

THE SECRET OF PAUL'S SUCCESS

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Saul who was later called Paul was a Pharisee, a lawyer and a devout Jew. He was so zealous for the law and the traditions of his fathers that he persecuted unto death believers in Jesus Christ. He even obtained letters from the High priest and Sanhedrin to Damascus to arrest and bring Jewish Christians back to be punished. Acts 7:53-8:1-3; 9:1-2; 22:1-5.

On his way to Damascus, he encountered Jesus Christ and got saved (Acts 9:1-19). Since that encounter, Paul devoted himself to the preaching of the gospel and excelled so much that much of the New Testament writings was by him, and the Acts of the Apostles focused more on him than any other Apostle.

In this study, we are going to study the secret of his success because I believe it will help us also in attaining success in every endeavor of life.

HIS PRINCIPLES

1. Paul was a man who always threw his whole weight on anything he believed in.

As a non-Christian, he upheld and practiced the law, and fought anyone or group who in his own opinion violates or blasphemes the law.

"They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee." (Acts 26:5)

"Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as of zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless" (Phil. 3:5,6).

As a Christian, he gave his life, time, energy and talent to the gospel. He even sacrificed marriage and family life for the gospel.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20).

"Don't we have the right to food and drink? Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?" (1Cor. 9:4-6)

"I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs – how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world – how he can please his wife – and his interests are divided. An

unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world – how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.” (1Cor.7: 32-35)

2. Paul was fully devoted to Christ, and was ready to suffer anything for his Lord and Savior.

His devotion and dedication cannot be questioned. He is a symbol of what commitment is. It takes commitment to succeed in life.

“Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as of zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.” (Phil. 3:5-11)

“To my shame I admit we were too weak for that! What anyone else dares to boast about – I am speaking as a fool – I also dare to boast about. Are they Hebrews/ So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?” (2Cor. 11:21-29)

Paul was so devoted that despite what he suffered he continued fervently to serve and work for his Saviour and Master. He never allowed what he suffered to distract him from the heavenly assignment. It takes this kind of commitment and dedication to succeed.

3. Paul was man of Knowledge and wisdom.

Paul was never taught the gospel like we were taught by our leaders. He received it by revelation from the Lord His letters show the depth of insight he has as far as the gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned. His knowledge was what helped him in his life and ministry to attain the height he attained.

“I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. For you have had of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles – only James, the Lord’s brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing to you is no lie. Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: ‘The one who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.’ And they praised God because of me.” (Gal. 1:11-24)

Revelation or insight is very powerful and productive. Paul’s life is an example of what insight can do in and for a man. Whatever you do, go for insight. The scripture teaches:

“Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.” (Prov. 4:7)

Paul believed in studying to show himself approved by God. The same thing he taught.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2Tim. 2:15 KJV)

Read 2Tim. 4:13; Acts 26:24; 2Pet. 3:15-16.

4. He practiced what he was taught by the Lord.

He practiced the scriptures. He lived his life as an example that others may follow. He put the principles of God to work in his life.

“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example....”(2 Thess.3:7)

“Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.” (Phil.3:17)

"...But set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."(1 Tim. 4:12)

Read also 2 Cor. 1:12.

5. Paul was committed to the vision and commission given to him.

"So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven."(Acts 26:19)

From the day Paul encountered the Lord on the way to Damascus, and he received revelation about what the Lord Jesus Christ wanted him to do for the rest of his life, he never deviated. He concentrated absolutely on it no matter the cost. All his studies from that time were on the assignment. He studied and enquired from the Lord about the gospel. No wonder he prospered in the assignment given to him. He knew his product and sold it well. He proved he new what he was talking about each time he spoke.

6. Paul was a humble man who didn't count his life as anything before Christ.

As far as Paul was concerned, Jesus was what mattered. Making him known was his business and his life, nothing else made sense. He gave up his own personality and previous achievements for the sake of knowing Jesus Christ.

"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

"And now compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." Acts 20:22-24)

Paul's humility is revealed in his abandonment of his personal ambitions and his willingness to give up his live so long as he is able to finish and complete the task given him by the Master Jesus Christ.

Again, his humility is seen in his total dependence on God for strength and all his needs.

"But he said to me, 'my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ power may rest on me. That is why for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."(2 Cor. 12:9-10)

God is ever willing to help those who put their trust in him and not in themselves or in man. David trusted in the Lord and he succeeded against Goliath, while other Israeli soldiers failed because they were trusting in themselves. Put your trust in the Lord.

7. Paul was a man who learnt to adapt to any and every situation that he finds himself without grumbling.

"I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learnt to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it means to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."(Phil. 4:10-13)

Paul served God without grumbling. He endured all conditions in good faith. Paul pleased God so much that God continued to fight his battles and deliver him from every ugly situation. He trusted God as a just and faithful God who will never do wrong to his own son or daughter. Even in prison, he continued to preach and write to instruct and encourage the churches. He did not see his imprisonment as a disservice to him by God. He had a proper understanding of the source of every problem and why God allows him to go through them.

