



Biblical Leadership: Reflections on the Pedestal of Paul

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ABSTRACT

The article presents the concept of leadership based on Apostle Paul. Some reflections are made and analyzed. Concepts from the Old and the New Testaments were considered and narrowed to St Paul. The bottom line is that we should look up to Jesus as the ultimate authority and be subservient to the pedestal of Paul in choosing leaders for the work in the Church of God today in order to avoid confusion, divisions and its attendant consequences in the church.

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Introduction

In most of Paul the Apostle's writings to the church, he considered himself a servant of Jesus Christ in his introduction and greetings. That notwithstanding, there is much evidence to suggest the influence he wielded in the early church. A cursory look at accounts in the Bible cannot miss the event where he rebuked the Apostle Peter (Cephas) in chapter 2 of Galatians on principle because of setting the example of leadership straight from clandestine operations. There is a popular saying that "Leadership is by example" and an old Korean proverb "Saying something a hundred times is not as good as living it once- Kang Yeon-sak" reinforces this view. Despite the outspread views on leadership in both the Old and New Testaments, we set the course of this reflections on the exemplary style of Paul the Apostle's leadership.

Candid Reflections on Leadership of Paul the Apostle

According to the Oxford dictionary, leadership may be defined as "The action of leading a group of people or an organization" or "The state or position of being a leader". Similarly, the Cambridge dictionary also defines leadership as "the person or people in charge of an organization" or "the position or fact of being the leader" or "the set of characteristics that make a good leader". These definitions offer a sense of dominance, but for the latter one that talks about the characteristics. In contrast with the general idea of leadership- someone possessing some level of domineering influence over others or a person being patronized by others, Paul's perspective differed as a redress to populist secular view and rather suggested a state of servant-hood with respect to the church. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ" in most of his intimations conferred this truth.

Unabatedly, Paul admonished Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:15 that "If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth". A leader is supposed to know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's church.

On such grounds, there is a lot to learn from the handed down instructions of Paul in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, about the qualifications and characteristics a good leader in church should have. Why would Paul give the criteria for enlistment of leaders in his absence? Is it not because he knew there was going to be a time when he would not be on the scene and yet the acme of the church office would have to be filled? Would not a canker from the head easily destroy and render the body useless? In Psalm 132: 2, it says of this as, "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;". The effect of the head on the body is obviously candid. Does not the head contain four of our five most vital human senses? The prime importance of the office of a leader in the church cannot be over emphasized. With every right it is deemed to be critically studied to stop a canker from even spreading down in the first place. We shall take a look at some of the verses Paul prescribed to guide Timothy, Titus and us in our days today to catch better insights into the leadership positions of the church and how best to fill them. The first seven verses of 1 Timothy 3 in the New King James Version reads;

1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;

4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence

5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);

6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

In as little as six verses, starting from 1 Timothy 3:2-7, seventeen qualifications have been enumerated for the position of a bishop. Who really is a bishop and what makes that position so dire to merit such high standards? The context of the title "bishop" deserves some clarification in our circles. According to [1] and [2], the New Testament records and uses the words "bishop," "elder," "overseer", and "pastor" synonymously as can be cross referenced from the entries of (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-2). To the bishop is assigned the responsibility of correcting the disorderly, strengthening, consoling, and caring for the weak in the text of (1 Thessalonians 5:12-14, King James Version);

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. 14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

How interesting it is that, "to know them which labour among you", comes before "and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;". Indeed, service or servant-hood is the elevator to lordship and a Lord must and cannot do with the staircase of servant-hood; a seemingly paradox. You can be sure of the zenith of the office but can one yet think about the position of a servant? How then can a bishop; *warn them that are unruly when members of his own household are unruly, comfort the feeble minded when he is himself feeble minded, support the weak when he is himself not strong, be patient toward all men when he is himself not patient toward his own household?* Uneasy then lies the head that bears the crown of a bishop or pastor. The high standards required thus, puts this position in a leadership bracket and class of its own for it is not to be allowed to be either experimental nor tentative as the bishop cannot be seen to be overbearing. Why then does the unnecessary tussle, tension and complexities set in among people you would expect to be seasoned and salted followers and ministers of God in contemporary times? Would it not be because people yearn for higher offices to get better remuneration and more esteem? Do such as are involved in such tensions not want to be esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake but why then are they not at peace among themselves? Is that not obedience in part? Does obedience in part even qualify to be called obedience? Is obedience not better than sacrifice? In 1 Samuel 15:22, Samuel said "*Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*" From (Jeremiah 7: 21-23, New King James Version) we also read;

"21 This is what the Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: "Go and offer as many burnt offerings and sacrifices as you want. Eat the meat of those sacrifices yourselves.

