

The Apostle Paul on Leadership: The Book of Acts[©]

*Dr. Michael B. Russell, MA, MBA, DSL
Mike Russell & Associates, Inc.*

About the author: Michael B. Russell, MA, MBA, DSL is a 30 year Licensed Consulting Agent in the Religious and Non-Profit sector conducting seminars and workshops on current liability issues facing these sectors. He holds a Masters in Communication and Research from the Fulbright College, University of Arkansas; an MBA from the School of Business and Technology, Webster University, St. Louis; and an earned Doctorate in Strategic Leadership from Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia. He can be reached at mike@mrains.net or 479-841-2601.

To understand leadership we must interpret the theology of Paul with our eye upon his character from an ideological texture.

The New Testament holds before our eyes the figures of two men-Jesus and Paul. At the center of this picture stands Jesus the Messiah, the son of the living God, and near him stands Paul, the man who above all others had the character of the Son in whom God is well pleased. Men today crave manhood and they prize character, yet men everywhere are bewildered, discouraged, and disillusioned. The world is looking for the vision of a man who struggled and suffered and conquered. The modern observer is skeptical as to the power of the Christian religion conceding the principles of Jesus are eloquent, but not practicable in today's world. Human nature is human nature.

Paul is the answer to the sneer that a man cannot be radically changed. He is proof, without blemish, that what Christ promised can be radically fulfilled. The church, and any organization, can be dramatically changed, quickened and energized if only this man should become a living force in the mindset and heart of professing Christians. Perhaps no one in all of history provides a better example of leadership than the Apostle Paul, whose leadership strength is without equal.

How then can we know him? Unlike his predecessor Moses, Paul was commissioned to carry his message primarily to the world at large to the Gentiles. In light of Paul's education, one might wonder, "Why would God choose Paul- a mind so thoroughly imbued with Jewish law, custom and thinking-to be the chief herald of the Messiah among the Gentiles?" At first glance we find Paul assuring the faithful translation of a Jewish message into a Gentile setting where Paul is credited with being the principle architect of Christianity. Clearly Paul never would have imagined the magnitude of his accomplishments. Perhaps to his greater amazement would be that he provides 21st-century leaders with a virtual perfect model for modern leadership-perhaps the greatest ever.

The Leadership of Patience

It is not easy for an excited man on a mission to be patient. People of warm impulses are prone to become eager. Those who mount up with wings like eagles often come down abruptly. When man wants something he wants it at once, he will look for shortcuts and find it hard to persevere and endure. Considering Paul's fiery and precipitate nature we can appreciate his patience. He could run, but he could also walk. He could let himself out, but he could also hold himself in. He was eager to get on about his business, yet he knew how to wait for the Holy Spirit to move among men.

A man shows his patience by the way he bears disappointment. Paul wanted to preach in Rome but entered the city in chains. He recognized that something always stood in his way, yet he made the best of his situation and quickly took up his work. He was disappointed in his affliction, and asked God to remove it but God did not seem to hear. Although he endured great disappointment he did not waiver nor give up his faith. He continued in his work, and discovered, to his delight, that notwithstanding his disability, he could still be successful in his work.

A man's patience comes out of the methods of his work. When Paul saw converts occur in a city, he did not quickly leave the city forever, he returned to that city over and over again. He walked back even if it were a hundred miles. He patiently walked long and dangerous distances from one city to another. Why would he return? Because his work had not yet been completed, the work of teaching, shepherding, and instilling his leadership upon the lives of new believers. It took commitment to make converts, but it took patience to organize converts into churches with officers to administer the affairs of the congregation and to train the new believers in the basic principles of Christian living.

The Leadership of Courage

When the average Christian is asked to name the most vivid trait of Paul's character, the answer nine times out of ten, is "Courage." (Jefferson, 1923). The example of Paul's courage is often illustrated in his experiences among bandits in mountain passes, his behavior when face to face with mobs in Lystra and Ephesus and Jerusalem, and his conduct in the time of shipwreck when he is on his way to Rome. History is full of men who have displayed courage in war, conflict, and altercation, but the true test of courage is displayed in his moral courage as he clearly conquered the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and that Gentile and Jew stood on an equal footing in the household of faith before God. To that great truth without question he was committed.

