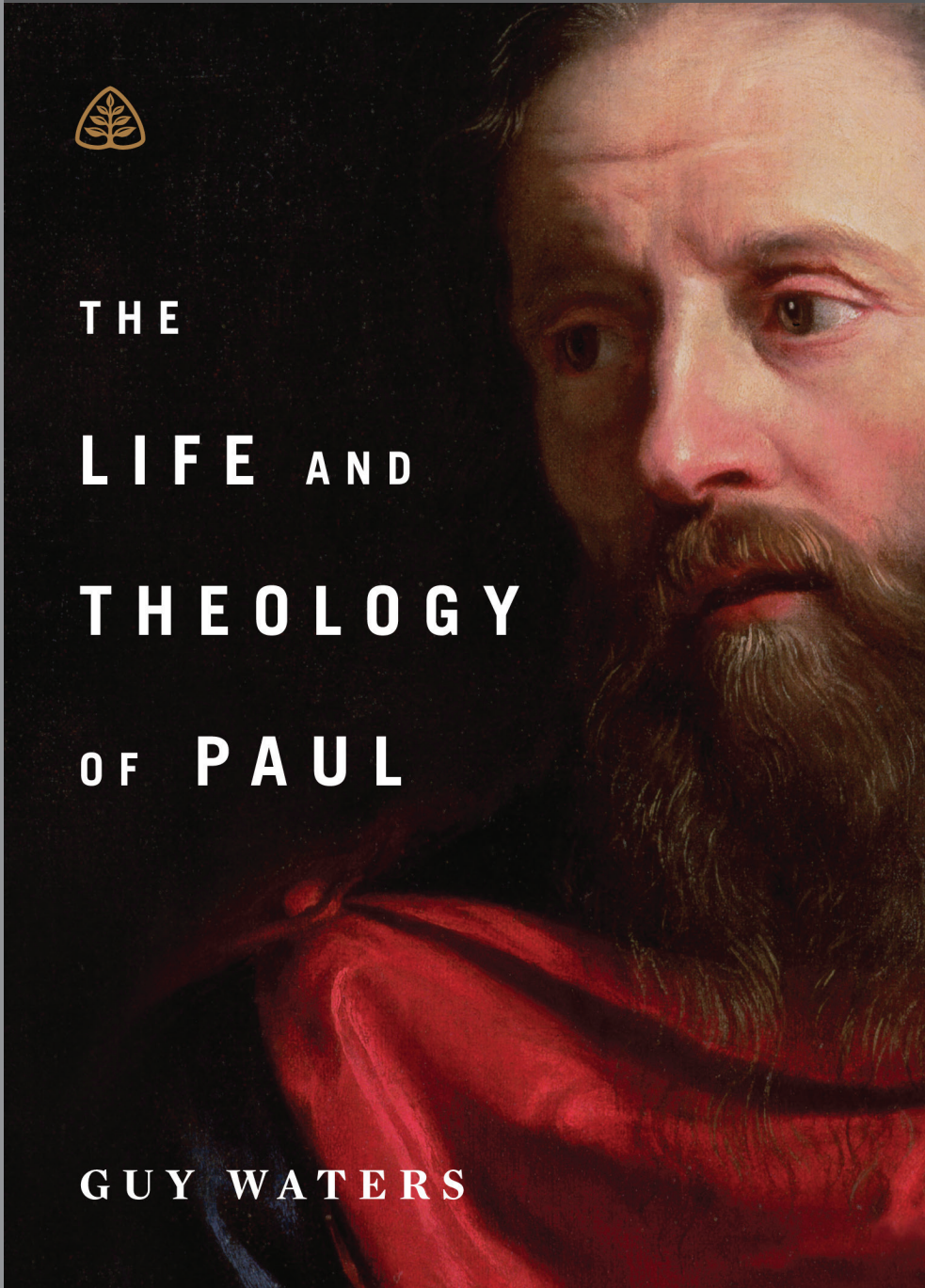


S T U D Y   G U I D E



THE  
LIFE AND  
THEOLOGY  
OF PAUL

GUY WATERS



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# The Life and Theology of Paul

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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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# Paul's Life

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Imagine if you were a first-century Christian meeting the Apostle Paul—or Saul of Tarsus, as he was called by his Jewish name. Instead of admiring him, you likely would have feared him as you faced this violent persecutor of believers. With this fact and other details in mind, we start this study of Paul's thought with an examination of his life. Why not just jump into his theology? Because, as Dr. Waters affirms, we "can't separate Paul the theologian from Paul the man, and Scripture certainly does not." In this lesson, then, we will learn of Saul before his conversion on the road to Damascus. His life and experiences were shaped by the Lord for His purposes.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Acts 7:54–8:4; 9:1–2; Philippians 3:1–6

