

Call to Obedience #321  
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA  
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The Christian life can only operate out of abundance.

## **The Prototype Christian**

By Pastor Reimar A. C. Schultze

Today we shall discuss the prototype Christian. Let me first define prototype. A prototype is the original design, or model, from which copies are made. Obviously, if the original is perfect so will be the tenth copy and the one millionth copy, provided no one interferes with the process of the copying and the materials hold up.

Now, prototypes are used almost everywhere. They're used in printing, in the production of automobiles, tools, nails, etc. In the area of human resources, prototypes are called job descriptions and there is one for nearly every job. New employees must conform to the job description or else they will be doing the wrong job.

The question then naturally arises, is there a prototype Christian? Well, whether we like it or not, nearly every new convert to Jesus will unconsciously make some other Christian his prototype (generally the one who led him to Christ). The new convert soon adopts the habits, mannerisms, and the religious vocabulary of the one who bought him to Christ. If the prototype Christian goes to every church service, so will his convert; if he skips prayer meetings, so will his convert; if he indulges in light talk, so will his convert; if he spends Sunday afternoons glued to the television set watching sports, so will his convert. Oh, how sad it is that most churches have abandoned prayer meetings, most have taken in the entertainment spirit of the world, most are not led by the Holy Spirit making these churches poor soil for new converts to become like Jesus.

Today I call all of you to a divinely given master-prototype, a Biblical prototype of the Christian which should be copied by all. Now let me put this prototype into a Biblical showroom and you will see it is the apostle Paul. Who said, "*Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers (imitators) of me*" (1 Cor. 4:16). Paul here literally makes himself a prototype Christian for all to copy, like it or not. If you follow him, you shall die, even as he died, with these words on your lips, "*I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness...*" (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).

The Corinthian Christians served as a background for the divinely appointed prototype Christian. These Christians had gone astray in nearly every area of moral, social and spiritual conduct. There was incest in the church along with adultery, laziness, abuse of gifts, pride, etc. The Corinthians lacked a God-appointed and God-anointed prototype to be copied, followed, and imitated by all. So here, in his first letter to them, Paul, with divine apostolic authority, declares himself to be that anointed, irrefutable prototype

of what a Christian should be. *“Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers (imitators) of me.”*

Prior to this Paul says, you (Corinthians) may have ten thousand instructors- but in one way or another you all came out of my calling on the Damascus road, out of the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ that has been committed to me for the Church Universal. Then in the eleventh chapter he explains that Jesus made him the pattern, the prototype to be followed. Hence as he followed Christ, the image of Christ was so powerfully imprinted upon his soul that he could say unashamedly, “If you follow me, you follow Christ.” Then this apostle underscores this statement by saying, *“Brethren, be ye followers (imitators) together of me...and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”* Does this sound like, “Follow me and my **prototype?**” Be sure of this, friend: I am not trying to make this a doctrine, but a point of inspiration, which it indeed is meant to be. So enough now for the introduction: in Paul we have the prototype Christian, and whosoever follows that and imitates that, is *normal*. Everything else is abnormal, faulty, and grieves the Holy Spirit. So, here are a few *normal* things we find at the beginning of Paul’s conversion (Acts 9) and from then on. Keep remembering throughout, I am not talking about an aberration of God’s prototype but about the original itself.

1. It is normal for a new convert to make a full surrender in the hour in which he is born of God. Paul’s first response to Jesus was: “Lord, what wilt thou have me do?” That was Paul’s response for the rest of his life. Let this be your experience as well.
2. It is normal for a new convert to be satisfied with Jesus only. At his conversion Paul gained spiritual light, but he lost physical light. He was struck with blindness. Many Christians lightly say ‘All I need is Jesus’ or ‘Jesus is all the world to me’ but when they lose their eyesight or job, Jesus becomes less than all the world to them. That is abnormal. It does not fit our prototype. As far as we know, Jesus gave no explanation why Paul was struck with blindness, nor did He say whether it would be permanent or temporary. A surrendered life believes in the sovereignty and benevolence of God demonstrated by Jesus’ loving sacrifice. They know that God makes no mistakes. A normal Christian is so satisfied with Jesus’ presence that he needs no other blessings. Am I loosing you here? I hope not!
3. It is normal for a Christian to pray frequently. Ananias was Paul’s first Christian contact. He didn’t believe that Saul, persecutor of the Christians, had become one himself. So the Lord said to Ananias: *“Behold, he prayeth”*. If you pray frequently, that is normal. Read about Paul in the New Testament, you will see that he prayed frequently. The epitaph on his grave stone could have been “behold he prayeth.” He knew that he could do nothing without prayer. So it is with the Christian who heeds these words, *“Be ye followers of me.”* If we are not people of prayer in private, and we don’t frequently pray with other Christians, we are abnormal. We don’t have the spirit of Christ and we are none of His.

4. The normal Christian speaks with his mouth what he believes in his heart (Romans 10:9). In Paul's practical Christian theology, once you stop speaking about Jesus, your faith is dead. Jesus is more straightforward about this. He says, (if I may paraphrase Matt. 10:32), If you stop identifying yourself with Me publicly, when it comes to Judgment Day I shall not identify myself with you - you are a dead Christian. "*Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh*" (Matt. 12:34). Now reverse that: When the abundance in the heart is gone, the mouth stops speaking. Christian proclamation in the daily market place of life comes out of abundance. Abundance is in the prototype norm. The Christian life can only operate out of abundance. It says of Paul, the new convert: "*And straightly he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God*" (Acts 9:20).

Preaching is for everyone, both ministers and laity. When things got hot in Jerusalem, the preachers stayed behind. The laity was scattered abroad and '*went everywhere preaching the Word*' (Acts 8:4). If you did not start sharing Jesus when you were saved, and if you have not kept it up, you are not normal, you are not "*following Paul as he followed Christ*" you're following some un-anointed prototype.

5. The normal Christian suffers persecution. This is a paradox: the gospel heals and hurts; the gospel brings peace and conflict; it unites and divides. In Damascus, soon after Paul's conversion, "*the Jews took counsel to kill him*" (Acts 9:23). But, thank God, Paul's new brothers came at night and helped him to escape. Dear ones, stay close to your brothers, because you never know when you'll need them. Paul then preached in Jerusalem and the Jewish leaders there also tried to kill him. Remember, Jesus too was threatened at his first sermon. Brothers and sisters, when you speak to souls what they need to hear, there will be some who will want to harm you. Many American Christians say, "I am glad we have no persecution here." These Christians have such poor testimonies that they would not be persecuted in China, either. But for those who speak for Christ as Paul did, it is a different story. Some have lost their jobs or credentials, some have even lost their children. Some have been kicked out of churches, college classes, or etc. Christians in America are not persecuted because they are not following Christ's prototype. They only proclaim Jesus when it costs them nothing, where they won't get hurt. If Jesus or Paul were here preaching, they would be persecuted and possibly killed as martyrs. Yes, my friend, the normal Christian life is associated with persecution and suffering, but also with glorious conquests and rewarding intimacy with our Lord.

We need revival, and that is nothing but going back to the God-appointed and anointed prototype of the apostle Paul. It is a tragedy of unmitigated proportion that we have begun to call the normal abnormal, and the abnormal normal. Hopefully now, you know which is which.

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