

Was Saul Saved as a Pattern for Believers Today?

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

“And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, 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” (I Timothy 1:12-16).

In this passage the Apostle Paul explains *why* the Lord saved *him*, the chief of sinners. It was that He might make him, Paul, the pattern of His longsuffering to those who should thereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.

Some have objected that Saul’s salvation could not have been a pattern of ours since he was saved by the revelation of Christ to him, was baptized to wash away his sins and had his eyes opened by a miracle. In all this, it is said, Saul’s conversion was typical of Israel’s. She too will be saved by the revelation of Christ to her, will be “sprinkled with clean water” and “be clean,” and will have her spiritual eyes miraculously opened.

It is further brought out that the risen Lord was seen by Saul “*as of one born out of* [Lit. *before the*]

due time” (I Cor. 15:8). Since Israel’s conversion is admittedly still future, Saul’s conversion is said to be typical of hers and not of ours.

We do not deny—we heartily agree—that Saul’s conversion *was* typical of Israel’s for the reasons stated above, but perhaps those who contend that *therefore* he is *not* our pattern in salvation have overlooked the fact that as one born “*out of*,” or *before* the due time he has a closer relationship to us than he has to Israel. Let us ask a few questions to help make this clear:

When, as far as prophecy is concerned, is the *due time* for Israel to be saved; past, present or future? The answer, of course, is *future*. And when is the *due time* for the Gentiles to be saved? Also future, for the Gentiles, according to prophecy, were (and are) to be saved *through Israel* (Gen. 22:17,18; Zech. 8:13, etc.).

Therefore, when a Jew today believes and becomes a member of the Body of Christ, is he saved *in* or *out of* due time? on the basis of covenants and promises, or by grace? according to prophecy, or according to the mystery revealed through Paul? Likewise, when a Gentile today believes and becomes a member of the Body of Christ, is he saved *in* or *out of* due time? on the basis of covenants and promises, or by grace? according to prophecy or according to the mystery revealed through Paul? The answers to these questions are obvious. Both Jews and Gentiles today are saved by grace according to the mystery revealed through Paul, entirely apart from any covenant or promise.

There is another respect in which Paul sustains a closer relationship to us than he does to Israel. He was a *born Hebrew* (Phil. 3:5) and a *born Roman* (Acts 22:27,28) in *one person*. He had been Christ's bitterest enemy on earth but had been *reconciled* by grace. In this he surely represents *Jews and Gentiles of this dispensation* who have been reconciled to God in *one Body* by the Cross (Eph. 2:16).

As to his vision of Christ, his baptism and the miraculous opening of his eyes, the Apostle does not say that *in these* he is our pattern. What he says is that the Lord *saved* him, the chief of sinners, and *showed forth all longsuffering* to him for a pattern to those who should thereafter believe on Christ. The details attending his salvation belonged to the dispensation under which he was saved, not to that which he was now to usher in.

The argument in I Timothy 1:12-16, then, is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*, and Paul was the great living demonstration of this fact, for *he*, the "*chief*" of sinners, leading the world in rebellion against Christ, had been gloriously saved. Jesus Christ had showed all longsuffering to him as a pattern of the longsuffering He has been showing ever since to sinners who trust Him for salvation.

—Cornelius R. Stam

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PAUL

A Pattern?

