

## 7 Admirable Characteristics of the Apostle Paul

Series 1-8

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### **Preface**

The Apostle Paul was no ordinary man. He wasn't chosen because he was flawless, nor did he serve because it brought him ease. Paul's life was marked by struggle, scars, and suffering — yet through it all, he stood as one of the most faithful vessels God has ever used. His letters stir the soul, his life commands attention, and his words echo with both heavenly authority and the pain of a man who gave up everything for Christ.

In an age of shallow faith and fading commitment, Paul's example is not just inspiring — it is essential. The modern church does not need more celebrity personalities or polished performances. It needs men and women shaped by the same fire that shaped Paul — a fire ignited by an encounter with the risen Christ and sustained by total surrender to His will.

This series explores seven admirable characteristics that defined the Apostle Paul's life and ministry. These traits are not presented as unattainable ideals, but as marks of a life fully yielded to Christ — a life that can be lived by any believer who walks in the Spirit and puts Christ first.

Each essay will walk through one of these defining traits:

- **Courageous Faith**
- **Unshakable Endurance**
- **Deep Humility**
- **Uncompromising Integrity**
- **Burning Zeal for Souls**
- **Loving Compassion**
- **Complete Surrender to Christ**

These are not simply virtues to admire from a distance. They are invitations — to follow Christ more closely, to serve more faithfully, and to live more sacrificially. Paul's life was not

his own, and if we would imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1), then ours must not be either.

May this series stir your heart, strengthen your faith, and rekindle your passion for the Lord. And may you, like Paul, be able to say at the end of your race:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”

— *2 Timothy 4:7*

## **1 of 8: 7 Admirable Characteristics of the Apostle Paul – Introduction: A Life Worth Imitating**

### **Introduction: A Life Worth Imitating**

The Apostle Paul stands as one of the most remarkable figures in all of human history. His transformation from a self-righteous persecutor to a tireless ambassador of Christ is not merely the story of personal redemption, but the divine unfolding of God's grace and power through a surrendered life. Across the pages of the New Testament, Paul emerges not as a distant religious figure but as a living, breathing man of astonishing character — a man who lived, suffered, taught, loved, and died for the cause of the gospel. He was not flawless, but he was faithful. His life is a testament to the power of Christ in a human vessel, making him a pattern for believers who seek to live for something greater than themselves.

In studying the life of Paul, one cannot help but be drawn into the profound tension between weakness and strength, between suffering and glory, between human frailty and divine empowerment. Paul's character was not forged in ease but in hardship. Shipwrecks, beatings, imprisonments, betrayals, hunger, sleeplessness — these were not exceptions in Paul's life; they were the norm. And yet, through it all, his spirit remained unbroken, his resolve unwavering, his faith immovable. Paul shines as an example of what it means to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12) until the very end.

The world today desperately needs more men and women shaped by the kind of qualities that marked the life of Paul. We do not lack intelligence, education, or innovation — we lack courageous faith, enduring perseverance, deep humility, unwavering integrity, passionate love for souls, tender compassion, and full surrender to Christ. In a generation increasingly marked by self-indulgence, compromise, and spiritual apathy, the characteristics embodied by Paul are not outdated relics; they are blazing beacons for the path forward.

In this series, we will explore seven admirable characteristics that defined the Apostle Paul. Each trait is a window into his soul, revealing the inner workings of a man who was completely captivated by Christ. These traits are not presented as distant ideals but as attainable realities for those who walk closely with the Lord. Paul's life demonstrates that greatness in the kingdom of God is not measured by outward success but by inward transformation — by the molding of character according to the image of Christ.

### **The Man Behind the Mission**

Before we examine Paul's characteristics individually, it is essential to understand the man himself. Born Saul of Tarsus, he was a Roman citizen by birth and a Hebrew of the Hebrews, trained under the revered Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Saul's early life was marked by zeal — but it was a misguided zeal, driven by legalism and hatred for the fledgling Christian movement. His fervor led him to hunt, imprison, and even consent to the death of believers, most notably at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58).

But Saul's life was destined for a dramatic collision with divine grace. On the road to Damascus, he encountered the risen Christ in blinding glory (Acts 9). That encounter shattered his pride, exposed his sin, and set him on a course of absolute devotion to the very Lord he once despised. From that day forward, Saul the persecutor became Paul the preacher, and the one who once tried to destroy the church became its greatest earthly champion.

Paul's conversion was not merely a change of belief; it was a total transformation of heart, mind, and mission. He described it this way: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:7). His old identity, accomplishments, and ambitions were discarded like rubbish in exchange for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

This total surrender set the foundation for the characteristics that would define the rest of Paul's life and ministry. He was a man possessed by a singular vision: to glorify Christ and to make Him known among all nations, at any cost.

### **Why Paul's Character Still Matters**

The traits we see in Paul are not unique to an ancient apostle; they are the same traits that Christ seeks to form in every believer today. Paul himself urged others, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). His life was intended to be a pattern

for those who would come after, demonstrating what it looks like to live fully yielded to the Spirit of God.

Too often, modern Christianity emphasizes comfort over commitment, popularity over principle, and convenience over conviction. The Apostle Paul's life flies in the face of such shallow religion. His example calls us back to the essence of true discipleship — a life laid down, a cross carried daily, and a burning love for the Savior that eclipses all else.

Studying Paul's admirable characteristics will challenge us, convict us, and — if we are willing — change us. We will see that courage is still needed in the face of cultural hostility, that endurance is still required in seasons of trial, and that humility, integrity, zeal, compassion, and surrender are still the marks of true greatness in God's eyes.

Each characteristic we will explore is not a product of human effort alone but the result of a life rooted deeply in Christ. Paul did not manufacture these traits by willpower; they were the natural fruit of abiding in the vine (John 15:5). And so it will be for us. If we would see these qualities formed in our own lives, we must seek Christ above all, yielding to His transforming work day by day.

## **Overview of the 7 Characteristics**

Before diving into each characteristic individually, let us briefly outline the traits that we will explore:

### **1. Courageous Faith**

Paul faced enemies, persecution, and even death threats without flinching. His faith was not theoretical; it was lived out with boldness wherever God sent him.

### **2. Unshakable Endurance**

Through beatings, imprisonments, shipwrecks, and betrayals, Paul remained steadfast, proving that true endurance is rooted not in human strength but in divine empowerment.

### **3. Deep Humility**

Though given extraordinary revelations and authority, Paul consistently pointed to his own weakness and sinfulness, magnifying the grace of God rather than his own achievements.

### **4. Uncompromising Integrity**

Paul never diluted the gospel to please men. His life and message were marked by a fierce commitment to truth, regardless of the cost.

## **5. Burning Zeal for Souls**

Paul's heart burned with a passion to see both Jews and Gentiles come to Christ. He was willing to suffer anything if it meant winning souls for the kingdom.

## **6. Loving Compassion**

Far from being a cold theologian, Paul displayed deep affection for the churches he planted, often likening himself to a nurturing mother or a caring father.

