

# Follow Paul

**Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. (I Corinthians 11:1)**

## Introduction

The Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthian believers to imitate (follow) his example, just as he followed Christ's example. Not only was he saying *do as I say*, but also *do as I do*. But aren't we supposed to follow Jesus? Isn't Jesus Christ our supreme example on how we ought to live? The answer is "yes"—we are to follow our Lord Jesus Christ. So, why didn't Paul say that instead?<sup>1</sup>

The question is: *How are we supposed to follow Jesus?* We must be careful to remember some very important truths about Jesus when He was on earth in the form of man. As the Son of God in the flesh (John 1:1-2, 14), Jesus was perfect and righteous (II Corinthians 5:21)—no believer can claim to be perfect. He was born as a Jew of the nation of Israel (John 1:10-11), God's chosen people at that time, but actually came only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6; 15:24). In other words, Israel as a nation was self-righteous and in effect did not need God. Jesus came to minister to Jews who were not blinded by their own righteousness. Furthermore, He only ministered to the Jews in Judea, which encompassed Jerusalem and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Jesus also instructed His disciples to obey the Law of Moses (Matthew 19:16-19; 23:1-3). We'll see later that we can't and shouldn't even try to do this. Furthermore, prior to His crucifixion Jesus instructed His disciples in Matthew 10:5-7 to limit their ministry only to the people of Judea; they were not to even go to the Samaritans (Jews of the remaining ten tribes of Israel) or to the Gentiles (everyone who wasn't a Jew).

Following His resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom to all nations but in the following specific and necessary order: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then the Gentile nations (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:47; Matthew 28:19-20). This was in accordance with prophecy because the nations were to be blessed after Israel is redeemed and Christ establishes His kingdom on earth (Acts 3:18-26; Isaiah 60:1-3; Zechariah 8:13). In order for Israel to be redeemed (a repentant and forgiven nation that serves only God), God's designated capital of Israel, Jerusalem (in Judea), had to turn to God, followed by the rest of Judea, followed by Samaria (the rest of historical Israel).<sup>2</sup> Only then were the disciples to expand their ministry to the surrounding nations. However, the record in the book of Acts shows that not even Jerusalem repented, as was demonstrated by the Jewish leaders imprisoning Peter and others and stoning Stephen. The Apostle Paul had more to say about Israel's disobedience and the resulting consequences.

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<sup>1</sup> All references are quoted from the *English Standard Version Bible* (2016 Text Edition). Words in brackets are either equivalent words from the *King James Version* or, if in italics, were added by me for clarification.

<sup>2</sup> The original nation of Israel was split into two nations after Solomon's reign (I Kings 11:9-13; 31-35; 12:16-20). One nation was referred to as *Judah* (with Jerusalem as its capital), and the other nation as both *Israel* and *Samaria* (with the city of Samaria as its capital—I Kings 16:29) in the Old Testament. The people of Judah (referred to as *Judea*, *Israel*, and *Jews* in the New Testament) were not to associate with Samaritans, which still held true during Jesus' ministry (I Kings 12:19; Matthew 10:5; John 4:9).

Finally, Jesus instructed His disciples to preach the gospel (good news) of the kingdom, which was the same gospel preached by John the Baptist prior to Christ's ministry, and the gospel preached by Jesus (Matthew 3:1-3; 4:23; 9:35; 10:7; Mark 1:14-15). What many Christians don't realize is that this kingdom was the long-prophesied kingdom of heaven on earth that Israel had been waiting for (Acts 1:6). This kingdom, which would be ruled by Messiah the Savior of Israel (Isaiah 9:6-7; Ezekiel 37:19-24; Jeremiah 33:14-15; Micah 5:2; John 4:25-26), was finally *at hand*. That is, its establishment was imminent in accordance with Old Testament prophecies.

