



“Patterned After Paul”

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One of the best ways to learn any skill or craft is to observe someone else. Many professions allow students of that profession to become interns or apprentices, to observe and work alongside somebody already trained. The Christian life is really the same way; the scriptures make us wise unto salvation and they are given for teaching, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, according to **II Timothy 3:16-17**. But seeing the truth of the gospel lived out in the life of another is a great help and encouragement. Jesus is, of course, our ultimate example, but on one occasion, Paul said that he was also a pattern for believers.

I Timothy 1:12-16 “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

Here, Paul says that he is a pattern for all believers to follow. In this study, we want to see how Paul serves as a pattern for salvation, sanctification and service.

The apostle Paul is perhaps the most beloved and also hated people found in the scriptures, besides the Lord Jesus. Those who love Paul see him as a hero of the Christian faith, a pillar in the early church, an ambassador of Christ Himself. Those who hate him do so because of his controversial teachings on a number of subjects. That was the case in the first century, just as it is today: Paul had his followers and he had his enemies, even within the church. There were those such as the Judaizers, who continually tried to discredit Paul as teaching a false doctrine and making false claims, because he preached that men were and are free from the law of Moses, particularly the requirement of circumcision. He taught

that the old covenant was fulfilled and done away at the cross (**Colossians 2:14**), and that Christ Jesus has established a new covenant and a better and living way. There were those who denied and despised his apostolic authority, even denying that he was an apostle of Christ. Paul dedicated much of his writing to the early church, especially those in Corinth and Galatia, to the defense of his apostolic credentials and thus, his authority.

I Corinthians 9:1 “Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?”

You see, to be an apostle of Christ meant that one was the ambassador or representative of Christ. The apostles were chosen by Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and they serve even today as the foundation of the church (**Ephesians 2:20**). Not men today, but those men chosen by Jesus in the first century, were those who served as the foundation of the church, and they still are today. Their writings still possess authority over Christians, even in this modern age. Thus, Paul would write the following passages:

I Timothy 1:16 “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

I Corinthians 4:15-16 “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.”

So, Paul is our pattern. Yet many reject his teachings and refuse to follow them in the Christian life, and in the work and worship of the church. You cannot say that you want to follow Jesus, then reject the teachings of Paul or any other apostle.

I Corinthians 14:37 “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”

First of all, Paul is our pattern in *conversion*. He was a Jew, and for a large portion of his life, not only was he not a follower of Jesus, but he hated and rejected Christ and His disciples. In **Acts 9**, after the death of Stephen, we find Saul persecuting Christians. He was on his way to Damascus to arrest more believers and carry them to Jerusalem to punish them. Here is how he later described himself:

Philippians 3:4-5 “Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews;”

This describes Paul as we find him in the beginning of **Acts 9**. Let’s read on.

Philippians 3:6-7 “Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”

Paul’s life was turned upside down. He was changed inside out when Jesus met him on the Damascus road and in the events that followed. The story is found in **Acts 9**.

Acts 9:1-6 “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”

One may say, *I agree. I was saved like Saul. He is my pattern in conversion because I had a marvelous experience like Saul had on the Damascus road.* But, be careful. Saul was not saved when he met Jesus on the Damascus road. That is very obvious from the entire narrative. In fact, he was told after he met Jesus to go and wait in the city and someone would come and tell him what to do. We read in **verses 17-18** how that Ananias was sent by the Lord to the house where Saul was waiting and restored his sight, telling him to be baptized. It becomes even more clear when Paul recounts what Ananias said to him:

Acts 22:16 “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

I can assure you that you are not saved until your sins are washed away. You cannot be saved *IN* your sins; you have to be saved *FROM* your sins. Saul had not yet called on the name of the Lord when he met Jesus on the Damascus road. He didn’t call on the name of the Lord until Ananias came to him and told him to do so, as the scriptures say that we must do in order to be saved (**Romans 10:13**). So, one calls on the name of the Lord by being baptized to wash away one’s sins, as shown in **Acts 22:16**, just as it shows us that one must be baptized in order to call upon the name of the Lord.

So, if you want to be saved like Paul was saved, you’ve got to be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins. In other words, to have your sins washed away by the blood of Jesus. There are many that deny that and tell you that you don’t have to be baptized to be saved. They put baptism inside the church rather than at the door to the church. They put baptism after salvation rather than at the point of salvation. But read again what Ananias told Saul.

Acts 22:16 “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

If your conversion is to be patterned after Paul’s conversion, then that is what you must do. But then the questions arise, why did Jesus appear to Saul on the Damascus road? Why didn’t Ananias just go and visit him at the direction of the Lord? Why did the Lord meet him and strike him blind? What was all of that about? Well, it was an extraordinary instance because it was to qualify Saul, who would become Paul, to be an apostle of Christ. That was a requirement to being one of Christ’s chosen apostles. Remember what Paul said in **I Corinthians 9:1** as we noted a little while ago.

I Corinthians 9:1 “Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?”

In **Acts 1** when the other apostles and the Lord chose Matthias in the stead of Judas, who had defaulted, we learn that a qualification of an apostle was one who had seen the Lord after His resurrection. So,

here on the Damascus road, not only after His resurrection but after He had ascended to heaven and was at the right hand of God, He appeared to Saul so that Saul could be an eyewitness to the fact that Jesus was indeed the risen Christ. Saul was a chosen apostle. But he was saved when Ananias went and told him what to do to be saved and Saul acted on what he was told to do.