## **7. Complete Surrender to Christ**

For Paul, life itself was Christ. Every ambition, every plan, every desire was laid at the feet of Jesus. His entire existence was consumed by a singular goal: to know Christ and make Him known.

## **The Journey Ahead**

As we embark on this journey through the character of the Apostle Paul, let us approach with open hearts and teachable spirits. The goal is not merely to admire Paul from a distance, but to allow his example to drive us closer to Christ, who alone can shape us into vessels fit for His use.

The same Spirit who empowered Paul is available to us today. The same grace that sustained him is offered freely to all who will humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. The same Christ who captured his heart stands ready to capture ours.

Let us not be content with a Christianity of mere profession without possession, of form without power. Let us seek, by God's enabling, to embody the same admirable characteristics that made Paul a man "of whom the world was not worthy" (Hebrews 11:38).

The call is clear. The need is urgent. The example is before us.  
Let us rise and follow.

## **2 of 8: 7 Admirable Characteristics of the Apostle Paul – Courageous Faith**

### **Courageous Faith**

Faith without courage is a flower that withers at the first gust of adversity. In the life of the Apostle Paul, however, we find a faith so deeply rooted and fiercely courageous that it defied tyrants, withstood beatings, endured shipwrecks, and overcame betrayals. Paul's faith was not a delicate ornament reserved for religious ceremonies; it was a battle-hardened shield that he carried into the fiercest storms of life. His courage was not natural bravado but supernatural resilience, born of a heart wholly surrendered to Christ and anchored in the unbreakable promises of God.

In a world where fear silences many believers, Paul's courageous faith remains a burning example of what it truly means to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). His life forces us to confront an uncomfortable question: Is our faith courageous enough to stand when the winds of opposition blow? Is it strong enough to act when the cost is high? Is it rooted enough to endure when all human supports are stripped away?

In Paul, we see a model of courageous faith in action, faith that did not retreat in the face of danger but advanced for the glory of Christ. His life compels us to leave behind timidity and to rise in bold, unshakable trust in the living God.

### **A Life Marked by Boldness**

From the very beginning of his Christian life, Paul's faith was characterized by extraordinary courage. Immediately after his conversion, he "preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). This was no small act of bravery. The very people who once hailed him as a champion of Judaism now viewed him as a traitor. The same councils that authorized him to persecute Christians now considered him a blasphemer. Yet Paul did not shrink back.

In fact, his boldness stirred such fury that the Jews in Damascus plotted to kill him. Undeterred, Paul continued to preach until he had to be lowered over the city wall in a basket to escape (Acts 9:23–25). It was a fitting picture: even as enemies closed in, Paul's faith found a way forward, trusting God to make a way where none seemed possible.

Throughout his ministry, Paul's boldness only grew. Whether preaching in the synagogues, disputing with philosophers on Mars Hill (Acts 17), or standing trial before kings and governors, Paul spoke the truth without compromise, without apology, and without fear. His confidence was not in himself but in the gospel he proclaimed: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16).

### **Faith That Withstood Persecution**

Paul's courageous faith was not theoretical; it was tested again and again by severe persecution. In 2 Corinthians 11:23–27, Paul recounts a staggering list of hardships:

- "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft."
- "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one."
- "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck."
- "In perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen..."
- "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

Each of these trials could have broken a lesser man. But Paul's faith, rooted in Christ, remained unbroken. He did not interpret suffering as a sign of divine abandonment but as confirmation of his union with Christ. As he wrote to the Philippians, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29).

Rather than diminishing his courage, suffering purified and amplified it. His boldness was not the reckless daring of a thrill-seeker; it was the steady, steadfast conviction of a man who knew that Christ had already won the victory, and that no earthly trial could shake his eternal security.

### **The Secret of Paul's Courageous Faith**

What made Paul's faith so courageous? The answer lies not in Paul's natural disposition but in the supernatural reality that gripped his soul.

First, Paul had an unshakable conviction about the sovereignty of God. He knew that nothing could touch him without passing through the loving hand of his heavenly Father. This assurance freed him from fear of men. As he wrote, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Second, Paul was driven by a consuming vision of Christ's glory. His life was no longer centered on personal safety or comfort but on exalting Jesus in life and in death. "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Philippians 1:20).

Third, Paul was energized by the hope of eternal reward. He knew that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory that would be revealed (Romans 8:18). His eyes were fixed not on the temporary afflictions of earth but on the eternal weight of glory awaiting him.

This triple vision — of God's sovereignty, Christ's glory, and eternal reward — infused Paul's faith with a courage that could not be extinguished by earthly threats.

### **Courage in Preaching the Gospel**

One of the most visible expressions of Paul's courageous faith was his bold proclamation of the gospel in hostile environments. From the synagogues of the Jews to the marketplaces of the Gentiles, Paul fearlessly declared the truth of Christ crucified and risen.

In Thessalonica, Paul preached despite violent opposition, and later wrote to the church, "We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention" (1 Thessalonians 2:2).

In Lystra, after healing a lame man, Paul was stoned by a mob and left for dead. Yet he rose up and continued preaching the gospel (Acts 14:19–20).

In Ephesus, his preaching caused such an uproar among idol-makers that a riot broke out. But Paul was undeterred, staying and ministering for years despite the dangers (Acts 19).

Everywhere Paul went, courage marked his ministry. He did not measure his success by the absence of opposition but by the faithful proclamation of Christ, whatever the cost.

### **Faith That Defied Kings and Emperors**

Paul's courageous faith was most dramatically displayed when he stood trial before the political and religious authorities of his day. Arrested in Jerusalem, Paul boldly defended his faith before the Sanhedrin, Governor Felix, King Agrippa, and ultimately sought to appeal before Caesar himself.

Before Agrippa, Paul gave one of the most compelling testimonies recorded in Scripture (Acts 26). He recounted his conversion and fearlessly urged the king to believe in Christ. Even in chains, Paul's courage made him spiritually free, while his judges, though seated on thrones, remained prisoners of their unbelief.

Paul understood that he was not ultimately standing before earthly rulers but before the King of kings. His courage was not rooted in self-preservation but in the commission he had received from Christ: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18).

### **The Call to Courageous Faith Today**

The courage of Paul is not merely a historical curiosity; it is a present-day calling. In a world increasingly hostile to biblical truth, the need for courageous faith has never been greater. Believers today must be willing to stand for Christ even when it costs them their reputation, their comfort, their career, or even their lives.

Courageous faith is not the absence of fear but the refusal to be ruled by it. It is the unwavering decision to trust God's promises more than man's threats. It is the willingness to speak truth in love, even when the world demands silence.

As Paul exhorted Timothy, so the Spirit exhorts us today: "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Courageous faith is not optional for the Christian; it is essential. Without it, we will be tossed by every wind of culture and silenced by every growl of the enemy. But with it, we will stand firm, shine brightly, and advance the kingdom of God even in the darkest of times.

### **Conclusion: Let Us Rise in Courageous Faith**

The Apostle Paul's life calls us upward. His courageous faith invites us to step out of the shadows of fear and into the boldness of Christ. It challenges us to live not for the applause of men but for the approval of God.