Challenges will come and go, and you will still remain. No condition is permanent. As there is night, so there is day. After every night season, there will be daylight. God is never unjust in all He does and permits in our lives. Have Paul's mindset and you will not complain. Grumblers end up being cursed with more problems. Even in prison Paul praised the Lord after what happened to him in Philippi. God couldn't stand such faith and commitment; He had to send an earthquake to deliver him and his colleague. He respects and honours praise rather than grumbling.

8. Paul believed in himself.

He was conscious of his potentials. Yet he depended on the strength and power of God. He knew he was loaded with all that he will need to make it in life. He also knew that any ability he has comes from God as a gift.

"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."(Phil. 4:13)

He moved in the power of the Holy Spirit. He released his spiritual potentials to bless the life of men. Much of his success is attributed to the gifts and talents that he possessed and used to bless the lives of men. His writing ability is still blessing the lives of men today through his letters in the Bible. He wrote 13 books in the New Testament. Use your gifts and talents to your own advantage and the benefit of mankind. It is in being a blessing to others that we prosper. Read 1 Cor.1:17; 2:4-5; 4:20.

9. He was dead to self, and always lived for the glory of God.

Self is the greatest enemy of man. Selfishness and self-centeredness is destructive. The man that must succeed must look beyond himself. It is self that make employers not to pay staff well, and as at when due even when the money is there, and as a result, trigger a curse on themselves. It is self that make a man greedy and a lover of money, which is the root of all evil. It is self that make people not to want to tithe. It is self that cause people to be crafty and cheat in their business and office. Self is responsible for all the theft and embezzlement of funds that we see in our world today. The evil of self to an individual, family, friends, marriage, businesses, communities and nations is too many to be enumerated.

Deal with self to be useful to yourself and people around you. Paul forgot himself and focused on the Master and his assignment. His concentration was on sinners and the church. He was so selfless that he didn't marry. He was so selfless that he worked for his living when the master commanded that the churches that are receiving instruction from him should take care of him. He didn't want to be a burden to anybody.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."(Gal.2:20)

Read also Galatians 5:16-18; 1 Corinthians 10:31.

10. His eyes were always focused on heaven and the heavenly prize.

It is easy to lose focus of heaven in pursuit of worldly gains. God's desire is that his people bear in mind that he God exists and he is going to reward everyone according to his life here on earth. Heaven is real, and hell is real. You must not forget that at all. Paul never forgot that, and he taught that we do not forget that also.

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."(1 Cor. 9:24-27)

When you are heavenly minded, you will discipline yourself to qualify for it. Don't be carried away by success, money, fame and achievement. Do remember that your relationship with God matters to God and also to you. If you live well, you will gain God's blessing and favor, and that will help you to succeed the more. If you displease him with your life, that will bring obstacles as he disciplines you.

11. He was a leader who understood his responsibility and carried it out well.

Paul knew that he will give account to his master, so he followed all the Lord's instructions on leadership, and insisted that all leaders do the same. His letters to the churches from the prison shows how he takes his leadership role seriously. Read 1 Cor. 1:10-16; 4:14-21; 1 Tim. 3

Know your job. Know your responsibility in the office, home, church and everywhere you find yourself. It creates focus and helps you to access your performance and fulfill purpose.

PAUL'S PROMOTION

- Because of these qualities, Paul was promoted from a persecutor of the church to a disciple of Christ. Acts 9:1-31
- He moved from disciple to a Prophet and Teacher. Acts 13:1-3
- Later, he was promoted from Prophet and Teacher to Apostle because of his faithfulness. Rom.1:1
- He was promoted from a powerless man to a man of power, miracles, signs and wonders. 1 Cor. 2:4,5; Acts 19:11,12.
- He became the most popular apostle in his days.

SUMMARY

1. Throw your weight on anything scriptural that you believe. Live by the principles of God. Be committed to the word of God, and God will be committed to your success in life.
2. Give your life, energy, time and talent to the service of God. Paul used all he had to serve God, and God blessed him.
3. Put in your best in whatever you are doing both for your God and yourself – work very hard. *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.” (Eccls.9:10)*
4. Be ready to face any difficulty along the way. Face it boldly and confidently. You will win for you were recreated in Christ to win.
5. Learn with all your heart about God and whatever your profession is. Improve and update your knowledge daily. Apply the knowledge you acquire. Be a wise person.
6. Be an example to others – your children, family, mates, neighbors, workers, colleagues and those under your authority.
7. Be committed to your vision. Be committed to any assignment God, your boss, or parents has given you. Be committed to your dream. Be committed to your marriage.
8. Be humble. Depend on God. Never let your achievement enter your head. Resist pride and arrogance. *“Pride goes before a fall, and a haughty spirit before destruction.”(Prov. 16:18)*

- 9.** Learn to adapt to any and every situation without grumbling. Never grumble or complain.
- 10.** Believe in yourself in the light of God's word. Be conscious of who you are and what you can do. But depend on God as you do what you are supposed to do. Look unto Jesus. Never forget who you are.
- 11.** Be heaven conscious whatever you do, and no matter the condition you find yourself.
- 12.** Carry out your assignment with all your heart though you find yourself in adverse conditions.

If you do these, God that rewarded Paul will reward you and continue to promote you in Jesus name.