

Paul as a Pattern

Acts 26; 1 Timothy 1.

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Part Fourth. LATER MINISTRY.

The apostle Paul is the pattern of all who are called and converted now, though they may not come up to the pattern. All the feebleness of Christian life is traceable to want of perfectness of foundation; it is not according to the pattern. A great many saints who are wishing to get on, and do not, would find out why, if they would compare their foundation with the pattern. They are satisfied with an acquisition that meets their own necessities. That is a poor thing. I want to reach that which it is the mind and purpose of the living God to give me. Paul and Paul's gospel are the pattern of that. You become partakers of the grace that would make you up to the pattern, or you are not a Christian at all. That grace, if you did not hinder it, would work you up to it.

Turn to Acts, and you will see what Paul was appointed to do — to be a minister and witness of those things which he had seen. On his way to Damascus a light shines suddenly round him, and Jesus was revealed to him in the glory. That is what he had seen — Jesus in the glory. Simple it is; but its reception involved the most wondrous consequences. We all admit that man is naturally at a distance from God; not on terms of intimacy, and that he ought to be. Nothing is so condemnatory to man, the first creature of God on earth. A conscience awakened wants that distance removed, and the first thought is that of Cain, "I must repair it." Of course the offender is the one who ought to do so; but he cannot. It must be done by one not under the penalty which is on him. God can do it through the intervention of Christ; but the intervention even of Christ must be from God's side, not man's.

Do you understand the nature and object of God? Christ came out to declare it; Satan has been trying to darken the knowledge of God from the beginning. Until you know what God is in His own essential nature, you are not on the right foundation. Having to do with God in His own nature is the only solid, unshifting foundation for a soul. The only-begotten Son He hath declared Him — disclosed an unknown subject, the heart of God. God in His own nature is essentially Love. Who knew it? No one but His own Son, and He came to do His will, and He knew His heart towards poor lost sinners in the world. And what was His will? That His heart should be set free to take His prodigals to His arms to express itself in its own mighty love. He was found in fashion as a man, and as the exponent of the heart of God He carried out His love, which was a love for ever. Like the good Samaritan, he to whom He became neighbour, needed no other neighbour after He took the whole charge of him. Now God is free in the strength of righteousness to open His heart.

God gives me the gift of eternal life; not merely does He bring me to heaven, but that gift is the expression of the love of God. The glory is opened, and the One who has accomplished the purpose of God in redemption is seen in it. God's satisfaction for sin altogether is thus revealed to Paul, and the glory shone out on Paul, and not a word is said of the sort of man he had been. Had he continued under the law, that glory would have destroyed him. But in another place he says, that the more he looked into it, the more like it he grew. Remember Paul is the pattern, and we have to look at Jesus as Paul saw Him. Everyone of you who knows Him at all, knows Him in the glory, for it is there He is. There is not a particle of light that has reached the soul that is not the light of the glory of God. We ought to have

the sense of it; but whether we know it, or not, does not change the wondrous fact. What is the gospel? Why, that you have a Saviour in the glory. Where get full satisfaction for your souls? Go to the glory; for you have a Saviour there, and only there. If Christ had done only all that was required of me it would have been but human righteousness; but He did the Father's whole will, and finished His work. (See John 4) It was God's work that that poor woman should be saved. We have such a low idea of what the gospel is. We think it is merely that Christ has come to save from judgment. That is not it; but God desired to have such as I am in the very nearest circle of glory to Himself, and that none but Christ could bring it about, and He was ready to do it. After, as well as in his conversion, Paul was a pattern (Phil. 3); he wanted to get back to the sphere of the glory which he had seen. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Where my spiritual history began, there it ends.

The Lord grant that your hearts may be exercised to know what God is in Himself. His heart has been satisfied to the full by His own Son. It is easy for me to travel into all the regions of the glory of God, if I have entered it from the right side, the love of God. All Christian truth is compromised if you have not the full foundation. The Lord rests in the magnitude of His love.