

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP SERIES (1)

To aspire to leadership is an honorable ambition

1 Timothy 3:1 (NEB)

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

INTRODUCTION

1. “Leadership is influence, the ability of one person to influence others to follow his or her lead” - J. Oswald Sanders

2. Paul was one of the greatest leaders of all time. No one except the Lord Jesus Christ has had more profound influence on his world and ours than Paul.
 - He wrote at least 13 New Testament epistles out of the 20.
 - He played a decisive role in expanding Christianity beyond the boundary of Israel.
 - He established the uniqueness of Christian theology by writing and preaching the gospel of free grace.

3. Paul quotes his opponents' criticism about his appearance and speech – 2 Cor 10:7-10
 - “A man with small stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat crooked” – second-century writer.
 - Although Paul was unimpressive outwardly, his inner being was very impressive, as we shall study.

SELF-LEADERSHIP

1. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it flows the issues of life – Proverbs 4:23
2. A leader is a person who has learned to obey a discipline imposed from without, and has then taken a more vigorous discipline from within.
3. Not many will follow a leader whose inner spirit is sagging or whose character is flawed. Therefore, it should be the top priority of a leader to learn to lead himself/herself.
4. He who leads, with diligence - Romans 12:8. Without this essential gift, all other gifts remain as dwarfs: they cannot grow. Diligence is a man's precious possession – Prov 12:27 (NASB)
5. Just as the height of a building depends on the firmness of its foundation, the height of leadership depends on the firmness of self-leadership.
6. *The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night
- unknown poet*

7. If a leader shows strong self-leadership, others will see it and cooperate with the expectations placed on them. Leadership by example is crucial.

8. John Maxwell states, "the first person you lead is you."

A. SELF-DISCIPLINE

1. "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity; but a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline" - 2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV)

2. Hebrews 12: 11 says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful." Although this verse talks about divine discipline for God's sinning children, it can be applied to self-discipline
 - There are differences between the two but pain is inevitable in both cases. No pain, no gain.

 - Self-discipline involves controlling of oneself, one's desires, actions, habits, rigorously imposed on oneself

3. "First and foremost, discipline yourself. Then manage your family properly. Only after that you will be able to rule the nation and even the world." – old Chinese saying

DISCIPLINE OF THE BODY

1. In order to discipline himself, the apostle Paul dealt with his bodily desires – 1 Cor 9:25-27

- The intensity with which Paul engaged in this battle is well expressed in his use of the verb "beat" in verse 27. The Greek word for "*beat*" literally means to strike under the eye
- The purpose of this battle is to put his body into subjection (v. 27a). Instead of being mastered by his body, Paul wanted to master it
- Instead of following his bodily appetites, he intended to lead them. He desired to make it serve his mission in the gospel. For that purpose he exercised rigorous self-restraint
- The final clause of verse 27 reveals Paul's motivation for self-discipline. Paul feared he would be "disqualified for the prize" after he has preached to others
- Considering his firm conviction in God's unconditional love in Christ, it is certain that Paul is not talking about the issue of salvation here
- What Paul was concerned about is the possibility that he would be disqualified for the race, and for the prize, because he has failed to meet the training requirements

DISCIPLINE OF THE MIND

1. In 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, Paul writes about another battle that he is involved in, a battle that takes place in the thought life of the mind
 - Using military metaphor Paul suggests that it is every Christian's mission to make worldly philosophy and human reasoning submissive to the lordship of Christ

2. Paul is convinced that the believer's mind should be renewed in order for him/her to be transformed -Rom. 12:2
 - He exhorts the Philippian believers to keep their minds on "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable" -Phil. 4:8, for he knows well that our thoughts produce conduct

 - Whether it is righteousness or sin, our conduct begins in the thought life. So Paul endeavors constantly to bring his thoughts under the control of Christ

3. Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.

B. PERSONAL GROWTH

1. God expects growth of every Christian. The apostle Peter exhorts us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3: 18)
 - If God is concerned about the growth of ordinary believers, how much more is He concerned about that of leaders who should set an example for their followers.

2. In 1 Timothy 4: 14-15, Paul exhorted his spiritual son Timothy who was overseeing the church of Ephesus to develop his gift
 - Timothy should devote himself to spiritual discipline (vv.7-8), exemplary lifestyle (v. 12), and teaching and preaching of the Word (v. 13). As a leader he should demonstrate his progress to everyone in the church.

3. In Philippians 4: 12, Paul reveals what he learned over time. Paul learned to be content whatever the material circumstances. The fact that Paul has learned something indicates he has experienced growth.

4. Paul’s growth can also be found in his leadership ability. When he is first introduced as a teacher of the Antioch church, his name follows Barnabas (Acts 11:25-30).
 - However, during the first missionary journey, things changed. Luke puts Paul’s name before Barnabas (Acts 13:46). It implies that Paul became the key leader instead of Barnabas.

