

The Mission of Paul

Titus 1:1

1. **"Paul, a servant of God":** Paul's mission was first to be godly. That began with an attitude of humility and service. Godliness means to reflect the character of God. The goal of the Christian journey—to be conformed to the image of Christ. Notice the image and character of Christ as a servant in the following passages:

Phil 2:5-7

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

John 13:3-5

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Luke 22:27

A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves."

Matthew 20:25-28

But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The call to our mission in life is a call to servanthood; it is a call to become Christ-like, godly; it means to continue our journey on the path to become more conformed to the image of Christ. Since Christ was humble; we must also be humble. Christ was a servant; it means we must also humbly serve. Servanthood is both attitude and action. Service is not just for the professional, but for all of us. Where is the place you are serving God in your community, church, city?

2. **"an apostle of Christ":** The second aspect that contributed to Paul's mission was that of being an apostle. According to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, the word "apostle" literally means, "one sent forth," an envoy, missionary" ¹

Easton's Bible Dictionary states of the word apostle, "It is, however, generally used as designating the body of disciples to whom he entrusted the organization of his

church and the dissemination of his gospel, "the twelve," as they are called ([Mat 10:1-5](#); [Mar 3:14](#); [Mar 6:7](#); [Luk 6:13](#); [Luk 9:1](#)). ²

Easton goes on to delineate two characteristics of an apostle:

"It was characteristic of the apostles and necessary

- (1.) that they should have seen the Lord, and been able to testify of him and of his resurrection from personal knowledge ([Joh 15:27](#); [Act 1:21](#), [Act 1:22](#); [1Co 9:1](#); [Act 22:14](#), [Act 22:15](#)).
- (2.) They must have been immediately called to that office by Christ ([Luk 6:13](#); [Gal 1:1](#)). ³

R.A. Torrey gives additional insights into the task and character of an apostle: ⁴

They were unlearned men [Act 4:13](#);

They were selected from obscure stations [Mat 4:18](#);

They were sent to preach the gospel to all nations [Mat 28:19](#); [Mat 28:20](#); [Mar 16:15](#); [2Ti 1:11](#);

Christ always present with them [Mat 28:20](#);

They are warned against a timid profession of Christ [Mat 10:27-33](#);

The Holy Spirit given to them [Joh 20:22](#); [Act 2:1-4](#); [Act 9:17](#);

Although the original and specific use of the office of apostle was designated for the twelve, there is a wider use of apostle for all of us.

First, are we not all sent forth? Are we not all missionaries? 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 reminds us that we are His ambassadors,

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us."

And in Philippians, Paul jogs our memory that we are citizens of heaven. This means that our home is not this world. As ambassadors, we have been sent by our home country (heaven) to a foreign country (the world) to represent the values and interests of the God who has sent us here!

Secondly, has not each of us "seen the Lord"? As a believer, are we not able to testify of him and of his resurrection from personal knowledge? Just as the apostle Paul was not present with Jesus during His earthly ministry, but had a personal encounter with Him on the road to Damascus, have we not too had a personal experience with the risen Christ?

In third place, look again at Torrey's insights into an apostle and let's apply them to us. Being an apostle or one sent forth:

Does not require a seminary degree; they were unlearned men, but had been with Jesus.

Being an apostle or one sent forth does not require professional Christians; Apostles are chosen from obscure stations of life, from the marketplace. An apostle can be from any walk of life. In fact they *must* be from all walks of life if we are to see spiritual movements in every domain of society. Consider what Reggie McNeal has to say,

"We need great leaders who will display both courage and wisdom in the face of unprecedented challenges in bioethics, global terrorism, economic realignments, and the information revolution, to name a few." ⁵

And later on he relates,

"[people today] do not link their search for spirituality to the church, or if they do, they don't limit their options in spirituality to organized religion. People take their life issues to the office, to school, and to the club, not just to the counselor's office or Sunday School class. This reality means we need spiritual leaders in all avenues of life and culture. We need business leaders, educators, health sector leaders, scientists, and information specialists who are great in their spiritual capacities." ⁶

Being an apostle or one sent forth means that we are sent forth to preach the gospel to everyone—our neighbors, communities, friends, co-workers, etc. Jesus' last words to us found in Matthew 28 are "go and make disciples of all the nations..." That is the job of each one of us.

