Paul – A Transformed Instrument

Text: Rom. 7: 14-15; 1 Cor. 15: 6-11

A. The Apostle Paul is a very interesting and inspirational bible character.

1. His life is somewhat of an allegory of the typical Christian’s life.
   a. He started off in just doing what he felt was right.
   b. He got caught up in a religious movement that put him in conflict with God.
   c. He came to know Jesus and his life was changed.

2. Paul’s life was characterized by zeal for God.
   Gal. 1: 14 – I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.
   a. He became so deeply enthralled in Judaism based on desire to serve God.
   b. He became an aggressive evangelist for the same reason.

3. The Holy Spirit urged each one of us to emulate Paul’s zealous attitude in our lives.
   I Cor. 11: 1 – Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. 2 Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.
   a. Traditions = teachings (not historical customs)
   b. How do we know we are imitating Paul? If we are living his teachings.

B. Paul was one who worked his advantages; not one who drifted through life.

1. Paul was born into a successful family and he learned the business.
   Acts 20: 34 – You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. (Acts 18: 3.. a tentmaker)

2. He grew up near a great university and famous library so he studied.
   Acts 26: 24 – While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.

3. He used his intellect and family influence to get a prestigious apprenticeship.
   Acts 22: 3 – I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.

4. Paul used his prestigious apprenticeship to gain a position of leadership.
   Acts 22: 4 – I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.
C. Yet the Apostle willingly gave up all he had worked for to serve God.

1. **Phil. 3: 7** – But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I **count all things to be loss** in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him.

2. Paul was affirming that our relationship with God should be our highest value.

3. He was not requiring that one stop all secular activities; we must sustain ourselves. **II Thess. 3: 10** – For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

4. Remember: **Acts 20: 34** … Even Paul plied his trade in order to sustain himself.

D. When we become a servant of God there is an abrupt change in our value system

1. Paul was affirming the value that Jesus Himself establish for all of his followers. **Matt. 6: 31**– Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first **His kingdom and His righteousness**, and all these things will be added to you.

2. Jesus instructed us to place a higher value on spiritual things than on earthly. **John 6: 27** – Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the **food which endures to eternal life**, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.

Like Paul, when one is “born again” he is a “new creature” and that new person has a different value system than the old man, a new life goal.

I. Paul lived a life characterized by gratitude for his salvation.

A. Paul never forgot the enormous guilt Jesus had removed from him.

1. **I Cor. 15: 9** – For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I **persecuted the church of God**. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

2. **Eph. 3: 6** – …fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me, **the very least of all saints**, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.

3. The Apostle Paul realized what had been done for him and **he was grateful.**
B. God doesn’t do anything for no reason; why choose a persecutor to preach?

1. *I Tim. 1: 15* – It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. 16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

2. The Apostle felt honored to be allowed to share the gospel with others.

   *Eph. 3: 7* – Gentiles are … fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

C. The attitude of the Apostle Paul is being held up to us as an example to follow.

1. None of us were a prize that God was lucky to win.
2. We were all convicts living under a sentence of death. “The wages of sin in death.”
3. Gratitude for our salvation should motivate us to share the free gift of God.

II. The zealous service of the apostle was motivated by love for the lost.

A. The Apostle sincerely desired for his countrymen to be saved.

1. *Rom. 10: 1* – Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

2. The Apostle was willing to sacrifice himself to save them.

   *Rom. 9: 2* – I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, …

B. The Apostle was emulating our Lord.

1. Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

   *I Tim. 1: 15* – Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,

2. Jesus knew that His purpose was saving lost souls.

   *Mark 10: 45* – Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

3. While Jesus was on the earth He sought to save the lost.

   *Luke 19: 10* – For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

4. When He left the earth He sent His followers to seek and save the lost.

   *Mark 16: 15* – Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.
C. What is our attitude toward those who are Lost?  

1. Do we love them enough to reach out to them?  
   a. We will not be asked to die for them as Jesus did.  
   b. We will not be physically abused if we reach out to them as was Paul.  

2. What are we willing to do to lead those we love to salvation?  

III. Paul was also motivated by a desire for God to be glorified.  

A. Paul was aware that the world was watching.  

1. He praised the church because their generosity brought glory to God.  
   II Cor. 9: 12-13 – For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.  
   13 Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,  

2. Any time the church functions properly, it brings glory to God.  
   Eph. 3: 20-21 – Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,  
   21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.  

3. Those in the spiritual realm are acutely aware of what happens on earth.  
   Luke 15: 10 – In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.  

B. Bringing souls to Christ brings glory to Him.  

1. When Jesus returns to receive His own, He will receive glory.  
   II Thes. 1: 9 – These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,  
   10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed.  

2. Followers living the Christian life brings glory to God.  
   II Thes. 1: 11 – To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,  
   12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
   a. When you live the Christian life you bring glory to God.  
   b. When you bring others to Christ you multiply God’s glory on the earth.
IV. Paul was motivated by a desire to receive a reward from God.  

A. The Apostle lived with a view toward one day being with Jesus.

1.  II Cor. 5: 9 – We also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

2. He viewed his service to God as an offering.  (As the Jews offered lambs.)

Rom. 15: 15 – But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

B. Paul ministered with a view toward receiving a reward.

1.  I Cor. 9: 17 – For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. 18 What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. (cf. 2 Cor 12: 13)

2.  I Cor. 3: 8 – He who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

3.  I Cor. 3: 14 – If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

   a. Reward is linked to successfully bearing fruit.
   b. Salvation is NOT linked to success.  (Faith is demonstrated by effort.)
   c. We will expand on this principle next lesson.

APPLICATION: Ask ourselves, “How do I compare to Paul’s example?”

A. Does my life reflect an attitude of gratitude for my salvation?
B. Do I share the love of Paul and of Jesus for the souls of lost people?
C. Do I consciously and actively seek to glorify God by my life?
D. Am I zealously working to receive a reward from God in Heaven?

INVITATION: There is no better day than today to commit my life to...
Lesson Text:

Romans 7: 14-25

14 For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. 16 But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. 17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

I Corinthians 15: 6-11

6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.