Individual salvation was based on repentance of sins followed by water baptism for the remission of sins (faith—believing that God would forgive their sins, plus works—physically submitting to water baptism as a demonstration of faith). This aspect of the gospel of the kingdom was first implemented by God through John the Baptist and was still the method of salvation at Pentecost, after Christ's resurrection (Matthew 3:1-6; Mark 1:4-5; Acts 2:36-38). To prove to the nation of Israel that this gospel of the kingdom was in accordance with the will of God, the disciples were given the ability to perform miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 10:8; Mark 16:15-18; John 4:48; I Corinthians 1:22). The gospel of the kingdom, however, is not the gospel that God expects us to claim and preach today.<sup>3</sup>

### **Paul's Background**

Who is this Paul that boldly instructed the Corinthian believers to follow his example? What right or credentials did he have to make such a claim? The Apostle Paul, who wrote the *books* (actually letters) of Romans through Philemon, is first mentioned in Scripture associated with the stoning of Stephen by the leaders and people of Israel (Acts 7:51 – 8:1). He was known at that time by his Hebrew name *Saul*. Saul was not only an observer but was in full agreement with the stoning and death of Stephen; he may have participated in the actual stoning, but we don't know. Stephen, accused of false teaching against the Jewish religion, truthfully implicated the Jewish religious leaders of being responsible for crucifying Jesus, just as the nation of Israel had historically persecuted and killed God's prophets. When Stephen proclaimed that the resurrected and glorified Jesus was revealing Himself to Stephen from heaven, the leaders considered it blasphemy and vented their anger by stoning him to death. Saul claimed his share of responsibility because the stoning was done in the name of God.

Saul was a highly educated Jew (Acts 22:3), a Pharisee in the Jewish religion and a leader among Hebrews, zealous to the point of persecuting and trying to destroy the church of God (referred to as *the Way*—Acts 9:1-2; 22:4; John 14:6), and found to be righteous according to the Law of Moses (Philippians 3:4-6). Following Stephen's death, Saul began ravaging the church, dragging off men and women from their homes to put them in prison where they would be tried for blasphemy and put to death (Acts 8:1-3; 26:10-11). Later, when looking back on his former manner of life, he described himself as a blasphemer, persecutor, and violent aggressor. In fact, he was the foremost (chief) of sinners who was God's number one enemy (I Timothy 1:12-16).

How did Saul go from being God's enemy to becoming an apostle of Jesus Christ? He was saved by the grace of God; not only saved, but chosen for a special purpose. The great persecution against believing Jews (thousands had been saved at Pentecost and afterward—Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4), which arose

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<sup>3</sup> See my study **The Two Messages of Our Lord Jesus Christ** for a more comprehensive explanation of the gospel of the kingdom and how it differs from the gospel of the grace of God.

after the stoning of Stephen, caused them to be scattered from Jerusalem throughout Israel and beyond for their own safety (Acts 8:1). Saul believed it was his duty to the Jewish religion and, therefore, to God to track them down and was on his way to Damascus on the authority of the High Priest in Jerusalem.

During the trip to Damascus, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ miraculously spoke to Saul from His glorified position in heaven. This event is recorded for us in Acts 9:1-17, and later Paul (his Greek name) described the event and subsequent actions to the people of Jerusalem who were bringing charges against him (Acts 22:1-22) and later to Judea's King Agrippa (Acts 26:1-18). Among other things, Christ revealed to Paul that he would be sent to minister to the Gentiles. Saul believed what was revealed to him and was baptized according to God's requirement at that time, and immediately began proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of God and Israel's Messiah (Acts 9:18-22).<sup>4</sup>

## Paul, The Apostle

In his letters to believers at churches that he or his coworkers started, Paul referred to himself as an apostle. The general definition of *apostle* is one who is sent with a special message or commission. In Scripture it is defined more specifically to apply only to certain individuals that had been with Jesus throughout His ministry. The eleven disciples (plus Matthias who was added by the will of God after Christ's ascension—Acts 1:21-26) fit this specific definition and also the general definition as they were sent to preach the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-48; Acts 1:6-8).