Courageous faith begins not with a roar but with a decision — a decision to trust Christ completely, to obey Him fully, and to live for His glory unreservedly. It is nurtured in prayer, strengthened in the Word, and confirmed in the fires of trial.

May we, like Paul, be able to say at the end of our race: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

Let us take courage, then, for the Lord our God is with us. Let us stand boldly, speak boldly, live boldly — and above all, believe boldly.  
For Christ is worthy.

### **3 of 8: 7 Admirable Characteristics of the Apostle Paul – Unshakable Endurance**

#### **Unshakable Endurance**

If courage begins the journey, endurance finishes it. Many begin their Christian walk with bold declarations and fiery passion, but few continue when the road becomes long, lonely, and filled with trials. The Apostle Paul was not only a man of courageous faith, but of *unshakable endurance* — a tenacious, God-fueled resolve to press on when others fell away, to remain faithful when the cost was high, and to finish the course no matter what obstacles stood in his path.

Endurance is not glamorous. It does not draw crowds or attract applause. But in the kingdom of God, it is one of the most prized virtues. Paul's endurance was not the result of human grit or stubbornness; it was a supernatural byproduct of grace, anchored in hope and empowered by the Spirit. His life reveals the inner strength of a man who had “counted the cost” and decided that nothing — not pain, not poverty, not persecution — could separate him from the love of Christ or deter him from his calling.

Today, in a world of instant gratification and spiritual short-cuts, Paul's endurance calls us back to the long road of obedience, reminding us that the Christian life is not a sprint, but a marathon. And finishing well is just as important as starting strong.

#### **The Call to Endure**

Paul knew from the start that following Christ would come at great personal cost. The Lord said plainly to Ananias at Paul's conversion: “For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake” (Acts 9:16). That divine forecast proved accurate. From his earliest days as an apostle, Paul endured fierce opposition, including attempts on his life, beatings, arrests, and betrayals — and that was just the beginning.

Yet, Paul never interpreted these hardships as a reason to quit. Instead, he saw suffering as part of his calling. He wrote to the Thessalonians, “Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost” (1 Thessalonians 1:5–6).

Paul didn't endure *despite* hardship — he endured *through* it, and often *because* of it. His trials became his testimony. His scars became his sermon. His faithfulness in the midst of affliction became his crown.

## Endurance Through Physical Suffering

Perhaps no one in the New Testament suffered as much as Paul, save the Lord Jesus Himself. Consider his staggering list of afflictions in 2 Corinthians 11:23–28:

- “In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.”
- “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.”
- “Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck.”
- “In journeyings often, in perils of waters... perils by mine own countrymen... in the wilderness... among false brethren.”
- “In weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

This wasn’t a list accumulated over a few years — this was the reality of Paul’s *entire* ministry. He was rarely at ease. Yet never once did he express regret or resentment. Instead, he gloried in his tribulations, writing, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Paul endured not because he was immune to pain, but because he trusted in a power greater than himself — the power of the risen Christ. His physical body bore the wounds of his commitment, but his spirit remained strong.

## Endurance in Ministry Disappointments

Physical pain was only one part of Paul’s endurance. Equally heavy were the emotional and spiritual burdens he carried for the churches. He told the Corinthians that, beyond all his external trials, there was “that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28).

Paul knew the heartache of betrayal — Demas forsook him (2 Timothy 4:10), many turned away from him (2 Timothy 1:15), and false teachers constantly sought to undo his labor.

He knew the sorrow of misunderstood motives, as the Galatians questioned his integrity and the Corinthians challenged his authority. He knew the sting of disappointment when churches he founded drifted into sin or false doctrine.

Yet in all of this, Paul kept going. He didn’t allow bitterness to take root. He didn’t quit in frustration. He poured himself out, again and again, not for his own legacy, but for the sake of Christ and His body.

## **Endurance in Delayed Deliverance**

One of the most poignant aspects of Paul's endurance was his ability to remain faithful even when deliverance didn't come. He prayed three times for a "thorn in the flesh" to be removed, but the Lord responded, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Paul did not throw a spiritual tantrum. He embraced God's answer, finding deeper joy and strength not in the removal of suffering, but in the presence of sustaining grace. His endurance was not contingent on outcomes — it was rooted in obedience.

He endured unanswered questions, postponed dreams, and delayed justice — all while keeping his eyes on the eternal prize. "For our light affliction," he wrote, "which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

## **Endurance to the End**

What makes Paul's endurance most admirable is that it endured all the way to the finish line. He didn't fizzle out in old age. He didn't coast in his final years. From the first missionary journey to his final imprisonment in Rome, Paul kept preaching, kept writing, kept praying, kept discipling, and kept pressing forward.

At the end of his life, Paul wrote with triumphant satisfaction: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). These are not the words of a man who merely survived — they are the words of a man who conquered, who endured every hardship and remained loyal to the One who called him.

Even in his final letter, penned from a Roman dungeon, Paul was encouraging others: "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).

His endurance wasn't just for himself — it became a torch passed down to Timothy and to every believer since.

## **The Source of Unshakable Endurance**

How did Paul endure so much without losing heart? The secret was his source. His strength did not come from within; it came from above.

He declared, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). He was not a stoic, gritting his teeth through pain. He was a Spirit-filled man, empowered by divine joy, anchored in eternal truth, and fueled by a relentless hope in Christ.

Paul’s endurance flowed from:

- **A clear identity** – He knew who he was in Christ: “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10).
- **A crucified ego** – “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live...” (Galatians 2:20).
- **A heavenly mindset** – “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).
- **An eternal perspective** – “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling...” (Philippians 3:14).

Endurance becomes possible — and joyful — when we shift our gaze from temporary trouble to eternal truth.

### **Application: Endurance in Your Life**

What does unshakable endurance look like in the life of the believer today?

It’s the parent who keeps praying for a wayward child.

It’s the missionary who stays when the harvest is slow.

It’s the pastor who labors in obscurity, year after year.

It’s the Christian who clings to truth while the world mocks.

It’s the disciple who keeps showing up, forgiving, serving, believing — even when it hurts.

Endurance is not glamorous. It is often quiet, often lonely, often unseen. But it is precious in God’s sight. The Lord is not looking for celebrities; He is looking for finishers.

As Paul wrote: “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

### **Conclusion: Let Us Run with Patience**

The writer of Hebrews echoes Paul’s example with this call:

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Paul's endurance challenges us. It beckons us higher. It reminds us that strength is not found in comfort, but in Christ. That joy is not found in escape, but in faithfulness. That glory is not found in quick results, but in long obedience in the same direction.

May we echo Paul's words in our own day:

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy..." (Acts 20:24).

Let us press on. Let us not faint. Let us endure — and finish well.

For the prize is Christ Himself.

