



PATTERNED AFTER PAUL

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One of the best ways to learn any skill or craft is to observe somebody else. Many professions allow students of that profession to become an apprentice – that is to observe and work alongside somebody already trained. The Christian life is the same way. The scriptures make us wise unto salvation and they are given for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness according to 2 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 more than one occasion – Paul said that he was also a pattern for believers.

Read with me in 1 Tim 1:12-16: “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are 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. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”

Here, Paul sets himself forth as a pattern for believers to follow. Today, we want to see how Paul serves as a pattern in salvation, sanctification, and service.

Aside from the Lord Jesus, the Apostle Paul is perhaps the most beloved but also hated people found in the scriptures. To those who love him, he is a hero of the Christian faith, a pillar in the church, and a royal ambassador of King Jesus. Those who hate him do so because of his controversial teachings on several subjects. That was the case in the first century, just like 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 because he preached that men were and are free from the

law of Moses, particularly, the requirement of circumcision. He taught that that Old Covenant was fulfilled and done away at the cross according to 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 – in fact, they even denied that he was an apostle of Christ. And so, Paul dedicated much of his writing – especially to the churches of Corinth and Galatia – to the defense of his apostolic credentials and thus, his authority. He said in 1 Corinthians 9:1 “Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not 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 serve as the foundation of the church. (Ephesians 2:20) Thus, Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:16 that Christ had made HIM a pattern for those who believe on the Lord. He also said 1 Corinthians 4:15-16 “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you, imitate me.” So, Paul is our pattern. Yet, many reject his teachings and refuse to follow them in the Christian life and the work and worship of the church. Today, I want us to look at how Paul is a pattern for those who want to please the Lord. You cannot say you want to follow Jesus and then reject the teachings of Paul... for Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:37 “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.”

First, Paul is a pattern for us in CONVERSION. Paul was a Jew and for a large part of his life, he not only was NOT a follower of Jesus, but he also hated and rejected Christ and his disciples. In Acts 9, we find him persecuting Christians and he was on his way to Damascus to arrest more believers.” Paul’s world radically changed when Jesus met him on the Damascus Road. Acts 9:1-6 tells us “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

Now, one may say. “I agree, was saved like Saul. I had a Damascus road experience.” But you see, Saul was not saved when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He was told to go and wait in the city, and someone would come and tell him what to do. We then read in verses 17 and 18, that the Lord sent Ananias down to the house where Saul was waiting and he restored his sight and told him to be baptized. Acts 22:16 says that Ananias told him: “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Saul had not yet called on the name of the Lord and the scripture says in Romans 10:13 that one MUST call on the name of the Lord to be saved. Acts 22:16 shows us HOW one calls on the name of the Lord – by being baptized to wash away one’s sins. So, if you want to be saved like Paul was saved, you’ve got to be baptized into Christ for the remission or forgiveness of sins or, in other words, to have your sins washed away by the blood of Christ. That is how your conversion can be patterned after Paul’s.

So, why did Jesus appear to Saul on the Damascus Road if it wasn’t to save him? It was to qualify him to be an apostle of Christ. That was a requirement to being one of Christ’s chosen apostles. Remember, Paul said in 1 Cor 9:1 “Am I not an apostle have I not seen the Lord?” But notice what his conversion

meant. For one thing, Paul's conversion caused him to change his religious beliefs and practice... He left the sect of the Pharisees and simply became a follower of Christ? Are you willing to leave a church you can't read about in the Bible to be part of the church 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) It caused him to disagree and likely sever ties with friends. Are you willing to forsake father, mother, or friend to truly follow Jesus? Paul, after enumerating all those things in his past in Philippians 3:7 said, I counted them all loss for Christ. Paul is our pattern in conversion.

Second, Paul is also our pattern in DOCTRINE. Here is where many part ways with Paul, namely because Paul's teachings about several subjects are grossly out of step with modern times. In fact, Paul's teaching often conflicted with the cultural norms of his own time. But listen to him in 1 Corinthians 11:1-2 "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you." You see, Paul being an apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gives his writing authority, even in the modern church. But have you ever heard someone say, "I go by what Jesus said, not Paul" or "the words that are really important are the ones in red."? If you have a bible that distinguishes Christ's words in red-letter text, the red lettering merely designates those words directly spoken by Jesus and recorded by the bible writer. But we must understand: what is in red is not ALL that Jesus said. Paul declared to the skeptical Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 13:3 "since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me..." In 1 Cor 4:1, Paul refers to himself and the other apostles of Christ when he states: "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." He said in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." Paul said in 1 Cor 11:23 that the things he delivered unto them were the things he had RECEIVED of the Lord.