Paul was sent with a special message, too, but he certainly had not been with Jesus throughout His ministry. However, he refers to himself as an apostle at the beginning of most of his letters. Was this a false claim? No, because he was chosen as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God (Galatians 1:1; I Corinthians 1:1; etc.), and Christ had revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus. Furthermore, he was called by God to be the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13; Acts 9:15). Paul considered himself to be one untimely born and the least of the apostles because He had not known Jesus in the flesh and had so severely persecuted the church of God (I Corinthians 15:3-11). However, by the will and grace of God, Paul was a chosen apostle and his authority as such should never be minimized.

## Revelations of Jesus Christ

In his letter to the Galatian believers, who had turned away from Paul's message and followed those who had told them to live under the Law of Moses (Galatians 1:6-10; 3:1-3), Paul reminded them that the message he taught was the message he personally received by revelation from the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-17). He neither received it nor was taught it from other men (i.e., the other apostles).

Paul refers to multiple revelations he received from the Lord, as Jesus Christ gradually revealed a new message to Paul. Take a few moments to read Romans 16:25, I Corinthians 11:23-27, and Ephesians 3:1-11. In II Corinthians 12:1-7, Paul explains how, in some form or another, he was caught up into the

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<sup>4</sup> However, Paul, unlike Peter and the other apostles, *never* exhorted the Jews to repent for their sins to receive their promised kingdom (the gospel of the kingdom).

third heaven and also into Paradise (two different places in the realm of God) and received visions and revelations of the Lord. The revelations were so great that God gave him an undefined *thorn in the flesh* to remind Paul to remain humble.

We will see that the message revealed to Paul by Christ was new and different in many ways from the message proclaimed by John the Baptist, Jesus (prior to His ascension), and the twelve apostles. Furthermore, the message revealed to and through the Apostle Paul actually completes (fulfills) the word of God (Colossians 1:25). The revelations of Jesus Christ to John recorded in the book of Revelation completes God's prophetic plan for Israel and the kingdom of heaven, but the revelations to Paul completes God's overall plan and purpose (Ephesians 3:8-10).<sup>5</sup>

Despite many claims otherwise, there have been no new revelations or prophecies to mankind from God (by God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels, or anyone else) since Christ's revelations to John and Paul (Galatians 1:8-9; Colossians 1:25-27; I Corinthians 13:8-13; Revelation 22:18-19). The only revelations occurring today are when God opens our eyes to understand what He has already revealed to us in the written word of God (Ephesians 1:15-21). Furthermore, only believers in Christ can actually understand the things of God (I Corinthians 2:10-16).

## The Mystery

Paul called the overall body of truth that Jesus Christ revealed to him as *the mystery*. In the context of Paul's letters, the mystery refers to God's eternal plan that He had kept hidden in Himself (as a secret) until it was revealed by Christ to and through Paul.<sup>6</sup>

**Now to Him [God] who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages [since the world began]. (Romans 16:25)**

Essentially, the two most significant divisions of the Bible are prophecy, which are those things that have been *spoken since the world began* (Acts 3:18-26), and the mystery, which are those things that were *hidden in God since before the world began* as described below. Understanding the revelation of the mystery, and Paul's role as the dispenser of the gospel of the grace of God,<sup>7</sup> is the key to understanding the entire Bible. The following truths describe some of the highlights of the mystery.

- Through the revelation of the mystery, we learn that God's eternal purpose since *before* the world began was to provide redemption from our sins through the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. This truth is the foundation of the mystery of the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 2:6-8).
- Paul's preaching of Christ was in accordance with the revelation of the mystery that had been kept secret by God since the world began (Romans 16:25-26). Keep in mind that everything that happened concerning Jesus when He was on earth had been prophesied in the Old Testament

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<sup>5</sup> The revelation of Jesus Christ to John was actually through the angel of God (Revelation 1:1-2), whereas the revelations to Paul were by the glorified Lord Jesus Christ Himself. God does not communicate to us through angels in this dispensation of grace (Galatians 1:8; Colossians 2:18-19).

<sup>6</sup> See my study **The Mystery (God's Secret Plan)** for more a comprehensive explanation of the mystery.