#### **4 of 8: 7 Admirable Characteristics of the Apostle Paul – Deep Humility**

##### **Deep Humility**

Power is dangerous when it is not accompanied by humility. In the case of the Apostle Paul, God entrusted one of the greatest spiritual callings in history to a man who learned, through suffering, revelation, and grace, to walk low before both God and men. Despite being an apostle, miracle-worker, church planter, and author of much of the New Testament, Paul referred to himself in striking terms: "the least of the apostles," "less than the least of all saints," and even "the chief of sinners." These were not false expressions of modesty, but honest confessions from a man who had seen the depths of his own sin — and the heights of God's grace.

Humility was not a mask Paul wore to appear spiritual; it was the very posture of his soul. His humility grew not from insecurity, but from divine insight. He understood who he was apart from Christ, and who he had become only by Christ. That realization anchored him, shaped him, and made his ministry all the more powerful. In a world where pride is often paraded as confidence, Paul's humility is both refreshing and convicting.

If courageous faith and unshakable endurance made Paul strong on the outside, it was deep humility that made him strong on the inside. Without it, his character would have collapsed under the weight of his mission. With it, he became a vessel fit for the Master's use — because he never forgot that the treasure was Christ, and he was just the earthen vessel.

##### **Paul's Humble Self-Assessment**

From his earliest writings to his final letter, Paul maintained a consistent view of his own unworthiness apart from grace.

In **1 Corinthians 15:9**, he wrote:

“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”

This is not the language of a man building his brand. It is the honest confession of a man who never forgot the pain he caused before he was saved. Paul was haunted — not in despair, but in sober memory — by the cries of the saints he had dragged from their homes, the joy he felt when Stephen was stoned, the rage that once fueled his religious zeal.

In **Ephesians 3:8**, years into his ministry, he wrote:

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given...”

And near the end of his life, in **1 Timothy 1:15**, he said:

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

Notice the progression. In Corinthians, Paul says he's the least of the apostles. In Ephesians, he's less than the least of all saints. In Timothy, he's the chief of sinners. The closer Paul got to Christ, the lower he saw himself. That is the paradox of holiness: the more clearly we see the glory of God, the more honestly we see the truth about ourselves.

### **Humility in the Face of Great Revelation**

Few men in history have experienced what Paul experienced spiritually. In **2 Corinthians 12**, he describes being caught up into the third heaven, into Paradise itself, where he “heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” The average man might have built an entire ministry around that single event. Not Paul. He barely mentions it — and even then, refers to himself in the third person.

But God, knowing how dangerous spiritual pride can be, gave Paul a “thorn in the flesh” to keep him grounded. Paul writes:

“Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh...”

(2 Corinthians 12:7)

God valued Paul's humility more than his comfort. And Paul, in turn, embraced the thorn, understanding that it kept him dependent, tender, and usable. He did not boast in his experiences; he boasted in his infirmities, "that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

The lesson is clear: humility is not just a virtue — it is protection. And God honors it.

### **Humility Toward Fellow Believers**

Paul's humility wasn't just vertical toward God; it was horizontal toward others. Though he was an apostle with divine authority, he never lorded it over others. He often referred to himself as a *servant*, and treated his spiritual children with tenderness and affection.

To the Thessalonians, he wrote:

"But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children"  
(1 Thessalonians 2:7).

To the Corinthians, who questioned his authority, he reminded them that though he could use boldness, he chose gentleness:

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ..."  
(2 Corinthians 10:1)

Paul's rebukes were firm but never cruel. His leadership was strong but never oppressive. His letters reveal a shepherd's heart, not a tyrant's tone. That balance — doctrinal firmness and personal humility — is sorely needed in the church today.

### **Humility in Discipleship and Partnership**

Another mark of Paul's humility was his willingness to work with others and lift them up. He wasn't threatened by the success of his co-laborers; he celebrated it.

He constantly praised others:

- Timothy, as "my own son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2)
- Epaphroditus, as "my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier"  
(Philippians 2:25)
- Phoebe, as "a servant of the church... a succourer of many" (Romans 16:1–2)

Paul's letters are filled with greetings, commendations, and expressions of deep affection. He understood that ministry was not a one-man show, and he was quick to acknowledge the vital contributions of others.

Even in disagreement, as with Barnabas or John Mark, Paul's humility allowed room for growth and eventual reconciliation (2 Timothy 4:11).

The humble man does not need to win every argument or dominate every platform. He is secure enough in Christ to cheer for others, even when they surpass him.

### **Humility in Preaching and Teaching**

Perhaps the most striking expression of Paul's humility was his continual pointing away from himself and toward Christ. In **1 Corinthians 2:1–5**, he describes how he came not with “excellency of speech or of wisdom,” but “in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.”

Why? Because he wanted their “faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

Paul had the intellect to impress. He had the credentials to silence critics. But he chose simplicity, clarity, and gospel-centeredness. His preaching wasn't about showcasing Paul — it was about magnifying Christ.

He told the Galatians, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). That is the heartbeat of true humility: to glory not in our gifts, but in God's grace.

### **Why Deep Humility Matters Today**

In today's world — even in Christian ministry — pride is often repackaged as boldness, self-promotion as strategy, and arrogance as authority. Paul's humility challenges us to recover the beauty of lowliness.

Humility draws people to Christ because it reflects Him. Jesus said, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). Paul learned that lesson well — and lived it.

Humility is the soil in which all other virtues grow. Without it, courage becomes brashness, endurance becomes self-righteousness, and zeal becomes fanaticism. But with humility, every virtue is seasoned with grace and empowered by love.

Paul's deep humility gave him moral authority. It made him relatable. It made his rebukes palatable and his example followable. If we would make any lasting impact for Christ, we must follow his path — downward.

### **How to Grow in Humility Like Paul**

We do not become humble by trying to act humble. True humility is born from being with Jesus, from seeing Him in His glory, and ourselves in our weakness. Here are a few ways Paul's humility was shaped — and how ours can be too:

1. **Remember who you were**

Paul never forgot his past — not to live in guilt, but to magnify grace.

2. **Embrace the thorn**

Paul accepted weakness, knowing it kept him dependent on God.

3. **Stay under the Word**

Paul constantly submitted to God's Word, not his own opinions.

4. **Point others to Christ**

Paul preached Christ, not himself.

5. **Serve the saints**

Paul made himself the servant of all, like Christ did.

6. **Celebrate others' success**

Paul honored his fellow laborers instead of competing with them.

7. **Focus on eternity**

Paul lived for the approval of God, not the applause of men.

The more we die to self, the more Christ lives through us. That's the path to real humility — and real impact.

### **Conclusion: Go Low to Grow High**

Paul's life teaches us that the way up is down. True greatness is found not in lording over others but in serving them. True leadership is not demanding authority but walking in humility.

When Christ called Paul, He didn't just change his direction — He changed his disposition. The proud Pharisee became the humble apostle. The self-righteous Saul became the grace-filled Paul.

The world needs fewer celebrities and more servants. Fewer performers and more preachers. Fewer influencers and more intercessors.

Let us walk with Paul in the footsteps of Christ, who "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7). Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time (1 Peter 5:6).

Let us decrease — that Christ may increase.

