

Paul the Pattern

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"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." ~ I Timothy 1:15-17

PAUL'S CONVERSION

Paul was saved in a very different way than we are. His was a salvation by direct divine intervention. Listen in part to Paul give an account of his conversion.

"And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' And I answered, 'Who art thou, Lord?' And He said unto me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom thou persecutest.' And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spoke to me ... And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus" (Acts 22:6-11).

Our Conversion

Is this the way that you were saved? Hardly. Saul, who later was called Paul, was an archenemy of God. It took the direct hand of God to stop him in his tracks and turn him around.

When Paul wrote to Timothy he said that his salvation was "a pattern" (i.e., a type, a picture); but it was not a pattern of our salvation. Our conversion in no way resembles his.

A closer look at what Paul actually said will reveal that he did not tell Timothy that his salvation was a pattern for ours. He says that his conversion was a pattern not for now, but for those who should “*hereafter believe.*”

Hereafter

A definition of “*hereafter*” found in the Webster’s Dictionary is “in a future state” (*American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828).

The Greek word is Strong’s Greek Lexicon #3195, *mello*. Here are some examples of how this same Greek word was translated elsewhere in the *King James Version*.

“... *Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath **to come** [mello]?*” (Matthew 3:7).

“... *Neither in this world, neither in the world **to come** [mello]*” (Matthew 12:32).

“... *Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath **to come** [mello]?*” (Luke 3:7).

“... *Nor things **to come** [mello]*” (Romans 8:38).

“... *Or things present, or things **to come** [mello]*” (I Corinthians 3:22).

“... *Not only in this world, but also in that which is **to come** [mello]*” (Ephesians 1:21).

“*Which are a shadow of things **to come** [mello] ...*” (Colossians 2:17).

“... *Having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is **to come** [mello]*” (I Timothy 4:8).

“*For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world **to come** [mello] ...*” (Hebrews 2:5).

“*And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world **to come** [mello]*” (Hebrews 6:5).

“*But Christ being come an high priest of good things **to come** [mello] ...*” (Hebrews 9:11).

“*For the law having a shadow of good things **to come** [mello] ...*” (Hebrews 10:1).

“*For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one **to come** [mello]*” (Hebrews 13:14).

Clearly the Greek word *mello* speaks of that which is “to come,” and the word “*hereafter*” in I Timothy 1:16 speaks of the “*hereafter*.”

Damascus Road Experience

Saul did not believe by simple faith (apart from sight). It took the “Damascus Road experience” to bring him to Christ. He met up with the resurrected Christ! Oh, the extent to which God will go to reach man! He is much less limited than we are in His evangelism.

Paul says that his salvation is a pattern for those who should believe “*hereafter*,” and this salvation shows forth all of God’s “*longsuffering*.”

Paul the Pattern of Things to Come

Paul is not only our Apostle in this current age of the Dispensation of the Grace of God, but he is God’s pattern, or type of the salvation of unbelievers after their death. The unbelieving, the obstinate, the oppressors, the enemies of God will all have a dramatic conversion, coming face-to-face with their Savior in the resurrection.

Like Saul, the real question is not really one of unbelief, but simply one of *timing*. All will eventually be brought to belief by their Creator, although not all in this lifetime. How have we made death the end of God’s grace and mercy? Some will be saved by pure “*faith*” without sight. With others it will take “*sight*” to believe.

Blessed Are They Who Have Not Seen, and yet Have Believed

For those of us who have the privilege of believing now, we are indeed greatly blessed. We are taught this from another account in the Scriptures. It is in the record of “doubting Thomas.” Listen to what Thomas, the apostle said.

“The other disciples therefore said unto him [Thomas], ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said unto them, ‘Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe’” (John 20:25).

Now listen to the response of our Lord Jesus Christ to Thomas.

“Then saith He to Thomas, ‘Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing.’ And Thomas answered and said unto Him, ‘My Lord and my God.’ Jesus saith unto him, ‘Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’” (John 20:27-29).

Jesus said that Thomas believed by sight – “*Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed.*” He goes on to say, “*blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*”

The First Trusters

Those of us today who believe by simple faith (apart from sight) are but the first trusters.

“That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ” (Ephesians 1:12).

Do not be discouraged as you look around you. What you see is not the end of God’s plan and purpose. Granted, the world is filled with sin and unbelief; but God is not yet done. Don’t judge the final outcome by the current state of things. This is not the finished product of God.

Those of us who now trust the Lord Jesus Christ are but the beginning of God’s glorious work. We are but the first trusters in His glorious design.

The Firstfruits of the Harvest

*“... My wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is **the firstfruits** of Achaia unto Christ”* (Romans 16:5).

*“Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be **a kind of firstfruits of His creatures**”* (James 1:18).

*“... These were redeemed from among men, being **the firstfruits unto God** and to the Lamb”* (Revelation 14:4).

In every harvest there is that small portion of the crop that matures early, before the vast majority of the rest. The firstfruits are a token of that which is to come – the full harvest.

Under the Old Testament economy the firstfruits belonged to God, and were holy unto Him.

In every generation and in every place, God has had His firstfruits; those that come to harvest earlier than the rest. We are blessed of God to be the firstfruits of God’s full harvest. We will enjoy the First Resurrection; but this does not exclude the rest of creation, who are awaiting our manifestation:

“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God” Romans 8:19).

What a blessed privilege to be the first trusters – the firstfruits of the Lord. Just as God has brought us to faith, He too will bring the rest of His creation.

Not Saved after Paul’s Pattern

None of us in the Dispensation of Grace were saved after the pattern of Paul; but *“them which*

should hereafter believe on Him” will see “a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun.” They will come into the presence of the resurrected Son of God and will with Saul call Him Lord.

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10).

This confession that Jesus Christ is Lord can only be the work of the Holy Spirit!

“... No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (I Corinthians 12:3).

The Victorious God

Reflecting upon the two examples of Thomas and Paul, we come to realize that God does directly and miraculously intervene in the faith of some individuals, by giving them sight experience for their faith. God will not deny this experience to the precious multitudes of His creation. Christendom has missed a key ingredient in the understanding of God, His love, and His will.

It is God’s will that *all* men be saved (I Timothy 2:4). God does *all things* after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11). His love will never fail (I Corinthians 13:8).

He will not lose any of His creatures. He will be victorious in all for all eternity. He will be “*all in all.*”

Just as God subdued Saul on the Damascus road, He shall subdue all things unto Himself.

*“And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be **all in all**”* (I Corinthians 15:28).

Taken from chapter 9 of *The Salvation of All: Creation’s Final Destination* (A Biblical Look at Universal Reconciliation). Available from StudyShelf.com for \$16.⁹⁵ (+\$3.²⁵ s&h).

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