<sup>7</sup> Paul refers to this time as the dispensation (or administration) of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:1-3).

(Luke 24:25-27, 44-47), so what Paul taught about God's eternal purpose regarding Christ's work on the cross was completely new.

- The gospel of the grace of God is the primary message of the mystery (Acts 20:24). Paul was chosen by God to be the dispenser of the gospel of grace, just as Moses was chosen to be the dispenser of the Law of God (Ephesians 3:1-3; 6:19-20).
- To Paul was revealed the mystery of Christ (Colossians 4:2-4), specifically that believing Jews and Gentiles are now equal members of the body of Christ (the church—Ephesians 5:22-32) and that God had this in mind all along (Ephesians 3:1-12).
- An important aspect of the mystery was that Israel was (as still is) temporarily blinded or hardened regarding the truth of God because of their rejection of God (Romans 11:25-32). God's promises regarding Israel and their kingdom are on hold until God is finished with this dispensation of grace, at which time they will all be fulfilled. Today, for those who continue to adhere to the Law of Moses, a veil still covers their eyes so that they are unable to understand the truth (II Corinthians 3:14-15). Furthermore, today a Jew can only be saved by believing the gospel of salvation as proclaimed by Paul for there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, male or female, or slave or free (I Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:23-28).
- The gospel of grace encompasses the mystery of godliness regarding our conduct as believers, which ultimately is based on Christ's godliness (I Timothy 3:15-16).
- Through Paul it was revealed that, at the close of this dispensation of grace, believers who are alive will be caught up to meet the Lord and the bodies of believers who had died in this dispensation of grace will be raised up (I Corinthians 15:50-53). In either case, whether the body is alive or dead, the bodies will be miraculously changed from perishable to imperishable forms. Although not referred to as such in Scripture, this event is commonly called the *rapture* and it can only be found in Paul's letters (see also I Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- The mystery of God's will was made known (Ephesians 1:9-10; 3:8-10). Through the gospel of grace, we now know (or, at least it has been provided for us to know—Ephesians 1:15-21) God's purpose throughout the ages. Everything in Scripture is tied together based on Christ's work at the cross, with even a glimpse toward the fullness of times, which will be the last and eternal age (see also I Corinthians 15:24-28).
- The mystery, including the fact that Christ is in believers and that we have the hope of glory with Christ, actually fulfills or completes the word of God (Colossians 1:25-27).

## The Gospel of the Grace of God

So, what gospel did the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ reveal to Paul? In Acts 20:24, Paul refers to his message as *the gospel of the grace of God* (instead of *the gospel of the kingdom*). This good news included the gospel of salvation that was not restricted to Jews and Jewish proselytes, and a new conduct of life apart from the Law of Moses.

**But I [Paul] do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24)**

## ***Gospel of Salvation***

Prior to Paul, the gospel (good news) was about the imminent establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth (Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17; Mark 1:14-15). There was not actually a *gospel* of salvation. The process of salvation included repentance and water baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4; Acts 2:36-38). Through Paul, however, we find out that it was God's plan from the beginning of time that Christ's death on the cross would cover God's required payment for sin for everyone, and that salvation would be provided to everyone, whether Jew or not, who believed that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. This was, and is, truly good news of salvation.

**Now I [Paul] would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.** (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

It is through Christ's revelations to Paul that we find out that everyone is guilty before God, regardless of heritage, and that Christ died for all sins (Romans 3:23-26). God demands only faith in what Christ accomplished for us at the cross because no amount of good or religious works will meet His requirement for righteousness (Romans 4:4-5). In Romans 5:6-11, we discover God's demonstration of love toward us in that: at the right time Christ died for the ungodly (i.e., everyone); we are justified through the shed blood of Christ; and, although enemies of God, we are reconciled to Him through the resurrected life of Jesus Christ. Salvation during this dispensation of grace, therefore, does not require repentance and water baptism for remission of our sins—only acknowledging that we are sinful and believing that Christ died for our sins. *Do you believe Christ died for your sins?*