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! Because Paul said in things such as this in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church." I dare to say that most churches today wouldn't allow you to preach that from their pulpits... and they likely wouldn't have liked it if Paul did either – because they dismiss it when he wrote it in the scriptures. Many don't like what Paul taught about morality. He categorized things like adultery, fornication, and homosexuality as sexual impurity and as sinful behaviors in the eyes of God, according to his words in Galatians 5:19-21 and Romans 1:26-32. Paul was speaking as the ambassador of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20) and ambassadors are vested with the authority to speak on behalf of the king. Remember that Jesus told Peter and the other apostles in Matthew 16:19 "...whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." So, Paul, along with the other apostles, serve as our pattern in doctrine.

Then, third, Paul is our pattern for PREACHING. I believe we've lost our way concerning what preaching is and what it is for. Many of today's preachers don't resemble in word, deed, or demeanor, the Apostle Paul. Paul was the prince of preachers and he's a wonderful pattern for any man who would be entrusted with the word of God to carry it to others. Paul was studious, he was consecrated, he loved Christ and the church of Christ above everyone and everything else; he coveted the truth; and he had a yearning love for the lost and saw it as a debt that he owed to preach it. (Romans 1:14-16) Paul's preaching was not political or patriotic. He did not go about draped in the flag or standard of the Roman Empire and promote the Caesar, other than to urge Christians to submit to the authority of the King so long as it did not contradict the law of the King of kings, Christ Jesus. His preaching was aimed to point

people to Christ – not himself, to politics, to secular social causes, or anything else. He aimed to instruct people in righteousness, exhort them to faithfulness, rebuke and admonish those who were living in sin, comfort those who were troubled, and warn those who were lost. And that’s the simple mission of the faithful gospel preacher today. When Paul needed to rebuke sin – he rebuked sin. When Christians needed to be encouraged by the promises of God, he encouraged them with the hope given in the scriptures. When people needed to be reminded of their identity in Christ, He reminded them of the gospel whereby they were saved and wherein they stood. He went about preaching Christ, establishing congregations of the church of Christ, strengthening those churches, and fighting for the fight. That’s what preachers need to concern themselves with today.

Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:11-13 “as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” And listen to his final and tearful words to the elders at Ephesus. They are a solemn and sobering charge to every man who would preach the gospel and we will answer to the Lord by this standard: He told them in Acts 20:25-27 “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” I wonder how many of we preachers can truly say that today. Do we hesitate to preach the truth because of how people will react to it? Perhaps we’ll lose support or popularity. Perhaps we’ll be run away from the church where we labor and therefore, we walk the line and preach whatever will keep us in the good graces of the church.” Of course, if a man is preaching false doctrine, he needs to be run off – or repent. But if we refuse to preach the word of God and declare the whole counsel of God regardless of the consequences, we don’t preach like Paul. Paul would not be voted “preacher of the year”. He would not be seen as America’s preacher. He wasn’t then and he would not be today. Paul is a pattern for the faithful and true gospel preacher.

Finally, Paul is our pattern in CHRISTIAN LIVING. Philippians 3:17 says, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” Paul’s life was one of the most remarkable ever lived. I can say without fear of successful contradiction that anyone ever lived a more conscientious, consecrated, and sacrificial Christian life than Paul did. And it will take eternity to reveal all that Paul did, said, and sacrificed for the cause of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Before his life ended with the flash of an executioner’s sword – Paul suffered deprivation, abuse, threats, ingratitude, personal attack because of his allegiance to Christ and he was burdened daily with the care of the churches he loved and to which he had devoted his life. He detailed it all in 2 Corinthians the 11th chapter. It was not a career to Paul; it was a consecrated life.

There are at least 3 passages that I believe point to the reasons Paul is such a pattern for you and me in what it truly means to live as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ! 1) Acts 23:1 “Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” Paul never knowingly did anything he thought would be a sin against God. 2) Philippians 1:21 “For to me, to live is Christ!” Christ was his life. He wasn’t PART of his life; Christ was ALL his life. 3) 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” Paul didn’t live a careless Christian life. He strove for the eternal prize. He strained every bit of his being to be what Christ wanted Him to become and be. 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! And thus, he could say in 2 Timothy 4:6-7 “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” What a wonderful way to conclude your life and leave this world. But to end like Paul ended, you must live like Paul lived. Is your life patterned after Paul?

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