# Secrets of Paul’s Success

*How did Paul become such a great follower of Christ?*

1 Corinthians 11:1

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1. **Introduction (Acts 9:11-16; 1Cor 11:1)**
	1. The Apostle Paul was unquestionably, the greatest Christian who has ever lived
		1. Never did he embezzle money, or promote a prosperity Gospel, or create a wealthy TV ministry.
		2. Never did anyone ever find secret sins going on in his private life
		3. He was a godly man, a solid Christian, through and through, committed to turning his world back to God!
		4. He made three long missionary journeys throughout the Middle East, and the Roman Empire…
			1. Personally planting dozens of packed churches, preaching the gospel to thousands of people, and giving strength and encouragement to the early Christians who endured such intense hardships of that day!
			2. He stood and preached before kings and princes
			3. As well as endured prison cells and almost constant hardships
		5. Of the 27 books in the New Testament, Paul wrote 14 of them – over half of them!
		6. He ended up travelling to Rome on his final journey, where he was brutally martyred for his faith in Christ by Emperor Nero, around 65 A.D.
	2. Since then, for the last 2,000 years, he has been THE example followed by countless millions of people who patterned their lives around his way of life
		1. Missionaries seek to turn the heathen world upside down like Paul and his men did
		2. Preachers seek to preach and write like Paul did
		3. Christians seek to rejoice and glory in their tribulations like Paul did
		4. Truly, Paul the Apostle, was an amazing Christian man!
	3. So, What was his secret? How did he become such a great follower of Christ?
	4. At Youth Camp this year, we will learn so much from the life of Paul. Maybe after this message, you ALL will want to come!
2. **Lesson**
	1. **He was Thoroughly Converted** (Acts 26:9-19)
		1. It is what the Bible calls, getting SAVED! It means:
			1. He was won over by the truth of the Resurrection! He heard and spoke with the living Jesus Christ
			2. Persuaded in that instant that Jesus actually was the Messiah, the Son of God, and the literal Saviour of the world!
			3. Was convinced that he had been totally wrong about Jesus, and His followers, and therefore that HE was the wrong one, and in trouble with God!
			4. So he made a decision to now walk and live in a totally different direction
			5. A 180-degree change in DIRECTION – to follow Jesus only!
			6. And that change of direction, brought about a complete and total change of life!
		2. How did it happen? Let me repeat it!
			1. Thoroughly defeated by God first
				1. No negotiations with Jesus – just worshipped Him!
				2. Absolute surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ
			2. A complete abandonment of everything he was before that moment
				1. His nationality – Jewish, Irish, American…
				2. His religious training – even the best of it, if without Christ, is dung
				3. His own life, and career
				4. All of that was old baggage – all of it!
				5. Left it all AND lost it all as he followed the Lord Jesus (Philp 3:8)
			3. That’s repentance!
			4. And then a desperate faith in the mercy of the very One Saul had hated
		3. Because it was so dramatic, he never doubted his conversion
			1. He knew what Jesus had done in him and to him that day!
			2. Gave him eternal life
			3. Forgave him of all sin – remember, he admits he was the chiefest of sinners!
			4. Is it THAT big of a deal? You bet it is!
		4. Paul LOVED giving his testimony of his conversion from darkness to light!
			1. Wasn’t ashamed of it ever! It was the greatest day of his life!
			2. Actually CHANGED his life inside and out
			3. Too many people want everyone to “just accept them”
			4. Well guess what? As you are, you will NEVER pass heaven’s gate!
			5. You MUST be born again Jesus said! You MUST be converted!
		5. Salvation makes anyone a great Christian!
			1. Can you even recount what happened when you were saved?
			2. Did it have any effect on you? It sure should have!
	2. **Completely Dependent Upon the Power of Jesus Christ** (Philippians 4:13)
		1. Before he got saved, Paul never lacked for money, or appreciation, or honour because he was a powerful Pharisee, very learned / well educated, very popular, very able to lead and make quick decisions, and especially teach the precise details of the Law
		2. But, From that day of his salvation…
		3. He lost everything but Christ!
			1. Saul COULD NOT expect anything from anyone anymore – because no one trusted him, and all his old friends now hunted him
			2. He had to learn to pray for everything now, and to wait for God to supply everything he needed
			3. He learned to do absolutely everything only with the strengths and abilities and opportunities that Jesus alone would give him!