## **5 of 8: 7 Admirable Characteristics of the Apostle Paul – Uncompromising Integrity**

### **Uncompromising Integrity**

In a world that often trades truth for convenience and conviction for comfort, the Apostle Paul stands as a model of unyielding integrity. His words and actions matched. His message never shifted with the culture. His loyalty was never up for sale. Paul was a man who lived out his faith with consistency, clarity, and uncompromising moral courage. Whether before peasants or kings, in synagogues or prisons, Paul stood unwavering on the truth of the gospel — not because it was easy, but because it was *right*.

Integrity is the mortar that holds the other virtues together. Without it, courage is just noise, endurance becomes hypocrisy, and even humility can be a performance. Paul's integrity ran deep. It was rooted in his relationship with Christ and expressed in every detail of his life and ministry. He didn't merely *preach* the gospel — he *lived* it.

In this age of religious image management and theological negotiation, Paul's integrity calls us back to purity of doctrine, transparency of life, and fearless fidelity to the truth, no matter the cost.

### **Integrity in Gospel Clarity**

One of Paul's greatest displays of integrity was his refusal to alter the gospel message — even slightly — to appease others. In **Galatians 1:8–9**, he made one of the strongest statements in the entire New Testament:

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

That is not the language of a people-pleaser. That is the bold declaration of a man who feared God more than man. Paul’s gospel wasn’t a product of human invention or tradition — it came by revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11–12), and he guarded it fiercely.

Even when false brethren tried to sneak in and corrupt the gospel with legalism, Paul didn’t yield. He recounts in **Galatians 2:5**:

“To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”

Paul understood that compromising the message was compromising Christ. His integrity demanded clarity — even when clarity was costly.

### **Integrity in Personal Conduct**

Paul’s moral life matched his message. He lived in such a way that no one could honestly accuse him of hypocrisy or hidden sin. To the Thessalonians, he wrote:

“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:10).

He wasn’t perfect — and he never claimed to be — but Paul’s life was marked by sincere holiness and transparent conduct. He welcomed scrutiny because he had nothing to hide.

In **2 Corinthians 4:2**, he said:

“But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully...”

Paul understood that the strength of a minister’s message is only as strong as the integrity behind it. His life was an open book — and he lived it that way on purpose.

### **Integrity with Money and Ministry**

Paul’s integrity especially shined in areas where many stumble: money and spiritual authority.

He often refused financial support from churches he was actively ministering to, not because it was wrong to receive it, but to avoid any appearance of preaching for profit. To the Corinthians, he wrote:

“I have made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more... I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me” (1 Corinthians 9:19,15).

Even though he had the right to receive material support, he often waived it — working with his hands as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3) — so that no one could accuse him of financial motives.

This wasn't false humility; it was strategic integrity. Paul knew the gospel was too precious to be tainted by accusations of self-interest. His life was proof that ministry is about souls, not salaries.

### **Integrity in Conflict and Correction**

Paul did not shy away from confrontation when truth was at stake — but even then, he remained principled and righteous in how he handled others. One of the boldest examples was his public rebuke of Peter in Galatians 2.

Peter had withdrawn from eating with Gentiles when certain Jews came to Antioch, fearing their judgment. Paul saw this as hypocrisy — and he addressed it directly:

“But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all...” (Galatians 2:14).

This wasn't power play or pride — it was integrity. Paul didn't care about maintaining alliances at the cost of truth. Even if it meant confronting a fellow apostle, Paul stayed aligned with the gospel.

But note: even in rebuke, Paul did not slander, gossip, or manipulate. He dealt with matters openly, biblically, and directly. That is what real integrity looks like under pressure.

### **Integrity in Teaching Sound Doctrine**

Paul not only lived with integrity — he *taught* others to do the same, especially in their doctrine. To Timothy, he wrote:

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them...” (1 Timothy 4:16)

And again:

“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love...” (2 Timothy 1:13)

Paul saw no separation between personal holiness and doctrinal soundness. The two walked hand in hand. He warned constantly of false teachers, emphasizing that departure from doctrine is a departure from truth — and from Christ Himself.

His words in **2 Timothy 4:3–4** are a chilling warning for today:

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine... and they shall turn away their ears from the truth...”

Paul knew the temptation to water down truth would grow. But the call to integrity would never change.

### **Integrity in Private Devotion**

Integrity is proven not just in public but in private. Paul's letters reveal a man deeply devoted to prayer, to Scripture, to spiritual disciplines that no crowd ever saw.

He constantly wrote to churches: “I make mention of you always in my prayers...” (Romans 1:9, Ephesians 1:16, Philippians 1:3–4)

Even in prison, his mind was set on heaven, and his hands were busy writing epistles, not wallowing in self-pity.

Integrity meant Paul didn't perform for people. He lived before the face of God. Whether on a public stage or locked in chains, his life was the same — because his audience was Christ.

### **The Cost of Integrity**

Paul's unwavering integrity came at great cost.

- He was misunderstood by his own people.
- He was hated by both religious leaders and pagans.
- He was slandered, attacked, and falsely accused.
- He was abandoned by some of his closest companions.

Yet never once did he adjust his message to gain favor. Never once did he manipulate people for selfish advantage. He stayed the course because he knew whom he believed (2 Timothy 1:12).

He wrote to the Galatians:

“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ”  
(Galatians 1:10)

Paul understood what many today forget: You cannot serve Christ and compromise. You cannot please the world and be faithful to the gospel. Integrity is not optional for the Christian — it is the very evidence that Christ lives in you.

### **Integrity in Death**

Paul’s life ended with the same integrity with which he lived. As he awaited execution in a Roman prison, he did not beg for release or soften his convictions. Instead, he wrote:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”  
(2 Timothy 4:7)

That is the cry of a man who lived without regret, who crossed the finish line with honor, and who stood ready to receive the crown of righteousness.

His integrity was not just about *what* he believed — it was about *how* he lived and *who* he lived for.

### **Conclusion: Let Integrity Define You**

The Apostle Paul’s life is a roadmap for anyone who wants to live without duplicity. His example shows us that uncompromising integrity isn’t loud — it’s *loyal*. It’s not self-righteous — it’s *surrendered*. It’s not about being perfect — it’s about being consistent, truthful, and faithful to Christ in all things.

In a world drowning in compromise, we must recover the courage to stand for truth without shame, to speak with conviction without arrogance, and to live with transparency before a watching world and a holy God.

Let us pray the prayer Paul lived:

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke... among whom ye shine as lights in the world”

(Philippians 2:15)

Let your words match your walk.

Let your life echo your doctrine.

Let your integrity be your legacy — as it was for Paul.

## **6 of 8: 7 Admirable Characteristics of the Apostle Paul – Burning Zeal for Souls**

### **Burning Zeal for Souls**

Few men in history have burned with the intensity of the Apostle Paul when it came to winning souls for Jesus Christ. His passion was not shallow enthusiasm or religious excitement — it was a holy fire that consumed his life, his plans, his safety, and ultimately, his very breath. Paul’s zeal was born not from human ambition but from divine love. It was the natural outflow of a man who had seen the risen Christ and could never be the same again.

