To understand leadership we must interpret the theology of Paul with our eye upon his character from an ideological texture.

The New Testament holds before our eyes the figures of two men-Jesus and Paul. At the center of this picture stands Jesus the Messiah, the son of the living God, and near him stands Paul, the man who above all others had the character of the Son in whom God is well pleased. Men today crave manhood and they prize character, yet men everywhere are bewildered, discouraged, and disillusioned. The world is looking for the vision of a man who struggled and suffered and conquered. The modern observer is skeptical as to the power of the Christian religion conceding the principles of Jesus are eloquent, but not practicable in today’s world. Human nature is human nature.

Paul is the answer to the sneer that a man cannot be radically changed. He is proof, without blemish, that what Christ promised can be radically fulfilled. The church, and any organization, can be dramatically changed, quickened and energized if only this man should become a living force in the mindset and heart of professing Christians. Perhaps no one in all of history provides a better example of leadership than the Apostle Paul, whose leadership strength is without equal.

How then can we know him? Unlike his predecessor Moses, Paul was commissioned to carry his message primarily to the world at large to the Gentiles. In light of Paul’s education, one might wonder, “Why would God choose Paul- a mind so thoroughly imbued with Jewish law, custom and thinking-to be the chief herald of the Messiah among the Gentiles?” At first glance we find Paul assuring the faithful translation of a Jewish message into a Gentile setting where Paul is credited with being the principle architect of Christianity. Clearly Paul never would have imagined the magnitude of his accomplishments. Perhaps to his greater amazement would be that he provides 21st-century leaders with a virtual perfect model for modern leadership-perhaps the greatest ever.
The Leadership of Patience

It is not easy for an excited man on a mission to be patient. People of warm impulses are prone to become eager. Those who mount up with wings like eagles often come down abruptly. When man wants something he wants it at once, he will look for shortcuts and find it hard to persevere and endure. Considering Paul’s fiery and precipitate nature we can appreciate his patience. He could run, but he could also walk. He could let himself out, but he could also hold himself in. He was eager to get on about his business, yet he knew how to wait for the Holy Spirit to move among men.

A man shows his patience by the way he bears disappointment. Paul wanted to preach in Rome but entered the city in chains. He recognized that something always stood in his way, yet he made the best of his situation and quickly took up his work. He was disappointed in his affliction, and asked God to remove it but God did not seem to hear. Although he endured great disappointment he did not waiver nor give up his faith. He continued in his work, and discovered, to his delight, that notwithstanding his disability, he could still be successful in his work.

A man’s patience comes out of the methods of his work. When Paul saw converts occur in a city, he did not quickly leave the city forever, he returned to that city over and over again. He walked back even if it were a hundred miles. He patiently walked long and dangerous distances from one city to another. Why would he return? Because his work had not yet been completed, the work of teaching, shepherding, and instilling his leadership upon the lives of new believers. It took commitment to make converts, but it took patience to organize converts into churches with officers to administer the affairs of the congregation and to train the new believers in the basic principles of Christian living.

The Leadership of Courage

When the average Christian is asked to name the most vivid trait of Paul’s character, the answer nine times out of ten, is “Courage.” (Jefferson, 1923). The example of Paul’s courage is often illustrated in his experiences among bandits in mountain passes, his behavior when face to face with mobs in Lystra and Ephesus and Jerusalem, and his conduct in the time of shipwreck when he is on his way to Rome. History is full of men who have displayed courage in war, conflict, and altercation, but the true test of courage is displayed in his moral courage as he clearly conquered the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and that Gentile and Jew stood on an equal footing in the household of faith before God. To that great truth without question he was committed.

Paul stood and rebuked Peter. Paul was so committed to the truth he, in rebuking Peter he rebuked Barnabas as well, as Barnabas had taken Peter’s side. The critical hour of the Christian church had arrived and Paul was the man to bring truth to the forefront. Paul stood and accused Peter of wavering on the truth. It is this standing up for truth against his friends that reveals the courage of Paul’s soul. He did things which only a man of amazing daring would ever be capable of doing. When we read of Paul boldly preaching Jesus as the Messiah to the Jews, we see his courage. The Jews had for centuries looked for a Messiah, mighty, and victorious, but the idea of
a suffering Messiah was not a popular message. A Messiah who would allow himself to be crucified as a malefactor, by a pagan Roman government, was blasphemy. This was Paul’s message, “Jesus had been crucified, and Jesus was the Messiah.” As Paul would have said, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel.” What courage he displayed; the cause of Christ was paramount.