		4. And THAT made Paul a great Christian!
	3. **Relearned Everything** (Gal 1:13-19)
		1. Saul had been taught by one of the greatest Jewish teachers named Gamaliel
		2. But had learned mainly about traditions, ceremonies, and rituals, and letters of the law
		3. But with nothing but time on his hands, and only desert all around him, Saul was personally taught the Bible ALL OVER AGAIN!
			1. How humiliating would that be?
			2. Yet, he was **willing** to start all over – and relearn everything
			3. He **slowed down** to ponder everything now
			4. **Started over** at page ONE of the Bible
			5. Sought to be careful to learn about and from Jesus only
			6. Only the Scriptures were clung to – whatever he found in the Bible, that was going to be what he would believe. Full stop!
			7. Anything that was not in the Scriptures, was discarded
		4. He discovered JESUS basically on every page of the Old Testament…
			1. He found Christ is the promised Seed of the woman in **Genesis** 3:15 who would one day come and crush Satan.
			2. He also discovered **Joseph** was like Jesus who was hated and suffered at the hands of his own brethren, and yet was made the Saviour of the world!
			3. In **Exodus** he noticed that Christ is the sacrificial Passover Lamb given for us all to save from the due punishment for our sin.
			4. In **Leviticus** Christ becomes our High Priest, making the perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins.
			5. In **Numbers**, He was the water from the rock, He even was the Rock, He was the Manna from heaven, AND He was the condemned brass serpent on a pole that gave life back to condemned people who would just look and believe!
			6. In **Deuteronomy**, Jesus is the prophesied Prophet who was greater than Moses and all his laws.
			7. In the **book of Joshua**, Paul discovered Jesus, the Captain of the Lord's armies of heaven.
			8. In the **Book of Judges**, Paul noticed that all the judges that God constantly raised up among them were special deliverers of Israel, pointing to Israel’s greatest deliverance one day by the Lord Jesus.
			9. In the **Book of Ruth**, a great man named Boaz redeemed all the debts of a pagan, Gentile woman named Ruth, simply because he loved her, all as a picture of Christ paying off all the debts of the whole world, just because Christ loved us!
			10. In **Samuel**, David, shows up as a lowly shepherd who was made king of Israel, just like what Jesus would become.
			11. **Job** points to Christ as the resurrected Redeemer!
			12. **Esther** pictures Christ interceding for His people.
			13. In **Psalms**, Jesus is our perfect strength and song in all our weaknesses.
			14. In **Ecclesiastes** – Paul found that Jesus is the only worthwhile meaning for life
			15. In **Song of Solomon** – Jesus is described as the Author of faithful love
			16. **Isaiah** describes Christ’s glorious birth, as well as his awful suffering.
			17. **Jeremiah** reveals that Jesus would be acquainted with sorrows.
			18. In **Ezekiel**, Paul noticed that Jesus is perfect Son of Man
			19. In **Daniel** Paul noticed for the first time that the fourth Man in the fire was the Son of God!
			20. In **Hosea** Paul found Jesus is our faithful husband even when we run away
			21. **Joel** describes Christ sending His Spirit upon His people.
			22. **Amos** tells us that Jesus will be the judge of all nations one day soon!
			23. In **Micah** Paul discovered that Jesus casts ALL our sin into the sea of God’s forgetfulness
			24. In **Nahum**, Jesus will be the source of future world peace we cannot even imagine
			25. **Obadiah** warns of the judgment coming on the world before the kingdom of Christ.
			26. **Jonah** offers a picture of Jesus being dead for three days, then coming back to life to preach repentance.
			27. **Zephaniah** says that Jesus will be the final king over Israel.
