April 21, 2002 Northwest Bible Church

**THE LIFE OF PAUL**

**INTRO**

 Paul was a man created by God, equipped by God, redeemed by God for the glory of God. God was the heavenly Potter who fashioned Paul into a vessel for His own use.

**I. GOD’S HAND IN FORMING PAUL’S PERSONAL DETAILS.**

 A. Born in Tarsus. Acts 21:39.

 B. He had an impressive genealogy. Phil. 3:5-6.

C. From a prominent family. Support:

1) His education.

 2) His Roman citizenship (Acts 16:37;22:25f.).

 D. His personal appearance was not impressive. 2 Cor. 10:10; Acts 14:12.

 E. His most powerful assetwas not eloquence but his mind. (2 Cor. 11:6).

 F. No evidence he was ever married. 1 Cor. 7:8.

**II. GOD’S HAND IN FORMING PAUL AS A PHARISEE.**

 A. “A son of Pharisees” (Acts 23:6), so at least a third generation Pharisee.

 B. His education. Acts 22:3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today.”

 The great tragedy of Phariseeism was that they put the traditions of men above the commandments of God. Phariseeism had grown grotesque. Its duties were deformed, its religion rotten to the core, and its piety perverted. From the top of its head to the bottom of its feet it was full of that which God despised: pride, self-righteousness, basing salvation on circumcision and external righteousness.

 Thus the Pharisees and Paul too came under the searing rebukes of Jesus Christ: Mt. 15:1-9; Mt. 23.

**III. GOD’S HAND IN FORMING PAUL AS A PERSECUTOR.**

 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting Stephen to death (Acts 7:58; 8:1).

Gal. 1:14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

Acts 8:3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

Acts 22:4 “And I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,

Acts 22:5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.

Acts 22:19 “And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in Thee.

Acts 22:20 ‘And when the blood of Thy witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the cloaks of those who were slaying him.’

Gal. 1:13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it;

1Tim. 1:13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

**IV. GOD’S HAND IN FORMING PAUL AS A CHOSEN VESSEL.**

 Where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more! Acts 9 records his conversion.

**V. CLOSING LESSON: THE POTTER STILL AT WORK!**