22 I brought your ancestors out of Egypt. I spoke to them, but I did not give them any commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices.

23 I only gave them this command: 'Obey me and I will be your God, and you will be my people. Do all that I command, and good things will happen to you.'"

To be esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake but not be at peace among themselves is like sacrificing but not obeying. Can it not be likened to seeking the approval of men instead of that of God? Do such acts not render the Biblical record verses like;

Deuteronomy 25:4 "*Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.*";

1 Corinthians 9:9 *For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned?;*

1 Timothy 5:18 *For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and, "The worker is worthy of his wages."*;

defenseless, null and void for the perpetrators? Would not the unmerited strive for a key slot of lordship in an office that is supposed to enhance peace among members in the first place but due to the tussle for the space, dispels peace among ourselves be wrong? Oh, that our leanings will not be for our own self gratification but for our fellow men and heartfelt service to God. Inasmuch as Paul's tall list of seventeen requirements for enlistment as a bishop renders some people prematurely disqualified, the summary of his list is in unison and harmony with Jesus' given on leadership.

In (Matthew 20: 25- 26, New King James Version);

25 But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.

26 "It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant.

In the following texts, we revisit the foundational pedagogy of Jesus' saying on leadership;

(Matthew 23:11 , New King James Version) "*The greatest among you will be your servant.*"

(Luke 22:26 , New King James Version) "*But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*"

(Mark 9:35, New King James Version) "*And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.*"

Can there ever be smoke without fire? We know not of such incident of smoke without fire occurring. According to [3], the mother of the sons of Zebedee, Salome, was put to the task of asking Jesus for positions for his sons in his kingdom. In the various accounts of Mark and Matthew, Jesus weighed in on the situation to teach his disciples about leadership in Matthew 20:20-26, before carnal views and offenses set in because of their desire. The summary of it all being that of service and probity like what Paul modeled after. One should definitely not get to the top at the cost of people's sweat. Did Charles Spurgeon not once say, "The lower down, the higher up. In a certain sense the way to heaven is downward in our own esteem certainly. "He must increase; I must decrease." And when that straight-backed letter "I," which often becomes so prominent, vanishes altogether, till there is not an iota of it left, then we shall become like our Lord."

We shall now dwell on the in-depth study conducted by [1] on the qualities earlier mentioned for leaders in the text of Chapter 3 of 1 Timothy.

1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;

4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence

5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);

6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

In Verse 1, the demeanor and bearing of the man to fit this role is one who makes a sturdy pursuit for the office motivated by the sincere sense of desire. Don't many people desire? How can one tell the sincerity of a person's desire? Paul perceived this by inspiration and steps up the qualifications by the flip of the verse with the budding expression of necessity with the usage of the word "must". It is not to be taken lightly then that the bishop must needs fulfill the gorge of public eye view and pass blame. That he would pass blame is in synergy with having a good testimony among those outside who his influence is expected to reach and transform. His garment must not be spotted with scandals that will lead back to blame. How then can one be of good report and behavior if none can verify his character?

How can an example to follow be shrouded in wrong doing and errors? We now submit the assessment from [1] concerning "*the husband of one wife*" where they stated that the issue transcended the elder's marital status, but rather dwelt on his moral and sexual purity.

