

Paul – the great apostle and the lessons to learn from him - Part 2

Continuation of Part 1

6. No one is beyond God's Saving Grace – (Matthew 5: 44-45)

God's grace upon Paul transformed him into a completely different person. Like Paul, God can do the same for us. We are broken people that can be transformed by God's saving grace that He so lovingly gives to us, even though we don't deserve it.

God the Father is a loving, patient, and gracious God. He loves everyone in spite of everyone. God's grace is the unmerited favor that He shows us. There are two types of grace namely 1) common grace and (2) the saving grace.

Common grace is what God provides to everyone, even to the unbelievers. Common grace maintains the whole of creation, and every breath that anyone takes is due to it.

The Bible says God still loves His creation and, "He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5: 44-45).

7. Our past doesn't define us – (Philippians 3:13)

I've heard it said, "Every saint has a past and every sinner has a future." It's pretty clear that Paul had a very dark and wicked past, but he didn't let that define him. Instead, he grew and learned from it and was transformed into an incredible man of God. In Philippians 3:13, Paul writes, "...Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead." One thing we should settle in our minds is that Satan is not God, he just wanted to be God. So since he isn't God, he cannot see what is in front of us, so that only leaves one weapon for him to use and that is **our past**. He's gotten good at it too; He is constantly putting the thoughts in our minds like – "Oh - well, I'm too far gone for God to use me" or "I've made too many mistakes for God to love me". However, our past mistakes do not define us. They only provide opportunities for us to grow. God knows we are imperfect people, so He will love us regardless, and nothing that we can do will ever change that.

I know that as Christians, we can be really hard on ourselves for our mistakes. It can be tempting to think that if we mess up, that God won't love us anymore. Paul

killed tons of people in his past. He tried to stop Christianity. Even still, God forgave him, had a purpose for him, and loved him. Know that if you make a mistake, it's okay. We are not perfect people because we live in a sin fallen world. It's impossible for us to be completely perfect, and that's why we need God in our lives. Don't get discouraged by your mistakes but allow God to use them to transform and strengthen you so that you can be an encouragement to those around you.

8. We need to care for others – (Acts 17:16)

Paul's life and his works make it evident to us that he cared for others. Acts 17:16 says, "While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols." Because Paul had a heart for the Lord, he also had a heart for His people. In Paul's engagement with others, he didn't act as though he was better than them, but instead fueled his conversation with compassion. This is an important thing to learn from Paul, especially in our interactions with others about faith. Nothing about it should be condemning, but instead out of genuine love and compassion for God and His people.

9. We need to be content in every situation – (Philippians 4:11-13)

In Philippians 4:11-13, Paul writes, "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in an and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through him who gives me strength." The secret of Paul's contentment was that he drew his strength from the Lord. He learned to rely on God's promises and strength to help him be content in any situation. He knew that God would supply him with everything that he would need, and that God ultimately knew what was best for him. I used to be the type of person who stresses and worries over everything, so I know that this is a very difficult thing to accomplish. However, I know that with God's strength, it is possible for me to accomplish great things. Philippians 4:13 declares; ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

10. Stand firm in Christ alone – (Philippians 3:20-21)

In Philippians 3:20-21, Paul writes, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies

so that they will be like his glorious body." The way to stand firm is to keep our eyes on Him. It can become so easy for us to be distracted by everything going on around us, but we need to remember that this world is not our home. Standing firm means to resist the ways of this world. Don't get discouraged or lose heart when you mess up, but instead continue to press into the Lord. He promises strength, so with Him, you can stay true to the Lord.

Finally, let me say that these are just a few points that we can take away from Paul, but there is so much more that we can learn from him. All in all God used a man who was wicked and transformed him into an evangelistic dynamite. In all of these points that we can take away from Paul, know that you are not too far gone for God to use, that He has a purpose for you, and that in His strength, He can use you to do great things for His kingdom and glory.