

Paul's Education under Gamaliel

(Acts 22:3)

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I. Rabbi Gamaliel, according to the Talmud, was the son of Simon and the grandson of Rabbi Hillel (the founder of one of the two main Pharisaic rabbinic schools).

A. The school of Hillel was known to advocate a freer or more liberal interpretation of the Law.

B. The school of Shammai was known for a very rigid, legalistic interpretation of the Law.

II. Gamaliel was a member of the Sanhedrin and seemed to advocate tolerance for the Christians, if Acts 5:34 is any indication of his position.

III. "While believing the law of God to be divinely inspired, Gamaliel tended to emphasize its human elements. He recommended that sabbath observance be less rigorous and burdensome, regulated current custom with respect to divorce in order to protect women, and urged kindness toward Gentiles. Scholarly, urbane, a man of great intellect, he studied Greek literature avidly." ISBE, Rev. Ed. 2:394. (underlining mine)

A. Perhaps Paul's willingness to lighten the burden of the Law comes from his training with Gamaliel.

B. Paul's willingness to minister to the Gentiles may have been assisted by Gamaliel's views.

C. Paul's knowledge of Greek customs and literature may be a reflection of Gamaliel's interest in Greek literature.



IV. Mishnah, *Sota*, 9.15, evidently saw Gamaliel as a very prominent rabbi of the first century: "When Rabban Gamaliel the elder died, the glory of the Law ceased and purity and abstinence died."

V. The Talmud, *Shabbath*, 30b, refers to one of Gamaliel's students who exhibited "impudence in matters of learning." Some scholars believe that this may be a reference to Paul.