



***Becoming Fully Devoted Followers  
by Studying the Followers Before Us***

**WEEK 47**

**PAUL**

**NOVEMBER 19-23, 2007**

<b>DAY</b>	<b><i>THROUGH THE BIBLE</i></b>	<b>ABBREVIATED STUDY</b>
<b>Monday</b>	Romans 1-4, Psalm 81	Galatians 3:23-29, Psalm 81
<b>Tuesday</b>	Romans 1-4, Psalm 82	Romans 12:1-13, Psalm 82
<b>Wednesday</b>	Romans 1-4, Psalm 83	1 Thess 5:1-11, Psalm 83
<b>Thursday</b>	Romans 1-4, Psalm 84	2 Cor 10:1-17, Psalm 84
<b>Friday</b>	1 Corinthians 1-5, Psalm 85	Ephesians 4:7-16, Psalm 85

**READ**

Galatians 3:23-29

Psalms 81

**REFLECT**

What do you remember about the Apostle Paul? Most of us remember that he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, was then led to Christians in Damascus so that he could regain his eyesight and he, like Jesus, took time to pray, read, and reflect about what had just happened. We suppose that he also took time to reflect on his whole life, his family, his upbringing, his training, his responsibilities to his faith and his zealot nature to carry out his mission.

What was Paul's mission before he met Jesus Christ face to face? Saul was on his way to capture and persecute any who belonged to the "Way." On the road he heard a voice: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He responded "Who are you, Lord?" The reply he heard was "I am Jesus, who you are persecuting." Here is Saul traveling to do the work of his Yahweh and following the directions of the Sanhedrin when he faces his ultimate challenge.

Saul, maybe for the first time in his life, became totally dependent upon others to complete his journey in Damascus. Here was the strong and determined leader of the Jews, working courageously to further his belief and his faith, confronted with a whole new dimension to his thinking, his faith, and his life. Saul was humbled when Ananias laid hands on him so that his sight was restored and the Holy Spirit came upon him.

Paul began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, which became his custom throughout his travels and his ministries. As Paul spoke out boldly for Jesus, he was soon threatened by those who tried to kill him.

Interesting how Saul, the zealot intending to destroy the Way, finds himself speaking and preaching for Jesus as Paul.

Paul is a Pastor to the new Christians, he knows the Law and he knows how to share the Law with the new believers so that they can see and understand how Jesus fulfills the Law and provides them with new life.

**RESPOND**

How would you respond? You are doing exactly what you believe you are supposed to be doing for God when suddenly you are struck by a revelation and Jesus asks you to take on a new task. Are you ready to listen to the leading of Jesus and take on His cross, remembering that He says the burden will be light? You have been very successful in everything that you have experienced when suddenly you feel compelled to do something completely, totally new. Are you ready? Look at how God prepared Paul for this change. How has God prepared you for a change in direction and new responsibilities?

**PRAY**

Dear God, give me the wisdom and understanding to know when You are speaking to me. Help me to remember that You are always with me, even when I don't realize Your presence. Help me to hear Your leading and be willing to take on any task that You give me. Help me to know that You will never ask me to do something that does not conform to Your Scriptures and that You always promise to be alongside helping me complete the task. Help me to always keep my eye on You and Your people. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

- G.E.

**READ**

Romans 12:1-13

Psalm 82

**REFLECT**

Most commentaries consider Paul a teacher, as well as a Pastor or Preacher. There are some who will argue that there is no difference: if you are a pastor, you must also be a teacher and a preacher – the three roles are nearly inseparable, and they are a good illustration of Paul. We find Paul in all three roles and Romans 12:1-13 is scripture that illustrates how Paul finds himself in all three roles and how we can begin to understand that to be one probably means we are all three.

Listen to Paul as he teaches us in these few verses; but while you are considering what Paul is saying to you, think of Paul speaking to himself and listening to God leading him on his mission to the world. Here is a prime example of the teacher being taught by the students.

Time and again we hear Paul talking from the heart, talking from his own heart, talking from his own experiences, sharing the love of God that he has felt with the rest of the world in the language of the time – but speaking directly to the heart of his listeners. As listen we to Paul the teacher we are struck by his honesty, his humble nature and how he is able to relate his experiences in such a way that we can understand his teaching because he is teaching by example.