[*This qualification heads the list, because it is in this area that leaders are most prone to fail. Various interpretations of this qualification have been offered. Some see it as a prohibition against polygamy. An unnecessary injunction since polygamy was not common in Roman society and clearly forbidden by Scripture (Gen. 2:24), the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 19:5-6; Mark 10:6-9), and Paul (Ephesians 5:31). A polygamist could not even have been a church member, let alone a church leader. Others see this requirement as barring those who remarried after the death of their wives. But, as already noted, the issue is sexual purity, not marital status. Further, the Bible encourages remarriage after widowhood (5:14; 1 Corinthians 7:39). Some believe that Paul here excludes divorced men from church leadership. That again ignores the fact that this qualification does not deal with marital status. Nor does the Bible prohibit all remarriage after divorce (see notes on Matt. 5:31-32; 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:15). Finally, some think that this requirement excludes single men from church leadership. But if that were Paul's intent, he would have disqualified himself (1 Corinthians 7:8). A "one-woman man" is one totally devoted to his wife, maintaining singular devotion, affection and sexual purity in both thought and deed. To violate this is to forfeit blamelessness and no longer be "above reproach" (Titus 1:6-7; Proverbs 6:32-33).]*

Being temperate is no easy task in times when our focus is constantly fledging at the vast information available at our desk but Paul stated "temperate" to show how self-restrained a leader should be in handling the scale of priorities. For such a one must be apt with Spiritual concerns because that is where we war. Despite the Greek context for "*sober-minded*" being a state devoid of the taste of wine, Paul cleverly utilized the metaphor of it to mean a state of sharpness and alertness that can be achieved by one who stays clear of the bottle. If one does not have good behavior and would be rejected by most work places, how much more the Church of God? The behavior of the bishop must be good. Did not Abraham receive Angels by his love of strangers?(Genesis 18:2) How can one serve if there is no table? The bishop must be able to provide the table from which he serves the community, is it not? He must be hospitable. Bible references abound in that respect (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9). Who doesn't appreciate a good teacher who is able to bring to life

dead texts that are not easily comprehensible? We all do love good teachers. Being able to teach is not a quality that comes easily, it takes much knowledge and experience at times and it is the only qualification that sets apart bishops from deacons.

Why Paul would place emphasis on "*not given to wine*" when he has already mentioned sober-minded connotes a sense of both spiritual and physical sharpness (Proverbs 31:4-5; 1 Corinthians. 6:12). For if the bishop is to be allowed to be given to wine, it should be the wine of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) leading to holiness. If the society within which we dwell eschews violence, so does the church of God. We cannot condone violent behavior from a bishop. How can the lambs of the church of God be allowed to approach a snarling wolf? No violence would be accepted, calmness will be preferred. Philippians 3:19 says, "*Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.*" If a bishop is greedy for money, his mind is on earthly things, his end is destruction, for his belly becomes his god and he will be to blame, for his glory will be his shame from embezzlements and mishandling of resources. If one placed in a position to watch the welfare of souls is busy with amassing wealth dishonestly, wherein lies his focus? The fellow should be one of gentle character, not quarrelsome, not covetous. He shouldn't be one making decisions that will easily set up factions in the Church but one who instills unity and dissolves quarrels before they spread like wildfire. Covetousness is to be dreaded because it will make the able-teacher teach things he must not (1 Titus 1:11; 2 Peter 2:1-3, 14; Jude 11). It is never right to want things that belong to another (1 Kings 21). Thus, Paul mentions that he should not be covetous.

If one can rule his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence, then he can rule the church. If one cannot tenderly nurse his vineyard, how can he be in charge of a winery? The military terms "rule" and "submission" hint at how strong this requirement is. He must be in charge well, like a charge is committed to a soldier on the battlefield to guard (1 Kings 20:39). His children if any, must be true believers with good report like in (Acts 21:9). Immediately after this requirement does Paul introduce the only caveat (*for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?*); a question to really ponder. Why then will it be required that he should not be a novice? The question does not sit for long. Paul gives the reasoning right from context "*lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.*" *Does pride not go before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall? (Proverbs 16:18).* A novice being new, is susceptible to the temptation of pride and its accompanying fall of ruin. This is not to mean young people cannot be leaders but they should be mature enough in the word and Spirit. To impress on outsiders the virtues by which the church of God stands, the bishop must possess a character so refined that the devil may not find enough cause of reproach to ensnare him.

Midway the chapter, Paul, then showed the requirements for a deacon (another person of service to the church). Interestingly, this new group needs not fulfill seventeen requirements for their position as they were meant as a relief to the bishops (Acts 6: 1- 4). We read in (1 Timothy 3: 8- 13, New King James Version) that;

*8 Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money,
9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.*

10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.

