

HISTORY OF St. PAUL.

LESSON-24

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

References : *Phili. Chapt:3*

Memory verse : *Ephe. 3: 8 -9*

Objective: Understand that election of any man by God is according to pre-destination. God brings that particular person of choice to a suitable place, background and environment.

Introduction: Paul was not among the 12 disciples of Christ. He had not even seen the Lord in body. Yet, Paul has a prominent place in the Church with respect to the formation and expansion of the Church. Whoever is yielding, God will use his potentials and education alike for the Lord's service. Saul was a perfect Jew of noble birth. Let us study how God prepared grounds to make his religious zeal and education for the Christian Church.

The sum-total of the history of Paul is that the severest persecutor of the Christian Church became the greatest propagator of the Gospel. The resurrection of Jesus Christ and the conversion of Paul stand out as two undeniable evidences of the uniqueness of Christianity. Most of the New Testament doctrines have come to us from Paul's writings. Even the mystery of the Church has been revealed to us through Paul's Epistles (Eph.3:1-11). Apostle Paul, aware of the fact that the gospel meant for the whole world, took its message to the farthest corners of the civilized world. "To whom He was not announced, they shall see, and those who have not heard shall understand" (Rom. 15:19-21). Paul was an ideal disciple of Jesus Christ. He said, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cori.:11:1) This history of Paul, therefore, is very important and inspiring.

HIS BIRTH PLACE:

Paul was born at Tarsus, the capital of the province of Cilicia on the South-Eastern part of Asia Minor. In Roman empire, there were three famous universities: Athens in Europe, Alexandria in Africa and Tarsus in Asia. Being an educational centre, Tarsus was a famous city. (Acts 21:39) which attracted students of philosophy and literature from all parts of the world.

PARENTS:

Paul's parents had migrated from Palestine to Cilicia. Majority of the people in the vast Roman Empire, were slaves without citizenship. Very few people obtained citizenship. The Roman citizenship was awarded either in reward for meritorious public service in the Roman Empire or on payment of lots of money into the Roman coffers. Possession of the Roman citizenship by either way was highly prized and honoured. Paul the apostle had been a Roman citizen by birth (Acts.22:25-29). The citizens were given legal protection in the empire wherever they went. Even if they were criminals, they would be punished only after trial (Act. 16:37-39). Thus Paul was born in a noble family of high status.

His parents were very pious and religious. His Father belonged to 'Pharisees' the most zealous sect of the Jewish groups. The son was brought up in the same zeal and he became a Pharisee (Act.23:6-9). Though they lived outside Palestine, Hebrew language was spoken in the home and Hebrew customs were practised. This explains why Paul said about himself "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phili.3:5,6). Besides, he was of the tribe of Benjamin.

HIS NAME:

In those days, most of the Jews who lived outside Palestine had two names—their Jewish name and a Gentile name. Saul was his Jewish name and Paul was the Gentile name. The name Paul means 'Little'. Saul came to be known as Paul from the first missionary journey onwards. (Acts.13:9). There is mention in the Bible about a sister and some of his relatives. (Acts.23:16; Rom:7,11).

EDUCATION:

Paul was brought up in a Gentile city. But being religiously

strict, Paul's parents put him on the study of Jewish law at the age of five in the nearest Jewish synagogue. He studied the Law in Hebrew. Perhaps he had been well-versed in the Septuagint translation (Greek) also. He was a scholar in Hebrew and Greek. In his writings there are some quotations of Greek writers..(Acts.17:28, 1Corin.15:33).

Besides studying the law, he was trained in a trade as was the custom of all Jewish youths. Tarsus was very famous in tent making and manufacture of canvas. Paul had learnt the trade of tent making in his early youth. Later during Paul's missionary journeys this trade was quite often, useful to meet his needs and those of his companions. (Act. 18:33, 20:33-35, 2 Timo. 3:8-10)

His higher education is note-worthy. Being ambitious to make their son a Jewish Rabbi, Paul's parents set him to Jerusalem for advanced studies. So about the age of thirteen, he joined the college of Gamaliel, a highly respectable Pharisee and completed his higher education. It was a great privilege for a Jewish Youth (Act. 5:33-40, 22:3). He was well-versed in the scriptures and the teachings of notable Jewish Rabbii like Hillel. After his education he emerged as a thorough Pharisee and an expert of the Law.

Paul was a contemporary of Jesus Christ. While the Lord grew up in Nazareth, Paul was receiving his education in Jerusalem. Though Paul was at first the strongest opponent of Jesus Christ, later he became His staunchest disciple and propogator.

EXERCISE - 24

Answer the following questions

1. Where was Paul born? Why is it said to be a famous city?
2. To which tribe did he belong?
3. What is the meaning of the name Paul?
4. What was the Jewish name of Paul?
5. Which trade did Paul learn in his early youth?
6. Where did Paul go for his higher education?
7. Who taught Paul at Jerusalem?
8. How did Paul's education influence his later life?
9. Write short notes on i) Roman citizenship ii) Paul's family background?