Everywhere he went, Paul’s focus remained fixed on the eternal destiny of others. He did not see people as mere faces in a crowd but as souls destined for Heaven or Hell. His heart broke for both Jew and Gentile, and his life mission was to bring them the truth of the gospel — at any cost. He wasn’t satisfied with converts; he labored to see Christ formed in people (Galatians 4:19). His zeal was marked not by momentary emotion, but by a lifelong, sacrificial, Spirit-driven pursuit of eternal fruit.

If there is one trait the modern church must reclaim, it is Paul’s burning zeal for souls. In an age of comfort and distraction, we need men and women who will weep, pray, preach, and pursue the lost with the same urgency that burned in the Apostle’s heart.

### **Zeal from the Moment of Conversion**

Paul’s zeal didn’t develop gradually — it exploded into motion the moment he was saved. In **Acts 9**, just days after his dramatic encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul was already “preaching Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20).

What makes this even more striking is that the very people he once sided with were now trying to kill him. The persecutor had become the preacher, and Paul didn’t wait to be fully

accepted or trained before he began witnessing. The truth had gripped him — and he had to speak.

This urgency never left him. From the beginning to the end of his ministry, Paul's zeal remained unwavering. To the Corinthians, he wrote:

“Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16)

He wasn't motivated by duty, money, or position. He was driven by love — love for Christ, and love for those still bound in darkness.

### **Zeal for His Own People: Israel**

Though called to be the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul never lost his burden for his fellow Jews. In fact, he expressed one of the most staggering statements in all of Scripture in **Romans 9:2–3**:

“That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

Paul said he would be willing to be eternally separated from Christ — if it meant his people could be saved. That is not theological rhetoric; it is heartfelt agony. His love was so deep, his desire for their salvation so intense, that he would give up his own hope if it meant they could have theirs.

Such a statement mirrors the heart of Christ Himself, who “became sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21) and bore our curse on the tree.

Paul's zeal was not generic. It was personal. It had names, faces, cities, and tears attached to it.

### **Zeal in Preaching Everywhere, to Everyone**

Paul's zeal drove him not just to his own people but to the ends of the known world. He said:

“Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named...”  
(Romans 15:20)

He wasn't content to build on another man's foundation or stay in one comfortable place. He was always on the move — planting churches, preaching in synagogues, reasoning in marketplaces, teaching in homes, and declaring Christ on ships and in courtrooms.

His missionary journeys covered thousands of miles. He faced robbers, wild terrain, hostile governments, and shipwrecks — yet he pressed on, always looking for the next soul to reach. As long as there was one more sinner who had not heard the name of Jesus, Paul could not rest.

He summarized his mission beautifully in **1 Corinthians 9:22**:

“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

That is the essence of gospel zeal: doing *whatever it takes* to bring others to Christ.

### **Zeal with Tears and Travail**

Paul's zeal was not cold or mechanical. It was deeply emotional — full of tears, passion, and personal investment.

He told the Ephesian elders:

“Remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

(Acts 20:31)

He didn't merely preach sermons — he poured out his heart. His soul was tied to the people he ministered to. To the Galatians, he said:

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you”

(Galatians 4:19)

Paul's zeal wasn't satisfied with surface-level responses. He longed to see deep transformation — Christ formed in the hearts of believers. He wasn't building an audience; he was birthing a spiritual family.

### **Zeal that Cost Him Everything**

Zeal without sacrifice is just noise. Paul's zeal for souls cost him everything — reputation, comfort, safety, freedom, health, and ultimately his life.

He endured beatings, imprisonments, riots, sleepless nights, hunger, betrayal — all so that people could hear the gospel. In **2 Corinthians 12:15**, he declared:

“And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you...”

Paul didn’t just give time or words — he gave himself. He didn’t count the cost because he had already given Christ everything.

That kind of zeal doesn’t come from personality or temperament. It comes from a heart gripped by the love of God and a vision of eternity.

### **Zeal in Prison and on Trial**

Even in chains, Paul’s zeal never faded. He wrote to the Philippians:

“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel”

(Philippians 1:12)

Most would have seen prison as the end of ministry. Paul saw it as a new mission field. He evangelized guards, witnessed to fellow prisoners, and even reached Caesar’s household (Philippians 4:22).

When standing trial before kings and governors, Paul did not plead for release — he preached repentance. In **Acts 26**, before King Agrippa, Paul shared his testimony and then said:

“I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

Even with shackles on his hands, Paul’s heart was burning for the salvation of his hearers.

### **Zeal that Inspired Others**

Paul’s passion was contagious. His boldness inspired fellow believers to speak up, even when persecution was intense. He wrote:

“And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

(Philippians 1:14)

A true zeal for souls doesn't just burn quietly — it ignites others. Paul's life became a matchstick in the dry timber of complacent hearts. His example awakened slumbering churches and emboldened timid preachers.

He taught others to not only teach truth, but to *love* people — to weep, labor, and fight for them until Christ reigned in their hearts.

### **How to Cultivate Zeal for Souls Today**

Paul's zeal wasn't unique to him. It is available to every believer who longs for it. Here's how to stir that same fire in your heart:

1. **Abide in Christ** – Zeal is not manufactured; it is the natural byproduct of being close to Jesus. The more you walk with Him, the more you care about what He cares about — and He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).
2. **Pray for a burden** – Ask God to break your heart for the lost around you. Paul's tears didn't come from guilt, but from divine compassion.
3. **See eternity clearly** – Remember that everyone you meet will spend eternity in Heaven or Hell. That truth will quicken your steps and soften your speech.
4. **Remove distractions** – Many believers lack zeal not because they don't care, but because they are distracted. Zeal grows in focused hearts.
5. **Take risks for the gospel** – Paul didn't wait for perfect moments. He stepped out, opened his mouth, and trusted God with the results. Zeal multiplies when it is exercised.

### **Conclusion: Set Your Soul on Fire**

Paul lived like a man running out of time — because he understood that others were running out of time, too. His zeal was not a phase; it was his life. It didn't flicker with emotion — it burned with eternal conviction.

The modern church has mastered programs, polished presentations, and flawless events — but too often, we have lost the fire. Paul calls us back. Back to the altar. Back to the tears. Back to the urgency. Back to the souls.

Let us pray for a heart that says, like Paul:

“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”  
(Romans 10:1)

Let that desire become our prayer — and our passion.

Let us weep, speak, and labor — until Christ is formed in them.

## **7 of 8: 7 Admirable Characteristics of the Apostle Paul – Loving Compassion**

### **Loving Compassion**

In the Apostle Paul, we see a rare and beautiful balance: a man of fierce convictions who also possessed a tender heart. Too often, boldness and compassion are wrongly seen as opposites, but Paul embodied both — with depth, sincerity, and sacrificial love. His compassion was not a soft sentiment or emotional reaction. It was an active, persistent, Christ-like love for both the churches he planted and the sinners he longed to save. His doctrine was strong, but his heart was soft.

