his love for the Greek language. It was studied in his ‘school’ and he even declared it the only language into which the Torah [the Old Testament Law] could be perfectly translated.”³⁹ This I would note not only because Paul wrote his letters we still have in Greek, but also because over and over in those letters, Paul used a Greek translation of the Old Testament Scriptures.

The Sanhedrin

After Paul’s arrest, events will lead him to plead his case before the local Roman Governor Felix in nearby Caesarea (a coastal town near Jerusalem). At one point in Paul’s stay there, King Agrippa visited the governor and Paul had an audience before the king and the governor. Agrippa’s fuller name was Herod Agrippa II, and he was the son of Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great. The Roman emperor Caligula gave Agrippa I the title of “king” and made him Rome’s ruler over ancient Palestine. Agrippa I was responsible for many persecutions of Christians, including the death of James, the apostle and brother of John. After his death, his son Agrippa II took his father’s title and responsibilities. Born in Rome in 27AD, the 30-year old King Agrippa II would have doubtlessly been familiar with Christian persecution policies of his father when he met Paul.

³⁷ *Sanhedrin. 11b; Tosefta, Sanhedrin 2:6; TJ, Sanhedrin 1:2, 18d.*

³⁸ *Babylonian Talmud, t. B. Qam. 9:30; y. ‘Abod. Zar. 1:9; Sifre to Deut. 38; Ber. 27a.*

³⁹ *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible, (Eerdmans 2000), “Gamaliel” with citations to the Babylonian Talmud at Soṭa 49b; cf. Gen. Rab. 36:8; Deut. Rab. 1:1; Meg. 1:8.*

During that visit, Paul was giving a bit of his history to the king. Paul told the king,

My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities (Acts 26:1-11, ESV).

One issue that has caused a fair amount of scholarly discussion is Paul's claim, "I cast my vote against them." On face value, the statement indicates that Paul was a voting member of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the highest leadership/judicial court within Jerusalem's Jewish circles at the time of Christ and Paul. It was the Sanhedrin that Luke terms the "council" in Acts 6:12 that had the power to vote for the stoning of Stephen. The word translated "vote" is *psephos* (ψηφος). It was the Greek for a rock or pebble, typically used in voting. A black pebble would mean conviction and a white one acquittal. Paul was saying he was voting in the Sanhedrin and he placed a black pebble, voting to convict.⁴⁰

What would it mean to our investigation of Paul to learn he was a member of the Sanhedrin? The Sanhedrin was composed mostly of people from the Jewish elite (mainly Sadducees) and from the legal circles (the lawyers being mainly Pharisees).⁴¹ There was

⁴⁰ Some scholars opt against the idea of the common meaning of Paul's phrase "cast my vote." The main reason concerns requirements for membership in the Sanhedrin. There are some later rabbinical writings that indicate prerequisites for membership in the Sanhedrin included being married and being at least 40. Many scholars refuse to believe that Paul was married or that he was quite that old, even though scripture never tells us Paul's age or whether he had at one point been married. I believe these scholars are mistaken. King Agrippa had the authority to appoint the high priests (elite or chief priests) that presided over the Sanhedrin (See, Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, at XX.i.1-3; viii.8; ix.7). For Paul to even suggest that he "voted" if he didn't, would have caused Agrippa to dismiss Paul immediately. Paul would be scrupulous to avoid even the appearance of anything false. Agrippa knew precisely what it meant for Paul to cast his "stone."

⁴¹ We must not think of lawyers simply in our 21st century frame of mind. A lawyer in Palestine at the time would have been trained first and foremost in the Torah, the Jewish Law. This training

a great deal of antagonism between the two groups. Shortly after Paul's audience with Agrippa II, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, the Sanhedrin was convened by the Sadducean high priest Ananus condemning James, the brother of Jesus. The Pharisees on the Sanhedrin used this as a time to depose Ananus, and it was Agrippa II who removed him from the office to the pleasure of the Pharisees. Agrippa II also made many other rulings in concert with the Pharisees' desires.⁴²

Paul was honest about his role in the Sanhedrin, and as a legal prosecutor of Jewish Christians. Paul never forgot his life as a persecutor of the church. In what we believe is Paul's earliest letter to survive, he wrote to the Galatians saying,

You have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it (Gal. 1:13).

For Paul, these actions of persecution and violence were not from a pagan life devoid of God. Paul saw it as part of his spiritual calling! Paul adds to the Galatians passage that his violent attempts to destroy the church were evidence of,

advancing in zeal beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers (Gal. 1:14).

CONCLUSION

From this initial interview and associated research, I would be starting to dig into the file to uncover what I need to defend Paul, but I would be far from done. After doing the research above, I would need to visit with Paul again. This would be my "follow-up interview number 2."

POINTS FOR HOME

1. *"we ...worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more..."*(Phil. 3:3-4)

Remember what really counts.

would be at the feet of a rabbi learned in the Law. As noted earlier, Paul's training as a "lawyer" was under Gamaliel.

⁴² See, Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.197-203.

2. “Paul replied, ‘I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people...’ (Acts 21:39; 22:3)

Use our opportunities for God.

3. “Paul replied, ‘I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people...I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city.’ (Acts 21:39; 22:3)

Make our choices for God.