Paul tells us to be transformed. Here is Paul telling us about transformation of the mind, the spirit, so that we can know and understand the will of God. Paul the teacher, preacher and pastor is telling us about transformation from personal experience. Paul knows the power of the transforming love of Jesus Christ, how to hear Christ when he speaks to Paul and how to let the Holy Spirit guide him on a

day-to-day basis. Several times during Paul's ministry he was literary stopped for doing something that he thought was his to do – a trip, a location, a person he was to see, a church he was to visit – yet this teacher let God teach him how to listen and follow.

**RESPOND**

As Paul was writing this chapter of Romans, was he relating to his own experience when he was transformed on the road to Damascus? How often in our lives have we been transformed by an unexpected – or even an expected – event which when we look back was a significant situation that God used to lead us in a new direction, give us a new challenge, allow us to be part of something bigger than life itself? Think back over the last 10 years and identify specific incidents in your life that changed everything. It could be the birth of a new child, or grandchild, or great grandchild; it could be an accident; it could be a change of employment; or it could have been the loss of a loved one by death or divorce. How did God use that event to change your life?

**PRAY**

Dear Gracious and Glorious God, help me to look at my life and identify the lessons that You have taught me. Help me to learn from those lessons and experiences so that I may learn Your will for my life. Give me the courage to share those experiences with others so that we can all learn Your plan for our lives. Give me the comfort to know that You are always present and the knowledge that I can always count on Your love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

- G.E.

**READ**

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Psalm 83

**REFLECT**

Paul as a pastor, preacher and teacher is a good example of what to look for in a pastor, what to expect from a pastor and how to respond to the leadership of a pastor. In this scripture we see Paul spending time explaining the future of the church and the people who make up the church. We need to remember that the church during the time of Paul's ministry was clearly made up by a group of dedicated, loving, caring and faithful people; the church was not a building, but people.

With meticulous care Paul instructs his congregations to sense the future coming of Christ, to be attentive, to listen, to hope, to wait patiently, but to be ready, for Christ might come at any moment. He spends time telling the people to stay awake and be sober, to encourage one another and build each other up. Paul not only talked to the people about how they should live, what they should do, how to help one another, but Paul lived what he taught. In Romans 16 Paul names and personally greets over 27 people – not collectively, but by name.

Another example of the way Paul teaches us to treat one another.

Note as you read about Paul as a pastor that he speaks to the people collectively, but he always has time to speak to individuals. We sense that Paul must also have had the gifts of listening and discernment, for he could not have addressed the needs of the church at large and the church as individuals if did not know the people he was teaching. Note that Paul always took the time to express his concern for individuals and often offered help in the most trying situations.

Paul would deny it, but see how often Paul emulated the way the

Christ related to people, how Christ always took the time to talk to individuals, always listened to their questions and always looked people in the eye when He responded. Paul did that so he could teach us how to be pastors to each other, to love one another, and to care for one another. Paul provided pastoral care to all – the people just needed to allow for his care and love.

**RESPOND**

How often do we have the opportunity to listen to someone and then deny them the attention they need? Do we listen to and follow the leading of Jesus Christ as our Pastor, besides being our Savior? Paul spends his ministry trying to learn from and follow Christ in everything that he did; do we have the courage and the patience to do the same? When was the last time we stopped and listened to the words and feelings being expressed by someone else? When was the last time we were the pastor to a child, a family member, a friend, or another member of the church of Jesus Christ? When was the last time we stepped out into the world, the unknown, and shared the love of Jesus Christ with a stranger and made a new friend? When was the last time we reached out to someone sitting next to us in the pew and said hello and offered encouragement?

**PRAY**

Dear heavenly Father, help us to learn from Paul. Help us to see the way he listened to and cared for each of Your people. Help us, Father, to love others as we love ourselves. Give the strength to be Your disciples of love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

- G.E.

**READ**

2 Corinthians 10:1-17

Psalms 84

**REFLECT**

When Paul speaks, he speaks with authority; yet look at his opening comments in the passage: “I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!” Listen to Paul as he speaks with the authority of a leader, a pastor, a teacher, a preacher; yet he speaks with the humble nature of a friend, a person who wants to walk alongside you, working with you, sharing with you, and ministering to others as your friend and partner spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

When Paul wrote to the churches, he expected their obedience and he expected his readers to follow his instructions on living with one another. Some often wonder about Paul’s authority; did it come from being an apostle? Nowhere do we see Paul talking about himself as an apostle, but rather we see Paul exercising his authority as the founding father of so many churches. In many respects the only authority that Paul has is the authority granted to him, and allowed to him, from the members of the various churches he founded. Paul’s authority was earned; he gained the respect and love of the people and in turn they gave him authority, the authority to be their spiritual leader, their guide, their interpreter of God’s love.