Notice something else that his conversion involved. It caused him to change religions. He left the sect of the Pharisees and became simply a follower of Jesus. Are you willing to leave a church that you can't read about in the Bible—a church built by man, to be part of a church that you DO read about in the scriptures? Paul's conversion caused him to go against his parents. He was raised a devout Jew under the law. Perhaps it was a great disappointment to them, were they still living, when Paul converted to Christianity and embraced Christ. It certainly would've caused him to disagree and likely sever ties with many of his peers and his friends. That begs the question of you and I: Are we willing to forsake father, mother, friends...to truly follow Jesus? After enumerating all of those things in his past, of which any Jew and Pharisee would've taken great pride, remember what Paul said in **Philippians 7:3?**

Philippians 3:7 “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung...”

That's what conversion is. That's the result of conversion. No wonder Paul is our pattern in conversion. But, Paul is also our pattern in doctrine. Read his words from this passage.

I Corinthians 11:1-2 “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.”

As Paul was an apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, that gives his writing authority—even in the modern church. But have you ever heard someone say, *I go by what Jesus said, not by what Paul said*. Or maybe you've heard it said, *the words that are really important are the words in red*. I've heard people make that statement. They really believe that the words in red in the scriptures are more important than all of the other words contained in scripture. Friend, the fact of the matter is that all of them belong in red because they all came from Jesus Christ. In our modern printings of the Bible, men have colored the words in red that Jesus directly said, but that doesn't mean that that's ALL that Jesus said. Paul declared as much to the skeptical Corinthians.

II Corinthians 13:3 “Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me...”

Christ was speaking through him, and through the other apostles, who were inspired of the Holy Spirit. In **I Corinthians 4:1**, Paul refers to himself as a *steward of the mysteries of God*. He commended the Thessalonian brethren for having received the word of truth—not as the word of men, but as the word of God.

II Thessalonians 2:15 “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”

He also said that the things he delivered to the church in Corinth—here, speaking of the pattern for the Lord's Supper—were the things that he had received of the Lord.

I Corinthians 11:23 “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:”

So, why do people want to reject the authority of Paul and the credence of what he wrote in the New Testament? I think the answer is obvious. It’s because he said such things as these:

I Corinthians 14:34-35 “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

I doubt that I have to tell you that most churches would not allow you to preach that from their pulpits today, and they likely would not have liked it if Paul had either, because they dismiss it when he wrote it in the scriptures. It is an incredibly unpopular portion of scripture today but it doesn’t change the fact that Paul wrote it by inspiration of the Spirit. In fact, in that very same context, Paul said that these things were not his opinions, but commandments from the Lord.

I Corinthians 14:37 “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”

Paul also taught that women are to have long hair because it is their *glory* (**I Corinthians 11**). Many don’t like what Paul taught about morality either. He categorized things like adultery, fornication and homosexuality as *sexual immorality* and sin in the eyes of God (**Galatians 5:19-21, Romans 1:26-32**). Paul was speaking as the ambassador of Christ (**II Corinthians 5:20**), and ambassadors are vested with the authority to speak on behalf of the King. Remember what Jesus told Peter and the other apostles:

Matthew 16:19 “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Paul is also our pattern in preaching. We’ve really lost our way in this day and time concerning what preaching *is* and what it is *for*. Many of today’s preachers don’t resemble the apostle Paul in word, deed or demeanor. Paul was truly the prince of preachers and he is a wonderful pattern for any man who would be entrusted with the word of God, to carry it to others. He was studious and consecrated. He loved Christ and the church of Christ above everyone and everything else. He coveted the truth. He had an unflinching love for the lost—so much so that he saw it as a debt that he owed, to preach the gospel.

Romans 1:14-16 “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

His preaching was aimed to point people to Jesus, not to himself, politics, social causes or anything else. He aimed to instruct people in righteousness, to exhort them to faithfulness, to rebuke and admonish those who were living in sin, to comfort those who were troubled and anxious and to warn those who were lost. And any faithful gospel preacher will follow in the steps of Paul today.

I Thessalonians 2: 10-13 “Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

Listen to Paul’s final and tearful words to the elders at Ephesus. There, a solemn and sobering charge to every man who would preach the gospel. I would assure you that we who preach the gospel and lead God’s people in the local congregation will answer to the Lord by this standard.

Acts 20:25-27 “And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

Whether it was popular or unpopular, whether they liked or disliked it, Paul said that he had declared ALL of the counsel of God. Paul is a pattern for the preacher in this troubled age that needs some faithful preachers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, Paul is our pattern in Christian living.

Philippians 3:17 “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”

Paul’s life was truly remarkable. It will surely take eternity to reveal all that Paul did, said and sacrificed for the cause of Christ. Before his life ended with the flash of an executioner’s sword, Paul suffered deprivation, abuse, threats, ingratitude and personal attack after personal attack because of his allegiance to Christ. He was burdened daily with the care of the churches that he loved and to which he had devoted his life. He detailed it all in **II Corinthians 11**. It was not a career to him; it was a consecrated life.

There are three passages that I believe point to the reason that Paul was such a pattern for you and me of what it means to truly live as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 23:1 “And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.”

Paul never knowingly did anything that he thought would be sin against God.

Philippians 1:21 “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

That is the essence of a Christian life. No one can sum it up any better. Christ was his life—not part of his life, but ALL of his life. The sum total and entirety of his life.

I Corinthians 9: 26-27 “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

He gave up those things that would hinder and weigh himself down in the race to heaven because he KNEW that everything was in vain if he failed to win the prize. Christ was his all. Serving the church was Paul’s all—not only as an apostle and a gospel preacher, but as a Christian. It was all given and devoted to Jesus.

When we look at the life, the humble and dedicated life of the apostle Paul, surely it makes us all pause and wonder what have we really given and what are we giving today to the Lord? What a wonderful thing to look back over your shoulder on your life, as Paul did, and be able to say this:

II Timothy 4:6-7 “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:”

Can you say that today? Is your life patterned after Paul?

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