			28. **Haggai** shows that Jesus the Messiah will restores perfect worship of God
			29. **Zachariah** prophesies of Jesus riding on a colt, and then instead of being made King, will be pierced and slaughtered for us all!
			30. And in **Malachi** Paul discovers Jesus to be the Sun of Righteousness.
		5. It must have thrilled Paul to suddenly realise that his Saviour wrote and lived throughout every page that Paul now preached
		6. It sure thrills ME to see all that and more every time I read it through!
			1. You can memorise just the letters and words of this Bible, and miss heaven!
			2. Or you can ask God to open your eyes and seek and find Christ on every page and in every story
			3. You will never be the same!
	4. **Valued Other Men’s Investment In His Life** (2Tim 4:11)
		1. He was rarely alone – good accountability practice
			1. Paul was not a loner. Didn’t think he could just do things alone!
			2. He loved being with the Congregation of the Saints! As imperfect as they may be!
			3. And he loved good men, and wanted their influence in his life (Titus 1:7,8)
		2. Wanted Good, Wise, Godly, and Biblical Influences
		3. To be a great leader, God must first make you a good follower!
		4. Paul became teachable under godly men!
			1. NOT from these suspicious YouTube pre-recorded ministry “performances”
			2. But from simple, flawed, stammering, imperfect, yet faithful men!!!
				1. There are NO perfect mentors
				2. But there are some foolish ones that just faithfully love God and love serving people
				3. FACT: The imperfect pastor/preacher, that actually lives near to you, and that faithfully believes this Book, and has no axe to grind with anybody but the devil, will be better for you than ten thousand teachers on YouTube and the TV!
				4. 1Cor 4:15  *For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus “I” have begotten you through the gospel*.
				5. God save modern Christianity from too many YouTube pastors!
		5. Learned how to work with other flawed men as team – for a great goal, not for glory!
			1. From that first day with Ananias, and then Barnabas’s great and lasting influence, and then later, Luke’s awesome help in the ministry!
			2. All the investment of so many people in his life that made Paul a great Christian
		6. The same will be true in your life too! That’s why Jesus has churches – to allow young Christians to get around older, wiser Christians
		7. It sounds very simplistic, but having GOOD godly people in your life still makes great Christians out of people!
	5. **Believed EVERYTHING in the Bible** (Acts 24:14; 1Thes 2:13)
		1. Paul was great, because he had a single faith – in this Book! THIS Book!!! The Holy Bible (1Thes 2:13)!
		2. The world says, believe ANYTHING except the Bible
			1. Go ahead, own a Bible, and even read some, but not all, and never again and again
			2. Learn and use Bible words like: Lord, grace, pray, love one another, blessing…
			3. Study the Bible, but don’t believe it, and definitely don’t obey it, and conform your life to ITS shape
			4. Mix the world with the Word (2Kg 17:12,16,33,41) – entertainment, drinking, living together, no clear right or wrongs!
			5. Make Jesus PART of your life, but definitely not PRE-EMMINENT
			6. Just mix God INTO your life… without losing anything. Hmmmm. (Cf Lk 9:24)
		3. But Paul just believed EVERYTHING in the pages of Scripture
			1. From 6 day creation
			2. To Noah’s world-wide flood
			3. To the reality of an eternal hell
			4. To Jonah swallowed by a whale
			5. To Jesus being born of a virgin
			6. Jesus raising the dead and healing all diseases
			7. To the soon secret rapture of Christians
			8. And to the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world
		4. Paul had great confidence in just believing God’s word
		5. It helped him when ships were sinking, when being beaten, hunted, hated, rejected
		6. Realise that if you DO actually believe this Book, you WILL be mocked and made fun of like Festus did Paul (Acts 26:24,25)
	6. **Lived a Life of INTEGRITY instead of Success** (Acts 24:10-13)