During his stay in Antioch and Iconium a confederation of Jews gathered and the multitude were stirred. Paul was stoned, dragged from outside the city, and left for dead. According to the Jewish Mishnah (Sanhedrin 6:1-4) a stoning victim was stripped of his clothing, thrown from an elevated place twice the height of a human person, positioned with his heart upward, and huge rocks were then dropped (or thrown) upon him until he was dead (Arnold, 2002; Boismard, 1992). The vicious mob at Lystra “assumed” Paul was dead and obviously left the site where Paul was left for dead. But the “apostle “rose up” (a hint, perhaps, of a miraculous recovery). The following day he and Barnabas left the city, proceeding toward Derbe some sixty miles to the southwest (Acts 16:32). Although weak in body and depressed in spirit, his courage was unabated, determined to go on preaching the truth that Jesus is the Messiah, that men crucified him, and God raised him from the dead.

Here we discover Paul’s courage like the courage of the Son of God.

**The Leadership of Humility**

While many character traits readily come to mind in any discussion of Paul, humility may not be one of them. In order to appreciate a man’s humility, we must first consider the measurement of his pomposity. By nature Paul was proud and imperious, and lowliness became an effort and an achievement. Paul held his head high, he felt confident of his abilities, and said himself he was not inferior to the tallest of Apostles. He never boasted that he did not know nothing, could do nothing, or amount to nothing. He did not exult on the number of things he could do. He exalted on the importance of his mission.

Paul invariably refused to prostate himself before men. He met with the greatest of men as his brothers and equals. But before God no man ever lowered himself more than Paul. In the presence of God he considered himself nothing. Every gift bestowed upon him by God was unmerited and he was not worthy. Paul’s favorite vocabulary was the word “Grace”. Grace was always before him. When he met other men, his salutation was: “The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” When he said good-by his last words were, “The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ go with you.” His life engulfed grace as undeserved mercy. It was music to his ears and filled his heart with an attitude of humbleness and love.

When others wrote “Saint Paul”, he always wrote “Servant Paul”. The Greek word he selected for himself was not the name usually associated with a domestic servant, but the name of a bond servant or slave under a master who owned him. He counted it an honor to obey the one who was worthy of obedience. He was glad, and willing, to place himself into subjection to a personality higher than himself. He was humble, teachable like a child, and eager to learn. He forgot the things behind him and pressed forward. He was a proud man and could have easily allowed his position and the attention he received from others during his ministry to make him stubborn, self-
indulging, demanding, and arrogant, but under the influence of Jesus he learned to bend his knee and become submissive to the Lord his authority.

Paul exemplified humility in his leadership. The larger cause of Jesus was more important than his own ego.

In What Ways Can Today’s Global Leaders Apply These Three Leadership Principles?

God develops leaders through a divine process. God can bring forth character development and personal growth out of any situation at any time. Whether he does so is conditional upon a leader’s willingness to submit to his will throughout the process. One characteristic of leadership that we do not hear often is patience. Global leaders require patience because they must work with people, not machines. People are reluctant to change. People develop political alliances and affinities. People have their pet projects, favorite territories, favorite friends, and preferred ways of doing things. It takes patience to effectively work with people of different cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and historical backgrounds to accomplish organizational goals and objectives. Although there are appropriate times to be impatient and push forward an agenda, the astute leader knows that patience is very often his or her secret weapon in getting things accomplished.

Another characteristic of leadership is recognizing when to display courage and having the wisdom of knowing when to exhibit courage appropriately. The art of influencing people to do willingly what is required in order to achieve a goal is the essence of leadership. Courage is, “mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, preserve, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty (Webster).” Courageous leadership must start from within the leader’s heart where real courage resides. It is difficult to argue that other traits such as integrity, honesty, altruism, communication skills and decisiveness are not qualities of a good leader. But leaders could not display these traits if they did not have personal courage. Paul displayed such courage before the Jews, Gentiles, and others during his ministry. He exemplified courage and a willingness to make the right decision even when it was not readily accepted by others.

Finally, we must recognize Paul’s humility in his leadership. A sense of humility is essential to leadership because it authenticates a person’s humanity. Humility is the only way to resolve current conflicts and contradictions of leadership. A leader can avoid excessive pride only if they recognize that they are human. We all have faults, but recognizing what we do well, as well as what we do not do as well, is vital to self-awareness and paramount to humility (Kouzes and Posner, 2007).

In global leadership some decisions should be made on fact and reason, and some decisions should be based on emotion. Wisdom is knowing what process is in the right place at the right time.
References:


Even though Paul was an apostle and one of the greatest missionaries the world has ever seen, he knew his own weakness and utterly depended upon God. Paul knew that he could not on his own make his ministry effective or escape from those seeking to destroy him; so he asked the church for prayer so God could intervene and do what he could not. This is why he often asked for prayer. A love for his brothers and sisters in Christ emanated from the Apostle Paul who was the spiritual father of many. Several times Paul showed his deep desire for fellowship and time with those he ministered to. Paul wrote in Romans 15:31-32, “Pray that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, so that by God’s will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.”