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the importance of Paul's life for his theology
2. To learn key details of Paul's unique Jewish and Roman upbringing
3. To discern the providence of God in preparing Paul for life after conversion

## QUOTATION

*An out-and-out zealot for those traditions such as he declares himself to have been would certainly have offered vigorous opposition to any tendency to "change the customs delivered by Moses." Gamaliel might counsel patience and moderation but, as Paul viewed the situation, it was too serious for such temporizing measures. If Stephen saw the logic of the situation more clearly than the apostles, Paul saw it more clearly than Gamaliel. In the eyes of Stephen and Paul alike, the new order and the old were incompatible. If Stephen argued, "The new has come; therefore the old must go," Paul for his part argued, "The old must stay; therefore the new must go." Hence the uncompromising rigor with which he threw himself into the work of repression.*

—F.F. Bruce

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### A. Paul's Jewish heritage (Phil. 3:5)

1. He was circumcised and raised in a Jewish home.
2. He was an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin.
3. He eagerly embraced his heritage in a Greco-Roman culture.

### B. Paul's unimpressive physical stature

1. He mentions a weak "bodily presence" in 2 Corinthians 10:10.
2. A fuller description of such occurs in a later apocryphal book.
3. Later physical suffering would have added to this condition (2 Cor. 11:24–30).

### C. Paul's Jewish family

1. He likely grew up in a devout household with connections to the synagogue.
2. He gained Roman citizenship from his father.
3. We learn of his nephew, the son of his sister (Acts 23:16).
4. We never hear of him having a wife, but he may have had one at one point.

### D. Paul's birth in Tarsus

1. It was a city in the province of Cilicia, in what is today southeastern Turkey.
2. It was no "ordinary" city (Acts 21:39) but a Greek university town, major port city, trade center, and sizeable community.

### E. Paul's Roman citizenship

1. It came at birth (Acts 22:28).
2. It granted him certain rights used to his advantage (Acts 16:37; 22:25).
3. It saved his life on at least one occasion (Acts 25).

### F. Paul's thorough education

1. He studied in the Pharisaic tradition under Gamaliel in Jerusalem (22:3; 23:6).
2. He excelled as a student (Gal. 1:14).
3. He learned several languages.
4. He knew Scripture thoroughly.
5. He studied pagan philosophy and secular literature (Acts 17).

### G. Paul's living as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3)

1. Such a vocation was not below learned Jews as it was with Greeks.
2. Such a vocation as a builder and mender of tents was very much in demand.
3. Such a vocation safeguarded his role as a preacher who did not peddle the gospel (2 Cor. 2:17).
4. Such a vocation kept him from being a burden to others (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8).

#### H. Paul's persecution of the church

1. He mentions his former hostility as a “blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent” (1 Tim. 1:13).
2. He rejected the idea that Jesus could be the Messiah.
3. He was on his way to arrest Christians in Damascus the day the Lord confronted him.

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Paul possessed a Jewish heritage and eagerly embraced it in the face of a resistant Greco-Roman culture.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. One of the things that made Paul so influential both before and after his conversion was his imposing physical appearance.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. The following are true of Paul as we encounter him before his conversion.
  - a. He was called by his Roman name, Saul.
  - b. He was being prepared by the Lord for His purposes.
  - c. He was a fierce persecutor of Christians.
  - d. Both a and b
  - e. Both b and c
4. Regarding Paul's family, \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. He was raised in a nominal Jewish household
  - b. He had a nephew, the son of his sister
  - c. Both a and b
5. Regarding Tarsus, the city where Paul was born, \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. It was found in the province of Cilicia
  - b. It was a major port and trade city
  - c. It was known for its uneducated citizens
  - d. Both a and b
  - e. All of the above
6. Regarding Paul's Roman citizenship, \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. He gained it from his father by birth
  - b. It granted him certain rights, which he used to his advantage
  - c. It saved his life on at least one occasion
  - d. Both a and b
  - e. All of the above

7. Regarding Paul's education, \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. He studied in the Pharisaic tradition under Caiaphas in Jerusalem
  - b. He studied exclusively in the Hebrew language in order to master it
  - c. He did not shy away from Greco-Roman literature and philosophy
  - d. Both a and b
  - e. All of the above
  
8. Regarding Paul's trade as a tentmaker, \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Such manual labor was not below learned Jews as it was with Greeks
  - b. It released him from the suspicion that he was a peddler of God's Word
  - c. It helped him from becoming a financial burden to others
  - d. Both b and c
  - e. All of the above

#### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

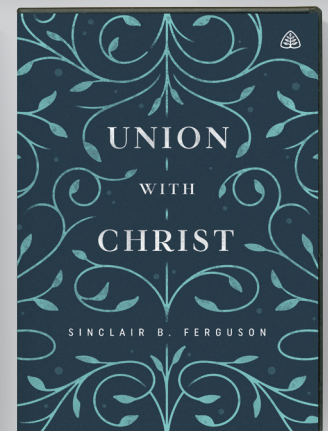
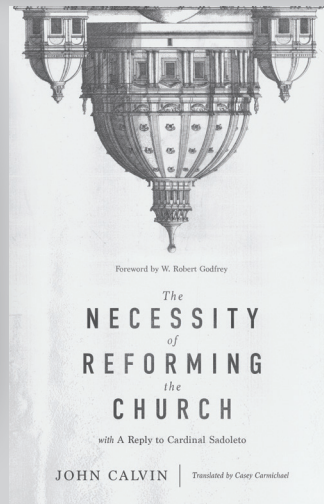
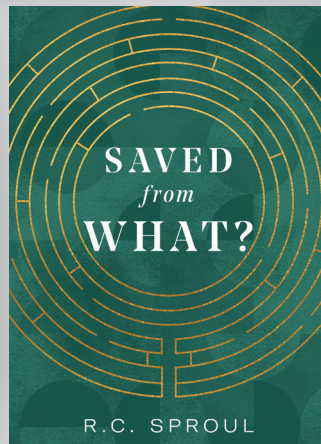
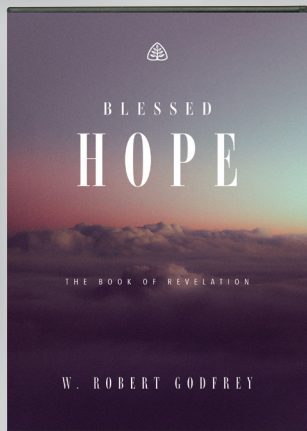
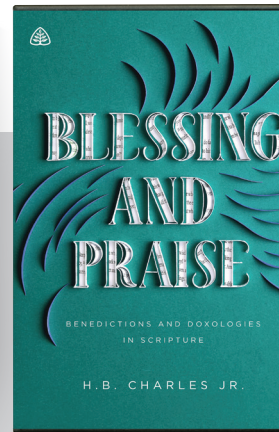
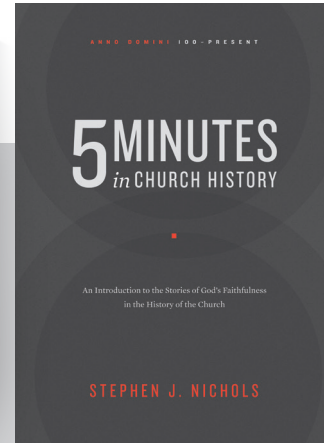
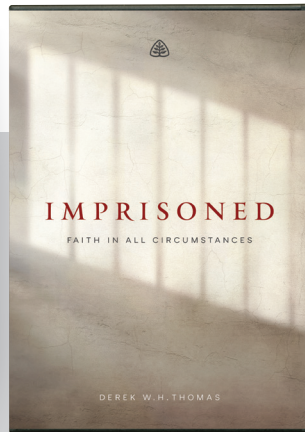
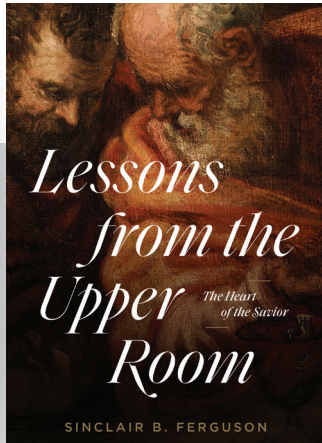
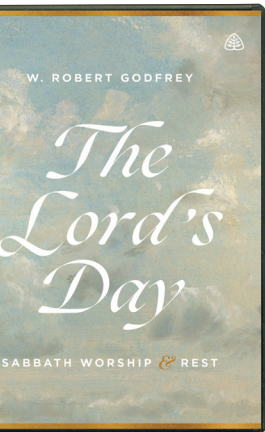
1. Study Philippians 3:1-7. As Paul looks back on his past and his "confidence in the flesh," what does verse 7 tell us about the value of such a life?
2. Consider Paul's weakness mentioned in 2 Corinthians 10:10 and how the Lord used it to teach him about success in ministry. If you are a Christian, why should you not be afraid of admitting physical weakness in a world where such is hardly popular?
3. When speaking of God's providence, we affirm His control over everything in our life including how He prepared Paul for future ministry. Think back on something (for example, location, family, education, or sin) in your life that, unknown to you at the time, God was using to prepare you for the future. How should this affect our attitude toward even the worst times we face?
4. Christians in this world face persecution on various levels. Knowing that God later subdued Paul, a fierce opponent of the Christian faith, how should this affect our attitude towards those who persecute Christians, such as Muslims or Communists?

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*  
Sinclair Ferguson, *Let's Study Philippians*  
J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*



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