		1. Integrity is more important than success
		2. There is NO real success in the Christian life without integrity!
		3. What does Integrity mean?
			1. Paul sought to be blameless – not sinless, but blameless. He didn’t offer excuses when he did wrong, only sought to make things right
			2. Had an absolute moral compass of what is right and wrong – from the Scriptures
			3. Would not allow himself to do wrong when no one was watching – not a hypocrite
			4. Made rules for HIMSELF to live by that kept him out of trouble and temptation
			5. Willing to suffer for doing right
			6. Willing to take responsibility when he did wrong
			7. ARE ANY OF YOU LISTENING???
			8. Lived open and honest before all men – had absolutely nothing to hide – never lied
			9. Paid every debt and bill he ever had – worked at making tents to pay his way
			10. Spent his time judging himself instead of everyone around him (about 99% to 1%)
		4. This made Paul a great Christian!
	7. **Accepted Affliction and Thorns – as part of his Christian life** (Philp 4:11-13)
		1. Was NOT a spoiled brat – living on soft pillows and wealthy popularity!
		2. He endured a lot of troubles, afflictions, poverty, and disappointments
			1. He several times clung to broken ship boards in the open stormy sea…
			2. Was constantly blamed and attacked by other believers
			3. Faced lions; was stoned by an angry crowd, and spent months in prison cells
			4. He often had no food, often was cold, and even naked
		3. Most anyone else would have quit, given up, gotten fed up with it all
		4. But Paul was determined to allow ALL THIS to teach him real humility, and real contentment (Philp 4:11) - it only comes from troubles!
		5. It kept him empowered by Jesus and by the Spirit of God
		6. And it made Paul a great Christian!
		7. Christians who have never had to deal with serious problems, serious struggles, serious poverty, serious disappointments, never amount to much more than seriously spoiled brats, who spend their life criticizing and complaining about everything!
	8. **He had a Clear Call from God** (Acts 26:15-19; 13:1-4)
		1. We all struggle with wanting to do what WE want to do ignoring the fact that God knows perfectly well what you should do that will make a mark – a difference - on this messed up world!
		2. Paul had a God Given Purpose – very different than he had expected
			1. Paul should have been preaching to the intellectual and religious Jews – because that was his forte, his niche, his speciality, his strength!!!
			2. But instead was called to go to the uneducated barbaric Gentiles!
			3. And Paul knew it
			4. And THAT knowledge enabled Paul to:
				1. Discard his Jewish Pharisee pension
				2. Abandon his own career goals
				3. Forget all his successes and accomplishments
				4. And to go and serve and minister the Gospel to the lost and dying in the world
				5. And that made Paul a great Christian
		3. And so do you! But most of you have resisted it, because of fears, and because it doesn’t make sense.
		4. A man self-called, and self-made, is cursed by his own limits, and will end alone and empty of anything of lasting value. A man who is God-called, and self-less, will be used beyond his own limits, and end full of everlasting rewards!
		5. I know which man "I" want to be!
	9. **Determined that God’s Grace would NOT be wasted in his life** (1Cor 15:10)
		1. He realised just how much **Jesus** had invested in him – “ALL Grace” / undeserved kindness
		2. So, he laboured more / worked much harder in serving Christ than any other Christian (including Peter) BECAUSE of that grace
			1. Went out on foot, into the lost pagan world, basically without financial support
			2. Made money himself – making tents
			3. Constantly Putting Off his old man and Putting On his new man
				1. It was a constant effort to not live under his old nature so that he could live in the Spirit
				2. So, he daily would put off his old mind, old habits, addictions, old feelings (trash them all, dumping them, and tearing them all down from his heart)
				3. And then put on the new mind - the new way of thinking that Jesus taught, and practiced new habits, and enjoyed new feelings that the Holy Spirit gave him!
				4. Why?
				5. Because of the grace of God bestowed, poured out upon him
				6. He was NOT going to let it go to waste!
				7. And he didn’t!
				8. Listen to Paul in 1Cor 9:27, “I keep under my body!” – “I” am in charge of what this body does – “I” carry it, “It” does not carry me!