Loving compassion was the heartbeat of Paul’s ministry. He wasn’t a cold theologian spewing facts — he was a spiritual father, weeping, rejoicing, mourning, and rejoicing with those he served. He bore their burdens, carried their concerns, and poured his life out like a drink offering on the altar of their faith (Philippians 2:17). His love wasn't abstract. It was visible, personal, and deeply felt.

As we follow Paul’s example, we must remember: compassion is not weakness. It is strength under control. It is truth wrapped in grace. It is the love of Christ flowing through a heart that’s been broken for others.

### **Compassion for New Believers**

Paul treated his converts like children — not in condescension, but in care. To the Thessalonians, he wrote:

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:  
So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.”  
(1 Thessalonians 2:7–8)

This is the language of loving compassion. Paul didn't just preach the gospel — he gave himself. He saw new believers not as numbers but as beloved souls, tenderly shepherded in the faith.

He understood that spiritual infants need nurture, not just instruction. So, he bore with their immaturity, taught them patiently, and rejoiced in their growth.

To the Corinthians — even in their carnality — he said:

“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.”

(1 Corinthians 4:15)

Paul loved them like a father. Even when they broke his heart, he kept pursuing them.

### **Compassion in Correction**

Paul didn't ignore sin or excuse false doctrine — but even in his sharpest rebukes, his heart ached for restoration. When he corrected churches, it was with tears, not cold detachment.

To the Galatians, who had fallen into legalism, Paul exclaimed:

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you...”

(Galatians 4:19)

He didn't lash out in frustration. He groaned in spiritual labor. His compassion made him long for their spiritual health more than their approval.

To the Corinthians, who questioned his authority, he said:

“Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.”

(2 Corinthians 2:4)

This is the kind of love that speaks the truth — but does so weeping.

### **Compassion in Intercession**

Paul's compassion drove him to his knees. His letters are filled with prayer — specific, fervent, and personal.

He told the Colossians:

“We... do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will...”

(Colossians 1:9)

And the Ephesians:

“I bow my knees unto the Father... That he would grant you... to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man...”

(Ephesians 3:14–16)

Paul didn't just *preach* to them — he *prayed* for them. Often. Earnestly. Compassion doesn't stop at care; it moves to intercession. He didn't treat his churches like projects but like family — hurting when they hurt, laboring for them in prayer when words could go no further.

### **Compassion for the Suffering**

Paul's letters are filled with sensitivity toward the suffering — widows, the poor, the imprisoned, the discouraged. His own suffering seemed to sharpen, not dull, his compassion.

He remembered the poor in Jerusalem and took up offerings from Gentile churches to send help (Romans 15:26). He praised churches like the Philippians for their generosity, but he also made sure their charity was stewarded with integrity and care (2 Corinthians 8–9).

To the weak, Paul became weak — not in doctrine, but in empathy (1 Corinthians 9:22). He wasn't distant. He entered into their burdens. He told the Corinthians:

“Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?”

(2 Corinthians 11:29)

That is loving compassion — to feel what others feel, to ache with their pain, and to carry their grief as if it were your own.

### **Compassion Toward Fellow Laborers**

Paul's love extended to his co-laborers in ministry. He didn't treat them as employees, but as brothers and sisters — beloved and vital to the mission.

- He called **Timothy** “my dearly beloved son” (2 Timothy 1:2)

- He urged the church to receive **Epaphroditus** “in the Lord with all gladness... because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death” (Philippians 2:29–30)
- He wept over **Onesimus**, a runaway slave turned Christian, calling him “mine own bowels” (Philemon 1:12)

Paul’s ministry was relational. He wasn’t just building churches — he was building a spiritual family.

His parting words in **Acts 20** to the Ephesian elders are filled with hugs, tears, kisses, and grief. That moment wasn’t rehearsed — it was real. They loved Paul deeply, because he loved them first.

### **Compassion in Trials**

Even in the midst of his own sufferings, Paul’s concern was not for his relief but for others’ encouragement.

In prison, he wrote the Philippians:

“But I would ye should understand... that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel”  
(Philippians 1:12)

Rather than request sympathy, he gave perspective. He cared more about their faith than his freedom.

In 2 Timothy, as his execution drew near, he asked Timothy to come see him — not just for support, but to pass the torch. He wanted to comfort Timothy’s heart and ensure the gospel work continued.

Compassion doesn’t retreat under pressure. It rises. Even with chains on his hands, Paul’s arms were still open.

### **Compassion Fueled by Christ**

What was the source of Paul’s loving compassion? It wasn’t personality. Before salvation, Paul was a religious zealot who consented to murder. His compassion was not natural — it was supernatural.

He said:

“The love of Christ constraineth us...”

(2 Corinthians 5:14)

He was gripped by the love of Jesus — and it transformed the way he saw people. No longer as enemies, threats, or burdens — but as souls for whom Christ died.

He learned to love like Christ because Christ now lived in him (Galatians 2:20).

The closer we walk with Jesus, the more tender our hearts will become toward others.

### **Why Loving Compassion Matters Today**

We live in a world that is loud with opinions but cold with love. The church, too, can sometimes become rigid, defensive, and disconnected from the very people we’re called to reach.

Paul’s compassion reminds us that truth must be held with grace. That doctrine must walk with mercy. That preaching must be bathed in prayer, patience, and love.

We will never argue people into the kingdom. We must *love* them in. Truth offends — but love disarms. Paul knew how to stand without becoming harsh, and how to serve without compromising truth.

That’s not weakness. That’s Christlikeness.

### **Conclusion: Love Like Paul, Because Paul Loved Like Christ**

Paul’s ministry was powerful not just because of what he taught, but because of how he loved.

He held nothing back — not his tears, not his prayers, not his life. His love wasn’t cheap; it cost him everything. And he would’ve done it all again.

May we be known not just for our courage, endurance, and doctrine — but for our compassion.

Let us weep over our cities.

Let us pray for our enemies.

Let us labor for our churches.

Let us love with reckless, redemptive abandon.

For in doing so, we reflect the Christ who first loved us.

## **8 of 8: 7 Admirable Characteristics of the Apostle Paul – Complete Surrender to Christ**

### **Complete Surrender to Christ**

The life of the Apostle Paul can be summarized in a single verse:

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

(Philippians 1:21)

This was not a metaphor or an exaggeration — it was the defining reality of Paul’s existence. Everything he did, every step he took, every sermon he preached, every hardship he endured — it was all for Christ. Not out of compulsion, not for applause, not for reward — but because Paul no longer lived for himself. His life was not merely influenced by Christ; it was consumed by Him.

Of all the admirable characteristics we’ve studied, *complete surrender to Christ* is the crown jewel. It is the fountain from which Paul’s courage, endurance, humility, integrity, zeal, and compassion flowed. His surrender was not partial or conditional. It was total, daily, and joyfully given. And it remained unshaken through success, suffering, and even unto death.

If we would imitate Paul — as he imitated Christ — then we must come to the same place of surrender: where our lives are not our own, where Christ is everything, and where His will becomes our joy.