Being an apostle or one sent forth comes with the guarantee that Christ is present with us. Again in Matthew 28, Jesus assures us that He will never leave us when he said, "*And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*"

Being an apostle or one sent forth means we must not be timid in sharing the good news. Matthew 10:27-33 warns us that we must not deny Christ before men, but acknowledge Him. Albert Barnes comments on this passage:

The same word in the original is translated "confess" and "profess," [1Ti 6:12-13](#); [2Jo 1:7](#); [Rom 10:10](#). It means to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, and our dependence on him for salvation, and our attachment to him, in every proper manner. This profession may be made in uniting with a church, at the communion, in conversation, and in conduct. The Scriptures mean, by a profession of religion, an exhibition of it in every circumstance of the life and before all people. It is not merely in one act that we must do it, but in every act. We must be ashamed neither of the person, the character, the doctrines, nor the requirements of Christ. ⁷

Being an apostle comes with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' last words before his ascension in Acts 1:8 were, "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" When we placed our trust in Christ, we were given a spiritual gift or gifts, and the power to be witnesses in the world. This indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles transformed them from timid cowards to radical men who turned the world upside down! The same Holy Spirit indwells you and me!

Besides the inward being conformed to image of God, there is an outward focus that benefitted others. The three fold work of the apostle resulted in changed lives:

- 3. "for the sake of the faith of God's elect":** The first change in peoples' lives resulted from coming to faith. People had a sincere emotional response; their heart was engaged. This was due to Paul's heart to share the gospel with the lost. Again, here we see the very heart of Christ. There is no separation of being and doing. Christ came to seek and save the lost; Paul had this same heart. As Paul himself put it:

If I acted crazy, I did it for God; if I acted overly serious, I did it for you. Christ's love has moved me to such extremes. 2 Cor 5:13,14 (The Message)

Evangelism is not some mechanical program or presentation, but a passionate, emotional plea that people come to know Christ. When Christ's love grips us, we naturally talk about Him!

- 4. for the sake of "their knowledge of the truth":** Paul was looking for more than just an emotional response of people coming to faith. Though that was the beginning point, the second work of the apostle was to teach people truth. This was discipleship; this was engaging not only the heart and emotions, but also the mind and intellect. People need to understand the Word, the truth. Paul writes in Romans 12:1-2:

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

We must not be content to have spiritual babies by leading people to Christ, but not following up with them to help them understand the basics of the Christian life.

- 5. "which accords with godliness":** The third role of the apostle was to affect the will. True transformation requires the whole person: emotions, intellect and the will. There must be a total life change. We must look to help people be more godly, more like Christ in the character and conduct. We must model this and then multiply it in others.

Barclay says, "It is the duty of the Christians to offer to men the very life of God; to awaken faith in their hearts and to deepen knowledge in their minds; to enable them to live in such a way that others will see the reflection of the Master in them."⁸

Our mission

What can we learn from the mission of Paul in Titus 1:1? He had a mission, a sense of destiny. It is of vital importance that we have one as well. After an extensive investigation, J Robert Clinton, professor of leadership at Fuller Seminary concluded: 70% of leaders do not finish well! Those who did not finish well had several common characteristics. One of those related to mission is: They stopped leading, being aware of their influence and sense of destiny.⁹

Mark Buchanan in *Rest of God* reflects: "Who God really is and who you really are: this is understood, not just in light of the past and the present, but in light of the future too. Who will you be? This is as crucial to your full identity as who you have been or have become. The future shapes you as much as the past of the present, maybe more. Destiny, every bit as much as history, determines identity."¹⁰

Erwin McManus in his series of podcasts encourages us to dream about what it is God wants us to be and do to make the world a better place. He challenges us to, "Live our most heroic life!"¹¹

"The greatest tragedy is not to have died; the greatest tragedy is to never have lived." Jean Valjean in *Les Miserables*

So whether you call it a sense of destiny, your future, your most heroic life or your mission, it is clear we need to have one. While it is true that everyone ends up somewhere; few people end up somewhere on purpose. So where do you want to end up?

Here is a smorgasbord of ideas on how to develop a life mission.