Paul stood and rebuked Peter. Paul was so committed to the truth he, in rebuking Peter he rebuked Barnabas as well, as Barnabas had taken Peter's side. The critical hour of the Christian church had arrived and Paul was the man to bring truth to the forefront. Paul stood and accused Peter of wavering on the truth. It is this standing up for truth against his friends that reveals the courage of Paul's soul. He did things which only a man of amazing daring would ever be capable of doing. When we read of Paul boldly preaching Jesus as the Messiah to the Jews, we see his courage. The Jews had for centuries looked for a Messiah, mighty, and victorious, but the idea of

a suffering Messiah was not a popular message. A Messiah who would allow himself to be crucified as a malefactor, by a pagan Roman government, was blasphemy. This was Paul's message, "Jesus had been crucified, and Jesus was the Messiah." As Paul would have said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel." What courage he displayed; the cause of Christ was paramount.

During his stay in Antioch and Iconium a confederation of Jews gathered and the multitude were stirred. Paul was stoned, dragged from outside the city, and left for dead. According to the Jewish Mishnah (Sanhedrin 6:1-4) a stoning victim was stripped of his clothing, thrown from an elevated place twice the height of a human person, positioned with his heart upward, and huge rocks were then dropped (or thrown) upon him until he was dead (Arnold, 2002; Boismard, 1992). The vicious mob at Lystra "assumed" Paul was dead and obviously left the site where Paul was left for dead. But the "apostle "rose up" (a hint, perhaps, of a miraculous recovery). The following day he and Barnabas left the city, proceeding toward Derbe some sixty miles to the southwest (Acts 16:32). Although weak in body and depressed in spirit, his courage was unabated, determined to go on preaching the truth that Jesus is the Messiah, that men crucified him, and God raised him from the dead.

Here we discover Paul's courage like the courage of the Son of God.

The Leadership of Humility

While many character traits readily come to mind in any discussion of Paul, humility may not be one of them. In order to appreciate a man's humility, we must first consider the measurement of his pomposity. By nature Paul was proud and imperious, and lowliness became an effort and an achievement. Paul held his head high, he felt confident of his abilities, and said himself he was not inferior to the tallest of Apostles. He never boasted that he did not know nothing, could do nothing, or amount to nothing. He did not exult on the number of things he could do. He exalted on the importance of his mission.

Paul invariably refused to prostrate himself before men. He met with the greatest of men as his brothers and equals. But before God no man ever lowered himself more than Paul. In the presence of God he considered himself nothing. Every gift bestowed upon him by God was unmerited and he was not worthy. Paul's favorite vocabulary was the word "Grace". Grace was always before him. When he met other men, his salutation was: "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you." When he said good-by his last words were, "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ go with you." His life engulfed grace as undeserved mercy. It was music to his ears and filled his heart with an attitude of humbleness and love.

When others wrote "Saint Paul" , he always wrote "Servant Paul". The Greek word he selected for himself was not the name usually associated with a domestic servant, but the name of a bond servant or slave under a master who owned him. He counted it an honor to obey the one who was worthy of obedience. He was glad, and willing, to place himself into subjection to a personality higher than himself. He was humble, teachable like a child, and eager to learn. He forgot the things behind him and pressed forward. He was a proud man and could have easily allowed his position and the attention he received from others during his ministry to make him stubborn, self-

indulging, demanding, and arrogant, but under the influence of Jesus he learned to bend his knee and become submissive to the Lord his authority.

Paul exemplified humility in his leadership. The larger cause of Jesus was more important than his own ego.

In What Ways Can Today's Global Leaders Apply These Three Leadership Principles?

God develops leaders through a divine process. God can bring forth character development and personal growth out of any situation at any time. Whether he does so is conditional upon a leader's willingness to submit to his will throughout the process. One characteristic of leadership that we do not hear often is patience. Global leaders require patience because they must work with people, not machines. People are reluctant to change. People develop political alliances and affinities. People have their pet projects, favorite territories, favorite friends, and preferred ways of doing things. It takes patience to effectively work with people of different cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and historical backgrounds to accomplish organizational goals and objectives. Although there are appropriate times to be impatient and push forward an agenda, the astute leader knows that patience is very often his or her secret weapon in getting things accomplished.