The great thing about the authority that Paul gained from the churches was the way he used that privilege to help each of the churches grow to their maximum, creative abilities. This is the same way Paul expects us to read his writings, as if he were speaking to each of us

individually, and collectively, as a believer in the love of Jesus Christ and wanting each of us to know that same love to the fullest possible extent. Paul would give his life for those he taught, he loved and he led; in fact he did give his life for the followers of Christ, for his belief in Christ and for his love of his one and only Lord.

As we read the writings of Paul we must always remember that he was writing to each of us in addition to the various churches of his day.

**RESPOND**

Do we read Paul’s writings as an expression of his love of Christ expressed to us so that we might enjoy the same faithful relationship with Jesus that Paul had. Paul felt his ministry for Christ began on the road to Damascus, yet he was being prepared to minister to the Gentiles before he started on that fateful journey. What is God preparing us for – can we see what He wants us to do? Do we know and remember that what we are doing right now is what God wants us to be doing right now if we are listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Will you have authority with those you love and care about because of the way you have treated them in the past as children of God, or, will your authority come autocratically without regard for the love of God in their lives and without the influence of the Holy Spirit in your life?

**PRAY**

Dear God, hear my prayer. May my prayer reflect the love I have for You and your children. May I have the courage and ability to be loving, caring and concerned for others for your sake. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

- G.E.

**READ**

Ephesians 4:7-16

Psalm 85

**REFLECT**

One of Paul's greatest attributes was his ability to share responsibility with others. Paul did not try to oversee each and every church by himself; rather he always appointed someone else to be responsible in his absence. Paul also traveled with others. Paul did not try to do the ministry of Jesus Christ by himself, but he relied on the Holy Spirit for guidance, he relied on other men and women to provide leadership, and he sought out suggestions and recommendations from others.

Paul set an example that many very successful pastors, evangelists, teachers and leaders in the churches of Jesus Christ have followed, and because they have followed the leadership guidelines of Paul, churches, ministries, colleges and missionaries have succeeded. Paul knew and understood the value of cooperative leadership and he encouraged and challenged others to take on leadership responsibilities. There have been many failures today of churches, ministries, missions, and educational organizations because one person tried to be a charismatic leader with the whole organization focused on one person. Paul knew better and he always shared the leadership of his ministries with others.

Paul successfully used gifted people and relied on the spiritual gifts that each of us are given, whether we know it or not. He used people who had the gifts of teaching, preaching, being an apostle, being a prophet or an evangelist, but he relied mostly on their collective abilities to build up the body of Christ. Paul knew that there was no place for trickery or misleading direction, and that the body of Christ, united together, joined together, and knit together in such a way that each part contributed to the whole, working properly, would benefit each part and the whole.

Paul taught us how to organize a church so that Christ would be the focus of everything and the love of Christ would be the force that allowed each person to be a contributor bringing their individual spiritual gifts to the whole. Paul clearly set an example of how all the parts of the church, its people, contribute to make to make the whole church a witness to the love of God.

**RESPOND**

How often have we wanted to do something our way? How often have we disregarded the skills and abilities of others so that we could do something our self? How often have we ignored the suggestions and recommendations of others because we knew what was right? Paul was an example of collective action working together to complete a task and complete it well. Paul was an example of how important it is to rely on others for support. Paul also relied on others to speak to him and give him guidance and direction. It seems clear that Paul also listened to the counsel of others before, during and after he involved himself in a task. Have we learned to do the same? Do we listen to the counsel and guidance of others or are we swift to wave them off because we already know the answer? How many of us would be more successful if we listened to others before we made a decision?

**PRAY**

Gracious and loving God, listen to our prayers. Hear us as we ask for guidance and direction. Hear us as we ask You to help us find good counsel for everything we do. Give the strength and courage to ask for help from other people and, most importantly, from You. Thank You, God for being our partner and provider. In Jesus' Name, Amen

- George Eastman