1. Train yourself in godliness. 1 Timothy 4:7,8 tell us, *"train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."* As we saw in Paul's life, the ultimate goal is to become conformed to the image of God. This requires that we take personal responsibility for our own progress. No blame shifting; no passivity. Training in godliness requires commitment, practice, God-centered devotion, spending time in the Word and prayer. It is not about developing a great proficiency in our jobs or ministries, but it focused on our relationship with God and developing Christ-like character.
2. Do good deeds. Serve others. Your mission is not all about you. It is about making the world a better place. As you humbly serve, you find out what you are good at, what you enjoy doing, and where God is powerful in you.¹²

3. Pray. Ask the Father. Take a clue from the life of Jesus. He spent time alone with the Father to get his marching orders for each day. Read Mark 1:35-38. Jesus knew his mission because he spent time talking to the Father about it.
4. Learn your [SHAPE](#). Pastor Rick Warren has some good materials on learning how you are SHAPed for ministry. Each of us has unique gifts and talents. SHAPE is an acronym for:
 - S**piritual Gifts - A set of special abilities that God has given to you to share his love and serve others.
 - H**earth - The special passions God has given you so that you can glorify him on earth.
 - A**bilities - The set of talents that God gave you when you were born, which he also wants you to use to make an impact for him.
 - P**ersonality - The special way God wired you to navigate life and fulfill your unique Kingdom Purpose.
 - E**xperiences - Those parts of your past, both positive and painful, which God intends to use in great ways. ¹³
5. Take a spiritual gifts test
6. Bob Buford in his book, [Half Time](#) says to ask questions of yourself. Here are a few to get you started:
 - Am I missing anything in my life right now that's important to me?
 - What am I passionate about?
 - Who am I?
 - What do I value?
 - What do I want to be doing in ten years?
 - What gifts has God given me?
 - What am I willing to die for?
 - What is it about my job that makes me feel trapped?
 - What changes can I make?
 - What do I need to learn? What changes do I need to make in order to live up to the demands on myself and my expectations of life? ¹⁴
7. Reggie McNeal has a good chapter on mission in his book, [Practicing Greatness](#). In the section on discovering your mission he clarifies that, "Great spiritual leaders understand that their mission is not something they invent. Rather, they realize that their life mission is something they discover." He offers several insights:
 - a) Distill out the core or essence of your **call** from God. One way to do this is by asking key questions such as,

- What people or cause do you feel drawn to?
 - What do you want to help people do or achieve or experience?
 - How do you want to help people?
 - What message do you want to deliver?
 - How do you intend to serve or have an impact on the world?
- b) Move toward your area of **passion**. Learn what makes you tick and what ticks you off. Know what makes your heart beat faster. Get in touch with what makes you feel alive.
- c) Talent. Your mission matches your personal strengths. God is not capricious. He gave you talents and strengths for a purpose.
- d) **Personality** also gives you a clue to your mission. Your personality and make up is no mistake. God made you unique. ¹⁵

OK, probably enough on Titus 1:1. In conclusion, Paul lived a mission, a destiny. He was a servant of God who desired to be conformed to the image of Christ; he was an apostle who longed to be used by God to see people wholly transformed--emotion, intellect and will--by the gospel. Being and doing--inseparable. What is your mission? What is your destiny? What do you wish to be remembered for?

"The real test of a man is not when he plays the role that he wants for himself, but when he plays the role destiny has for him." Vaclav Havel

"The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wishes me to do...to find the idea for which I can live and die." Søren Kierkegaard

¹ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia on e-Sword commentary on the word, "apostle".

² Easton's Bible Dictionary on e-Sword commentary on "apostle".

³ Ibid, Easton.

⁴ R.A. Torrey's New Topical Textbook commentary on "apostle" found on e-Sword.

⁵ Reggie McNeal, "Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders", p. 5

- ⁶ Ibid, McNeal, p. 5-6
- ⁷ Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible found on e-Sword commentary on Matthew 10:32-33
- ⁸ William Barclay, The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, p.229
- ⁹ J Robert Clinton notes on Finishing Well
- ¹⁰ Mark Buchanan, The Rest of God, p 208-209
- ¹¹ Erwin McManus podcast on Wide Awake found at iTunes
- ¹² A good book on this topic is Eric Swanson's The Externally-Focused Church
- ¹³ More on SHAPE can be found at the following links:
<http://www.pastors.com/blogs/ministrytoolbox/archive/2004/02/27/Why-must-I-understand-my-S.H.A.P.E.-3F00.aspx>

<http://www.shapediscovery.com/yourshape.php>
- ¹⁴ Bob Buford, Half Time. Go to <http://leaderimpact.wordpress.com/2008/12/16/taking-stock-during-transitions-of-life/> for more on this topic.
- ¹⁵ Reggie McNeal, Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders, pgs 84-92.