			4. Just followed Jesus’ example, with solid determination
		3. It was HARD being a Christian in the First Century
			1. Not hard to GET saved – Jesus did all the work necessary
			2. Not hard even to STAY saved – Jesus keeps us saved
			3. But he worked so hard BECAUSE he WAS SAVED!
			4. And that effort made Paul a great Christian
		4. Count on it being HARD living the Christian life in the 21st century as well!
		5. Don’t think you will amount to anything without some serious effort on your part
			1. Reading your Bible through again and again and again
			2. Making the effort to pray for extended periods of time
			3. Making the time to go out and personally win hard people to Christ
			4. Working at serving alongside other believers in your church
			5. Hey! Jesus did everything for you to be saved
		6. What are you willing to do to make sure Jesus didn’t waste His Grace?
	10. **Shook Off Satanic Attacks** (Acts 28:5) **AND Personal Attacks** (Philp 1:18)
		1. To Paul, Satan’s attacks against him and his ministry were rough, but NOT the worst things to happen in his life
			1. They are to ME! I take Satan’s attacks very serious
			2. But I shouldn’t, if I want to prove that I believe God is greater that Satan!
			3. Satanic attacks crippled Paul at times, but were no big deal – just expected them
		2. To Paul, human attacks, especially from other believers, were painful as well, but he learned to just expect them, and believed that good would come of it all!
			1. A boxer gets into the ring expecting to be punched, over and over and over again!
			2. A runner expects to be tripped at times
			3. A golfer expects sudden cross-winds
			4. A Hurler expects opponents to surround him
			5. Why do WE crumble when the devil takes a stab at us?
		3. A mark of greatness is the ability to expect opposition, and misunderstandings, and personal stabs, and to just shake it all off!
			1. Did you have a bad week? The devil would like you to go through the rest of your life WOUNDED! Well, shake it off!
			2. Did you mess up? Fail? Get overwhelmed? Repent of any failures, and then shake it all off, and get back on track serving the Lord! WITH JOY!
		4. Great Christians don’t quit!
3. **Conclusion**
	1. **I have given you just a FEW of the things God did in Paul’s life, and what Paul did in response that made him the greatest Christian who has ever lived:**
		1. He got Thoroughly Converted – didn’t “ease into it” but came in kicking & screaming
		2. Completely Dependent Upon the Abilities and Power of Jesus Christ alone
		3. He Relearned Everything he thought he knew – so teachable
		4. Valued Other Men – not a loner; not arrogant
		5. Believed EVERYTHING in the Bible
		6. Lived a Life of Integrity instead of Success
		7. Accepted Affliction and Thorns – as part of his Christian life
		8. He had a Clear Call from God
		9. Determined that God’s Grace would NOT be wasted in his life
		10. Shook Off Satanic Attacks AND All Personal Attacks
	2. **I could go on and list quite a few more “secrets” to Paul’s Christian life**
		1. But you will have to come to Youth Camp this year, to learn the rest of them!
		2. All these ingredients fed into ONE life – Paul’s – and made him the greatest Christian
	3. **What if all that could happen AGAIN, TODAY?**
		1. Someone in this room might just turn the heathen world upside down like Paul and his men did
		2. Someone else might preach and write like Paul did
		3. Someone else might start to rejoice and glory in their tribulations like Paul did
		4. And the world around us might start meeting some amazing Christians, and become convinced that Jesus really IS alive, and is worthy of being followed!
	4. **Paul proves the Christian life CAN be lived in an amazing way, with great success by anybody!**
	5. **What is holding YOU back?**
		1. Probably your pride – you are too worried about starting over, and losing everything, and becoming a spectacle to the world!
		2. Maybe too much education – makes it impossible for you to just believe the only Book that can save your soul AND make you great!
		3. Maybe your own self-righteous attitudes about your own sin! Thinking you really don’t need to be all that desperate about following Jesus and depending upon only Him
		4. And then there is the devil! Are you going to let THAT *snake in the grass* to keep you down, and defeated???
		5. If any of you are not converted because you worry about any of that, it will land you in hell to be sure
		6. And it will make miserable Christians out of the rest of you
		7. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, today, and walk out of here born again
		8. And the rest of us, believe Jesus Christ enough to let Him use you in the greatest ways imaginable!