### **The Damascus Road: Where Surrender Began**

Paul’s surrender to Christ began with a divine confrontation. On the road to Damascus, with murderous intentions in his heart, Paul (then Saul) was stopped dead in his tracks by the risen Lord. Blinded by a light from heaven, he heard a voice saying:

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”

(Acts 9:4)

Paul responded with the two most surrendered statements a man can make:

1. **“Who art thou, Lord?”** — a confession of Christ’s authority.
2. **“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”** — a commitment of total obedience.

From that moment, Paul's life was no longer his own. The persecutor became the servant. The proud Pharisee became the broken disciple. The controller became the one controlled — not by law or flesh, but by grace.

Conversion and surrender were simultaneous in Paul's life. He didn't accept Christ as Savior and then later make Him Lord. He *met* Christ as Lord — and bowed in full submission from day one.

### **A Life No Longer His Own**

Paul often described himself with terms of ownership and slavery:

- “A servant of Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:1)
- “The prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:1)
- “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Galatians 6:17)

He had no illusion of personal autonomy. His body, time, future, and reputation belonged entirely to Christ. As he wrote in **1 Corinthians 6:19–20**:

“Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price...”

Paul's surrender was not a moment — it was a mindset. Every day, he died to self (1 Corinthians 15:31), took up his cross, and followed his Master. He was not seeking to *add* Christ to his life; he *lost* his life so that Christ could live through him.

This is the essence of Christian discipleship. Not Jesus as an accessory. Not Jesus as a supplement. But Jesus as *everything*.

### **Surrender in Suffering**

Paul's surrender was proven in the fires of affliction. It's one thing to serve Christ when the crowds cheer. It's another when they stone you, beat you, chain you, and abandon you.

In **2 Corinthians 11**, Paul lists a staggering series of sufferings — shipwrecks, imprisonments, beatings, hunger, perils, betrayal, and anxiety for the churches. Yet not once does he complain or draw back.

Why? Because he had already died. His life was not his own. His comfort was not his goal. Christ's glory was.

In **Acts 20:24**, he declared:

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy...”

Surrender means nothing can stop you — because nothing can threaten what you’ve already given up.

### **Surrender in Success**

But Paul’s surrender wasn’t just visible in trials — it was also evident in triumphs.

- When miracles occurred, he pointed to Christ.
- When churches flourished, he gave glory to God.
- When people praised him, he redirected them to the cross.

He never let success distract him from submission. He didn’t crave credit. He wanted Christ to be magnified, whether by his life or by his death (Philippians 1:20).

Even after being caught up into the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12), Paul refused to boast. He received a “thorn in the flesh” to keep him humble — and he embraced it.

His surrender meant that even *blessings* were yielded to the will of God.

### **Surrender in Daily Living**

Paul’s surrender wasn’t dramatic only in the big moments — it showed up in daily choices:

- In choosing celibacy to serve more freely (1 Corinthians 7:7)
- In becoming “all things to all men” to win some (1 Corinthians 9:22)
- In abstaining from liberties to avoid causing offense (Romans 14)

He yielded not just his life’s direction, but its every detail. He lived in constant alignment with Christ’s will — and invited others to follow:

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

(1 Corinthians 11:1)

That invitation isn’t arrogance. It’s authenticity. Surrender is contagious. People follow fully yielded men.

## **Surrender That Redefined Identity**

Paul's entire self-concept was redefined by his surrender. He no longer identified by tribe, education, or status. He counted all things but loss for the excellency of knowing Christ (Philippians 3:7–8).

He wrote:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...”  
(Galatians 2:20)

That is the heartbeat of surrender — not just living *for* Christ, but allowing Christ to live *through* you.

Paul no longer chased identity — he rested in union. No longer striving to prove himself — he had died, and Christ was now his life.

## **Surrender in the Face of Death**

Paul's surrender reached its crescendo not in a sermon, but in a dungeon. Awaiting execution, abandoned by most of his companions, he wrote:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”  
(2 Timothy 4:7)

There's no fear in his words. No panic. No bargaining. Just peace.

Because his life had already been given — years before, on the Damascus road, and every day since.

Paul's final offering was his last breath. And it was surrendered gladly.

“For I am now ready to be offered...”  
(2 Timothy 4:6)

The one who once took life now gave his own — and did so with joy.

## **What Complete Surrender Looks Like Today**

Paul's surrender is not reserved for apostles. It is the call of every believer.

Jesus said:

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

(Luke 9:23)

Surrender means:

- **Letting go of control**
- **Releasing your rights**
- **Laying down your dreams**
- **Obeying Christ, no matter the cost**

It doesn't mean you'll never wrestle. Even Paul had to “die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31). But it means your direction is set: “Not my will, but thine be done.”

Surrender is not defeat — it is divine partnership. When you let go, God takes over. And He can do far more with your life than you ever could.

### **Conclusion: A Life Poured Out**

At the end of his life, Paul wrote:

“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.”

(2 Timothy 4:6)

The word “offered” refers to a drink offering — a final act of worship poured on the altar. That's how Paul saw his life: not as something to preserve, but something to pour out for the glory of God.

He held nothing back. Not his intellect. Not his influence. Not his body. Not his time.  
*Nothing.*

Let us be like Paul — not simply informed, but *transformed*.

Let our lives cry out:

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

That is complete surrender.

That is the highest calling.

That is the life God honors.

## Conclusion

The Apostle Paul did not live for comfort. He did not preach for applause. He did not write for recognition. He lived, labored, and died for One reason: **Jesus Christ**. And in doing so, he left behind more than epistles — he left behind a living example of what it looks like when a man is fully surrendered to the will of God.

Throughout this series, we have explored seven admirable characteristics that shaped Paul's extraordinary life:

- A **courageous faith** that defied fear.
- An **unshakable endurance** that overcame trial after trial.
- A **deep humility** that saw glory only in Christ.
- An **uncompromising integrity** that stood firm in truth.
- A **burning zeal for souls** that could not rest while one remained lost.
- A **loving compassion** that wept, prayed, and served with tenderness.
- And a **complete surrender to Christ** that defined every breath he took.

But these are not traits reserved for apostles or spiritual giants. They are the fruit of a Spirit-filled life. They are marks of a disciple — of any man or woman who will die to self, take up their cross, and follow Christ without looking back.

Paul's greatness did not lie in his intellect, boldness, or missionary strategy. It lay in his **daily death to self** and his unwavering "Yes" to Christ. He lived not for the seen, but for the unseen. Not for the temporary, but for the eternal. Not for the approval of men, but for the reward of the Master.

We need Pauls today. Men and women with backbone and brokenness. With truth and tenderness. With fire and faithfulness. We need a generation who, like Paul, count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ (Philippians 3:8).

Let this series not merely be admired — let it be *applied*. Let Paul's example call us higher, deeper, and further. And may we, when our time has come, stand as he did — not perfect, but faithful — and echo his final words:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

— 2 Timothy 4:8

Now is your time.

Live like Paul.

Die like Paul.

And most of all — glorify Christ in everything.