



Paul's Behavior Problem: A Biography: Ingrained Self-Righteousness from Legalistic Religion, Phil 3:4a-6; World's Worst Sinner, 1 Tim 1:15-16

30. A summary of Paul's fanaticism for the law is provided by:

Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. 3d ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 831:

Paul was a native of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia [si-lish' i-a], and was of pure Jewish descent, of the tribe of Benjamin. His father was a Pharisee, and from him Saul inherited the rights of Roman citizenship (Acts 22:28). It will help to a better understanding of the apostle's life and teaching to remember that he was (1) a Roman citizen; (2) a Tarsian, a citizen of no mean city, (3) a Hebrew; and (4) a Pharisee.

At the proper age (probably about 13 years) he went to Jerusalem to prosecute his studies in the learning of the Jews. Here he became a student of Gamaliel, a distinguished teacher of the law (Acts 22:3). Here Saul grew more and more familiar with the outward observances of the law, and gaining that experience of the "spirit of bondage" which should enable him to understand himself.

Paul is first introduced to us in connection with the martyrdom of Stephen, and the persecution which followed. (In Luke's narrative and in Paul's own speeches and epistles ... he "made havoc of the Church," invading the sanctuaries of domestic life, "entering into every house" (Acts 8:3), and those whom he thus tore from their homes he "committed to prison." And not only did men thus suffer at his hands, but women also, a fact three times repeated as a great aggravation of his cruelty.

Nor was Stephen the only one to suffer death, as we may infer from the apostle's own confession, "I persecuted this way unto death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women (Acts 22:4), and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them" (Acts 26:20). He even endeavored to cause them "to blaspheme" (Acts 26:11). His fame as an inquisitor was notorious far and wide. Even at Damascus Ananias [an-a-ni' as] had heard "how much evil he had done to Christ's saints at Jerusalem" (Acts 9:13). It was not without reason that in his later years he remembered how he had "persecuted the Church of God and wasted it" (Galatians 1:13).

31. This describes Paul as an unbeliever which he confirms as a believer in:

Philippians 3:4b - If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:

v. 5 - circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

v. 6 - as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

32. This ingrained self-righteousness caused him to become spiritually blinded by the Law and thus incapable of seeing the grace of salvation in Christ.

33. This self-righteousness was taught to Paul at an early age and he bought into it. His zeal for the Law spiritually blinded him and made it impossible for him to see the grace of salvation in Jesus of Nazareth.

34. It took a Christophany on the Damascus Road to get Paul's attention and convert him over to Christianity. According to Galatians 1:15-2:1 it took Paul years to acquire the doctrine the Lord wanted him to communicate in Scripture.



35. Think of the children who are being indoctrinated into all the varied forms of evil in this country: sex education, environmentalism, homosexuality, progressivism, political correctness, multiculturalism, and diversity. Even if saved it will take years of concentrated Bible study to deprogram them from these doctrines of demons.
36. As far as Paul was concerned he considered his status quo to be history's worst sinner:
- 1 Timothy 1:15 - Faithful is the word and worthy of unqualified acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinful ones, with reference to which sinful ones, I keep on being the record holder [*πρῶτος, prōtos*].**
37. The word translated "record holder" is *prōtos* in the Greek and translated "chief" in the King James Version. The word means "first in order of rank; foremost, most important, or most prominent."
38. Paul's emphasis on being the foremost sinner of all time is a testimony to the grace of God toward all mankind as expressed in:
- 1 Timothy 1:16 - Nevertheless, for this reason, I have been given maximum grace in order that in me, the record holder, Jesus Christ might have demonstrated His perfect patience as a Prototype to them who are destined to believe in Him for eternal life.**
39. From these two verses we are able to extract a number of principles that explain why Paul continued to do what he did not desire to do:
1. Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit confirms that he is the worst sinner in all of human history.
 2. Paul holds the record because (1) he was more religious than anyone else and (2) he was driven by extreme religious zealotry which unrestrained always leads to murder.
 3. Since all religions are an invention of Lucifer designed to counterfeit and destroy proper worship of Jesus Christ in every dispensation of history then it may be concluded that the worst kinds of sin and evil are motivated by religion.
 4. Paul, motivated by the "traditions of men," which refers to the oral traditions of apostate Judaism, became the worst sinner.
 5. Paul's assertion of his status as world record holder for sinning is not hyperbole but a personal testimony illustrating the greatness of grace.
 6. The grace of God was able to take the worst sinner, convert him, and then mold him into the greatest believer of the Church Age.
 7. Paul thus becomes an illustration of the transforming power of God's grace combined with the inculcation of doctrine in the soul of the believer.
 8. A principle emerges: If God can save and transform the worst sinner who ever lived, He can save and transform any of the rest of us.