



MZBMP

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TITLE:

Paul's Background (Part 1)

TEXT:

Acts 21:39

PAUL'S NAME

- It was not uncommon to have two (or more) names (Acts 13:9).
- SAUL was his Hebrew name – it means “asked for.”
- PAUL was his Latin name – it means “little.”

PAUL'S BIRTHPLACE AND CITIZENSHIP– TARSUS

- Tarsus was the capital city of the imperial province of Cilicia.
- It was renowned as a place of education under the early Roman emperors. Historians compare it in this respect to Athens and Alexandria. Tarsus also was a place of much commerce. It is a famous trading center.
- It was made a free city by Cæsar Augustus – meaning it was not under Roman tribute or tax.
- It was a “no mean city” (Acts 21:39) – It is a “badge of honor” to have come from Tarsus.
- It probably boasted a population of half a million in the time of Paul.
- Paul was born in Tarsus (Acts 22:3).
- Paul is a citizen of Tarsus.
 - Living there would not automatically make a person a citizen. Only the privileged were named citizens of the city. The general population did not have that standing.
 - A person who was a citizen of a city was a person of influence.
 - The citizens of the city were responsible for its government. They were the ones who would assemble to conduct the affairs of the city and make the decisions that affected its corporate life.
 - Paul's family had probably lived in Tarsus for a significant length of time before his birth.

PAUL'S ROMAN CITIZENSHIP

- Paul was also a Roman citizen. He was one of the privileged ones, as seen in Acts 22:25-29.
 - A Roman citizen could not be condemned or punished without a fair hearing, a right ordinary people did not possess. That is why the Philippian authorities were frightened about the beating that had been administered to Paul and Silas in Acts 16:35-39. He could not be scourged, which is the reason Paul escaped the beating in Acts 22:25-29.
 - A Roman citizen could also appeal his case to the emperor if he felt he was not being treated fairly (Acts 25:10-12).
 - The citizen was also exempt from the poll tax but not the land tax.
 - This status normally came either: As a reward for some service to Rome or an influential Roman (the most usual way); By descent from one's father; Through purchase.

PAUL'S FAMILY

- Paul was a Benjamite (Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5).
 - Genesis 35:18 — Benjamin was the son of Jacob and Rachel.
 - I Samuel 9:21 - Benjamin was King Saul's tribe.
- Paul was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6).
 - Paul was a Pharisee of the strictest kind (Acts 26:5).
- No mention is made of his mother.
- Paul had at least one sister - Acts 23:16.
- Paul had kinsmen - Romans 16:7,11,21.