Another characteristic of leadership is recognizing when to display courage and having the wisdom of knowing when to exhibit courage appropriately. The art of influencing people to do willingly what is required in order to achieve a goal is the essence of leadership. Courage is, "mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, preserve, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty (Webster)." Courageous leadership must start from within the leader's heart where real courage resides. It is difficult to argue that other traits such as integrity, honesty, altruism, communication skills and decisiveness are not qualities of a good leader. But leaders could not display these traits if they did not have personal courage. Paul displayed such courage before the Jews, Gentiles, and others during his ministry. He exemplified courage and a willingness to make the right decision even when it was not readily accepted by others.

Finally, we must recognize Paul's humility in his leadership. A sense of humility is essential to leadership because it authenticates a person's humanity. Humility is the only way to resolve current conflicts and contradictions of leadership. A leader can avoid excessive pride only if they recognize that they are human. We all have faults, but recognizing what we do well, as well as what we do not do as well, is vital to self-awareness and paramount to humility (Kouzes and Posner, 2007).

In global leadership some decisions should be made on fact and reason, and some decisions should be based on emotion. Wisdom is knowing what process is in the right place at the right time.

References:

Arnold, C.E. (2002). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*. (Vol. 2) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Boismard, M.E. (1992). *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. (Vol. 6) David N. Freeman, (ed.) New York, NY: Doubleday.

Kouzes, J.M.; Posner, B.Z. (2007). *The leadership challenge* (4th ed.), San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Jefferson, C. E. (1923). *The character of Paul*. New York, NY: MacMillan.

McRay, J. (2003). *Paul-his life and teaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Webster's Dictionary of the English Language (1972). New York, NY: Lexicon Publications.

In this article, we identify 10 leadership qualities of the Apostle Paul based on Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. These qualities represent the motives and methods necessary for legacy leadership. We present logic for a causal model of spiritual leadership that represents evidence of legacy leadership in terms of the changed lives of followers. The legacy of the leader's influence is perpetuated through the followers' incorporation of legacy principles into their lives as they become leaders. Legacy logic. The Apostle Paul was the greatest Christian missionary and theologian who ever lived. He was more responsible than any other individual for the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. If we accept the spread of Christianity and its enduring impact on civilization as a measure of his effectiveness, then Paul must be recognized as one of the most influential men in history. In this plan we will take a close look at the life and letters of the Apostle Paul. We will see how he was able to lead a legacy that continues to impact the world today - and we will see how each of us can also I...Â The content in this plan is based on his book, *Biblical Perspectives on Leadership and Organizations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). About The Publisher. Saint Paul the Apostle, one of the early Christian leaders, often considered to be the most important person after Jesus in the history of Christianity. Of the 27 books of the New Testament, 13 are traditionally attributed to Saint Paul, though several may have been written by his disciples.Â To settle the issue, Paul returned to Jerusalem and struck a deal. It was agreed that Peter would be the principal apostle to Jews and Paul the principal apostle to Gentiles. Paul would not have to change his message, but he would take up a collection for the Jerusalem church, which was in need of financial support (Galatians 2:1â€“10; 2 Corinthians 8â€“9; Romans 15:16â€“17, 25â€“26), though Paulâ€™s Gentile churches were hardly well off. For example the Book of Acts relates that when the apostle Paul came to a new town or city he typically spoke first at the local synagogue: a very wise strategy. Here there would be Jews familiar with the Scripture and anticipating a coming messiah. Here too would have been gentile seekers who were warm to Judaism, and would have surely been converts if not for the festive initiation rite of circumcision (a highly effective means for keeping membership down).Â Without a public forum Paul would then network relationally through the family and friends of those who had been converted. New converts would share with their friends and family and invite them to a meeting at their homes, where they could hear the message in its entirety from the apostle. This book helped cast Paul's letters from "books of the Bible" into living historical documents. Bravo to the author. Sometimes it felt a like historical fiction, however, as details were described that could never really been.Â The Apostle, together with Warren Wiersby's Be Series, has become essential to my preparation for Bible Study. What Mr Pollock has done for us is use context and history to more fully flesh out the man Paul. All while flawlessly preserving Scripture.Â This telling of the apostle Paul's life really puts his writings, life and times into perspective. He becomes a flesh and blood person instead of just an historic Biblical writer. The author thoroughly researched the culture, politics and geographical terrain at the time of Paul's life, and tells his story in narrative form.