Salvation is a miracle of God. When a person believes the gospel of salvation, he is spiritually transformed from being dead in sin to alive in Christ (Romans 6:3-11; Ephesians 2:1-5). The person becomes a child of God and inherits eternal life (Romans 5:21; 6:22-23; 8:14-17; Titus 3:4-7). The Apostle Paul refers to salvation as a washing of regeneration (born again—Titus 3:5), and that we become a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17). We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, have two natures—our human (or old sin nature) and a new nature of God (Romans 5:5; 8:9-11). We are eternally sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14), meaning that we cannot lose our salvation and that nothing can separate us from God (Romans 8:31-39). Furthermore, God considers His children to be citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20).

Believers under the kingdom gospel looked forward to an earthly hope—being resurrected to live with Christ their Messiah on earth (Acts 1:6; John 11:24). Believers in this dispensation of grace, on the other hand, have a heavenly hope—we are spiritually in Christ at the right hand of God even now, and upon physical death of our bodies we will finally occupy that position in Christ (II Corinthians 5:6-8).

**But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.** (Ephesians 2:4-6)

**But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)**

### ***No Longer Under the Law of Moses***

The Law of Moses was far more than the ten commandments (Exodus 20:1-17)—it included all the requirements that Moses received from God that are described in detail in the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy. When Jesus was born on earth He was born as a Jew of God's chosen people Israel (Matthew 2:6). He was born under God's dispensation of the Law of Moses and, therefore, lived according to the requirements of the Law (Galatians 4:4). He instructed His disciples to obey the Law of Moses, which they continued to do even after His resurrection (Matthew 23:1-3; Acts 21:20). On the contrary, in this dispensation of God's grace, we are no longer under the requirements or consequences of the Law of Moses. Christ revealed to Paul the following information regarding the Law of Moses and the gospel of grace:

- Through the Law we know what sin is and that no one can be justified by works of the Law (Romans 3:19-20).
- Anyone, without distinction, will obtain the righteousness of God apart from the Law simply by believing in Christ's sacrifice for us (Romans 3:21-26).
- We cannot earn salvation through righteous works (of the Law or anything else)—we are recognized by God as righteous only by faith in what Christ did for us at the cross (Romans 4:4-5).
- The Law of Moses proved that everyone sinned and that sin resulted in spiritual death; however, by the grace of God we can have eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:20-21).
- We are no longer under the Law but under grace (Romans 6:12-14).
- The Law was righteous but no one could keep it because of sin; however, Christ's death condemned sin (paid the price for sin) so that the requirement of the Law (righteousness) would be fulfilled in all who believe in Christ's payment (Romans 8:3-4).
- It is foolish to even try to obey the Law of Moses because by doing so shows our disregard for Christ's all-sufficient work for us at the cross. In fact, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us (Galatians 3:1-14).
- We are saved by the grace of God through faith, and salvation is a gift of God completely apart from works so that there is nothing for us to boast in ourselves about (Ephesians 2:8-9; I Corinthians 1:26-29).
- The righteous requirement of the Law was a barrier between us and God because we cannot keep it, so God took it out of the way by nailing it to the cross—we are alive in Christ apart from the Law (Colossians 2:13-14).
- Paul received the gospel of God's grace so that it could be revealed through him in this dispensation of grace (Ephesians 3:1-12).

In truth, no one was ever saved by keeping the Law—all believers (children of God) throughout the ages have been saved by the grace of God because no one has been good enough to overcome sin or earn salvation. Those who were saved were those who believed what God told them to do—their demonstration of faith by being obedient was counted as righteousness. However, the fact that we are saved by grace apart from any religious or righteous works or ceremonies was not revealed to mankind

until Christ revealed it to and through the Apostle Paul. If the enemies of God had known the implications and magnitude of God's love and eternal plan through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, they would not have crucified Him (I Corinthians 2:6-8).