11 Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Would it not be hard to describe the job of a house help or helping servant at home since varying situations will always call for new additions to the role? This was the context of the situation, however, it was not to be taken for granted that anyone become a deacon for the sake of the fifth column. Insights were still supposed to be resourced from the requirements of the bishop. All these instructions from Paul was in line with carving a church made of harmony and unity so that the ministration of the Spirit can have free course like in (Ephesians 4:11, New King James Version) “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*”. The exhortation of the chapter in 1 Timothy 3 is rather enlightening and directly sets the final verses in our time.

The discourse between Paul and Titus is no different in (Titus 1, New King James Version);

1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;

2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;

4 To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:

11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, the Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;

14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Here, the instructions he gave to him are almost the same as that given to Timothy. Had Paul not earlier on said in 1 Corinthians 11:1 who he modeled after? Jesus, he said. Any true elect leader should live a live free from the stain of sin since Jesus should be our standard and influence. Despite the careful choice of leaders, the scourge of public views could sometimes get very able leaders to err (1 Samuel 13: 7-11). Paul outlines how to tackle such situations circumspectly to prevent offense. In that regard, Paul's rebuke of Peter in public (Galatians 2), can be likened to Samuel's rebuke of Saul (1 Samuel 13: 11). According to [6], [7], [8], [9], Paul took this form of appraisal because he had gotten to know Peter in person in Galatians 1:18 and his new behavioral change in Chapter 2 of Galatians had caused a ruckus that was affecting the faith of the Gentile church and needed to be quenched before unnecessary offense flourished. How often we neglect correction of an error under the guise of maintaining peace. One might argue that Paul in (1 Corinthians 9:19-23, New King James Version);

19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;

20 and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;

21 to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;

22 to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

23 Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Had said that in order to save some by all means, he “adapted to their way of life”, why then would Peter be brought to book for adapting similar choices? However, the answer is in verse 22, “that I might by all means save some”, not scatter those gathered which is exactly what was happening in Peter's case. What transpired, was rather weakening the faith of the believers gathered and corrupting the fundamental mystery of the truth of the Gospel. Our leaders are fallible after all because they are also men. Confronting Peter the Apostle can be likened to confronting the supreme pontiff publicly in our days. Despite the degree of the matter, Paul still went ahead. Should we not be motivated by Paul's model approach to stand up for the truth in times of such errors like that? Tribal, cultural and racial lines still persists in our churches today because we have missing that Paul to call the leadership and church populace to order? The gospel must be propagated and free flow cannot be achieved with such divisions. For every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand (Matthew 12:25, New King James Version). The purpose of correction is not to cause divisions but to promote unity and its consequences in the church. One must leave the bag of emotions at the door when doing this like Paul. May we not let our actions, convey meanings we do not intend and may our intentions be pure from the dilution of impure influences. For Paul rightly said in (Romans 14:20, New King James Version) “*Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.*” More references can be found in (1 Corinthians 8:13, 1 Corinthians 14:40).

According to [10], leaders who are able to establish bonds of commitment, performance, and morality between subordinates and themselves are called "Transformational

leaders" and this group of leaders motivate higher moral ethics and values in subordinates. It will be difficult to peruse many recent works today on leadership, and not find mention of the theory on transformational leadership [11], [12], [13]. Paul said, in the following verses (Philippians 3:17, Philippians 4:9, 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2 Thessalonians 3:9, 1 Corinthians 4:16, 1 Corinthians 11:1) that we should imitate him, just as he also imitated Christ. In all respects, Paul is a transformational leader who appeals us to the ideals of service and probity just like our savior Jesus.

Conclusion

We should look up to Jesus as the ultimate authority and be subservient to the pedestal of Paul in choosing leaders for the work in the Church of God today to avoid confusion, divisions and its attendant consequences in the church. We should be careful of who becomes the head of our church since that fellow could either make or mar it. (Jeremiah 12:10-11, King James Version) reads;

10 Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.

11 They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart.

May we not become victims and instruments who will make the work of God desolate. Rather, may we be good instruments who will but lay to heart the great commission and choose good leaders who will help shepherd the sheep of God we bring into the kingdom.

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