# PAUL’S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

***The Book Of Philippians***

Have you ever tried to sum up the life of a man who seemed larger than life?

Carl Sandberg wrote what many call the greatest biography of Abraham Lincoln ever written, and it took him six volumes to do it. *Lincoln*: *The Prairie Years* (2 Volumes), followed by the Pulitzer Prize winning *Lincoln: The War Years* (4 Volumes), beautifully described the great man who brought us through the Civil War and immortally said, *“that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”* It is surely worth reading, both to yourself and to your children, for Sandburg said he primarily wrote it for them.

Similar large biographies have been written on Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Winston Churchill and many others. I love biographies of great people. They inspire me.

But what about trying to sum up the life of the greatest evangelist for Christ who ever lived? How would you succinctly describe the life of the apostle Paul? We don’t have to wait for it to go to press. It is already written. Paul’s autobiography was written about 1,960 years ago (60 A.D.). It is found in the book of Philippians.

Take a look at his Table of Contents:

Christ – The Purpose of My Life (chapter 1)

Christ – The Pattern of My Life (chapter 2)

Christ – The Prize of My Life (chapter 3)

Christ – The Power of My Life (chapter 4)

**CHRIST: The Purpose Of My Life (Philippians 1:21-24)**

*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. … I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.*

He looked at life as a continuum. A journey. A destination. Christ was both the center and circumference of his life. When a man says, “to die is gain,” he is telling you death is not the end, but the beginning. Paul had found his life’s Purpose. Christ!

**CHRIST: The Pattern Of My Life (Philippians 2:5-8)**

*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus… and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Paul had taken on the mindset of Christ, using the Lord’s humility in giving up His position of power to sacrifice Himself as a servant for others. To confess Christ is to pattern one’s life after Him, thus becoming a servant of others (Matt. 10:28). Can you think of a greater servant than Paul? I want to be just like him (I Cor. 11:1).

**CHRIST: The *Prize* Of My Life (Phil. 3:13-14)**

*“…forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*.

Forgetting his past accomplishments (which were many), he never looks back, only forward. Jesus is “up there!” The goal, the prize, is an UPward call, not a backward glance. Forward, ever forward. Christ calls from heaven, “I’m here waiting for you.”

**CHRIST: The *Power* Of My Life (Phil. 4:12-13)**

*“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.* *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*.

In his former life as “the chief of sinners” Paul had determined to live by his own strength. But that providential rendezvous with Christ on the Damascus Road changed everything. He was done with living an impotent life, allowing Christ to now “*enable*” him (I Tim. 1:12), “*strengthen*” him (2 Tim. 4:17), and “*empower*” him (Eph. 6:10). From weakling to superman, his life would never be the same again.

Summary: Paul finished his autobiography with these challenging words:

*“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:9).*

Is it any wonder that we again and again hear Paul challenge us to look carefully at his life and to imitate him to the extent that you see him imitating Christ?

“*Imitate me even as I imitate Christ*” (I Cor. 11:1)
“*Therefore I urge you, imitate me*” (I Cor. 4:16)
“*Join in following my example… as you have us for a pattern*” (Phil. 3:16)
“*You became followers of us and of the Lord*” (I Thess. 1:6)
“*For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us… to make ourselves an example
 of how you should follow us*” (2 Thess. 3:7)
“*I obtained mercy that in me first Jesus might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to
 those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life*” (I Tim. 1:16)

Paul’s autobiography from his book of Philippians was supplemented by his twelve other books. In that incredible life the Holy Spirit has revealed to us a terrible sinner who became a saint, showing us that heaven is clearly within reach.

If I do what Paul did, I will go where Paul went. I will find the Purpose, the Pattern, the Prize, and the Power for my life, all in Christ!

Read Philippians, it would (or should) have won the Pulitzer Prize if given two millenniums ago. But then take Paul’s challenge. In my humble opinion it’s the best HOW TO book ever written to find real joy in life.

– Rick