### **Paul's Example**

In addition to I Corinthians 11:1, Paul exhorted brethren in other letters to follow his teaching and his example (I Corinthians 4:15-17; Philippians 4:9; I Thessalonians 4:1; II Thessalonians 2:15; 3:7-9; II Timothy 1:13; 2:2). God established Paul as the pattern for all believers in this dispensation of grace. Recalling his former manner of life and how God had changed him and appointed him as the Apostle of the Gentiles, Paul reminded his close associate Timothy of the following truth:

**The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost [chief]. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost [first], Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life.** (I Timothy 1:15-16)

If we imitate or follow Paul as he followed Christ, our lives will be pleasing to God and we will know the inner peace that comes from God (I Thessalonians 4:1; Philippians 4:6-9). Paul's actions and attitude (i.e., his walk) that we should follow or imitate include the following examples:

- Content, regardless of circumstances (Philippians 4:11-12)
- Dependent on God (Philippians 4:13; II Corinthians 12:9-10)
- Rejoiced (Philippians 2:17-18; Romans 16:19)
- Thankful to God (Philippians 1:3; Romans 1:8; II Corinthians 9:15) and thankful for fellow believers (Romans 16:1-16; I Corinthians 1:4)
- Encouraged brethren to be unified in faith (I Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27; 2:1-2)
- Behaved properly toward believers (I Thessalonians 2:10-12)
- Good conduct toward the world—did not give unbelievers cause to blaspheme God (II Corinthians 1:12)
- Worked so as to not be a burden to others (I Thessalonians 2:9)
- Prayed for fellow brethren (Philippians 1:2-5, 9-11; Romans 1:9-12; Ephesians 3:14-19)
- Did the right thing despite the consequences (Acts 20:22-24; II Corinthians 11:23-27)
- Did all things for the Lord and the sake of the gospel rather than for men or to seek their approval (I Corinthians 9:23; Galatians 1:10)
- Showed compassion toward others (Philippians 2:25-28; Romans 9:1-3)
- Humble (Acts 14:11-15; Ephesians 3:8; Philippians 3:7-8; I Corinthians 2:1-5)
- Conformed himself (was not offensive) to those he preached to (I Corinthians 9:19-23; 10:31-33)
- Self-disciplined (I Corinthians 9:26-27; Acts 24:16)
- Eager to serve God (Romans 1:15), was a faithful servant of Christ (I Corinthians 4:1-2), and was unashamed of the word of God (Romans 1:16-17)
- Stood for the truth (Acts 26:24-25; Romans 9:1; I Timothy 2:7)
- Warned fellow believers about false teaching (Philippians 3:18-19; I Timothy 6:20-21; II Timothy 4:1-4)

- Shared the gospel despite his circumstances, such as during imprisonment (Philippians 1:12-13; Acts 16:25-32)

Paul was an ambassador for Christ, as are all children of God—we are Christ’s representatives on earth. If we follow Paul as he followed Christ, then we, too, will be good ambassadors of Christ, faithfully representing Him in our daily lives.

**Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake He [God] made Him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God.** (II Corinthians 5:20-21)

### **We Should be Examples**

Paul not only asked believers to follow his example, he told the Philippian brethren to observe those who walk accordingly (Philippians 3:17). Therefore, we should live in a manner that is an example to others (I Timothy 4:12). To the Thessalonian brethren, who suffered persecution because of their faith (I Thessalonians 2:13-15; II Thessalonians 1:3-5), Paul said:

**And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction [tribulation], with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.** (I Thessalonians 1:6-7)

Being a good example does not require perfection because no one is perfect. Paul admitted to his own struggles of not doing what he should do and doing what he shouldn’t do (Romans 7:15 – 8:1). However, if we desire or endeavor to live according to the Spirit (i.e., walk worthy of our calling to salvation—Colossians 1:9-12; I Thessalonians 2:10-12), then sin will not have control over us (Romans 6:12-14) and we will be able to be good representatives of Christ and good examples to others.

**I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling [salvation] to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.** (Ephesians 4:1-3)

Dick Johnson  
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[www.gospelofgracenotes.org](http://www.gospelofgracenotes.org)