5. In Philippians 3:12-14, Paul declared his determination for continual progress. When Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians, he had been a Christian for about 30 years.
- He had won many spiritual battles and achieved much for Christ in that time. No doubt, he had grown much in those years, but he honestly confessed he had not "already attained," nor was he "already perfect."
 - With holy discontent and forgetting the past, Paul actively pressed on toward the goal. With the enthusiasm and persistence of a runner, Paul pursued continuous spiritual growth.
 - It is this passionate devotion to unceasing personal growth that makes Paul a great leader.

C. CHARACTER, THE FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP

1. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Prov. 4:23).
- From God's perspective nothing is more important than the heart because it is "where hope is born, where decisions are made, where commitment is strengthened, where truth is stored, mainly where *character* (the stuff that gives us depth and makes us wise) is formed.

- Character matters. It is your inner substance. It is who you are when no one is looking. It is much more important than one's talent or technical competence. It can generate genuine respect for leadership from the followers.
 - Character is like bedrock that sustains leaders in times of crisis and stress. It will determine the lengths, widths, depths and heights of their influence.
2. Paul had admirable Christian character. People were attracted to him because of the sheer force of his character. As J. Oswald Sanders says, "his qualities of character irresistibly lifted him above his colleagues and associates."
3. What especially set Paul off as a man of character was his integrity. "Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God" (2 Cor. 2: 17).
- The life of integrity was not automatic to Paul though. As a matter of fact Paul worked very hard at maintaining his own integrity. In his testimony to Felix the governor of Caesarea, Paul testified as the following: "So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man" (Acts 24:16).
 - To the apostle, the standard was so high that the earthly judgment did not matter. "I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judged me" (1 Cor. 4:3-4).

- The apostle lived his life before God. That is why he was so bold when he appealed to God to testify of his moral purity. "You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed" (1 Thess. 2: 10).
4. Bill Hybels states, "courage is foundational to being a Christian." It takes courage to follow Christ in a hostile world. But courage is required not only for followership but also for leadership. Leading people for the sake of Christ demands great courage.
- The apostle Paul was such a courageous leader. His bravery is clearly seen in the incident where he attempted to confront the raging mob in Ephesus (Acts 19:29-31).
 - Behind Paul's physical courage there was a moral impetus. He wanted to do what was right in the eyes of God no matter what the cost was
 - Acts 20:22-23 "And now compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me"
 - Paul admitted to knowing fear, but it never stopped him. "I came to you in weakness, fear and trembling, " he reported in 1 Cor 2:3, but he still came. He did not stay at home out of fear for the journey.

5. Paul took character very seriously. To him, the formation of Christian character was the first priority. He realized that it was God's ultimate purpose of our salvation.
 - Romans 8:29-30 “For those God foreknew he also predestined *to be conformed to the likeness of his Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

6. Paul pursued the time of solitude where real depth of the inner man can be developed. In Galatians 1: 16-17, Paul writes of his experience in solitude after his dramatic encounter with the risen Lord.

7. Paul responded positively to sufferings. Although he was chosen by God as the primary apostle to the Gentiles, he did not live a trouble-free life. In fact, the magnitude of sufferings he had to endure was incredible.
 - Few leaders today would compare to Paul in their experience of sufferings. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, Paul lists what he has gone through.
 - Paul never once blamed God for his affliction. He never complained or was angry about it. He never became bitter because of it. Instead, he received it as a part of his commitment to Christ and confidently trusted God to help him handle it.

- To him, suffering was not just an uninvited harmful intruder to his life. But rather it was like a drill sergeant who teaches him a hard lesson.
- Though it did not look good at the first sight, Paul was able to see its good side. He viewed it as an instrument that will achieve "an eternal glory" (2 Cor. 4: 17).
- Because of his perspective, he was able to say; "Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16).
- Suffering cannot automatically achieve strong character. It can either make or break a person. The key is one's response to it. If the response is positive, it results in building of one's character. That is why James exhorts his readers to receive it joyfully (James 1:2-4)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

1. We have looked at the areas of self-discipline, personal growth and character of the apostle Paul.
2. Paul was indeed a leader to himself. He was a man whose private world was well organized. Paul was a great leader because his inner-self was in a great condition. He was able to lead from the inside out.
3. In a world where many people's attention is paid to the outer-self, it becomes increasingly difficult for a leader to take a good care of his/her inner-self. However, we must not forget that God's focus of attention is on our inner man and not on our outward appearance.

4. Above all else, the secret of Paul's successful self-leadership was this "I can do all things through the One who empowers me within" – Phil 4:13

5. To be continually filled with the Holy Spirit is essential for spiritual leadership. And each believer can have as much of the Spirit's presence as he or she desires and thirsts after – John 7:37-39