

## Paul As a Pattern Convert

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"However for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." *1 Timothy 1:16*.

IT is a vulgar error that the conversion of the Apostle Paul was an uncommon and exceptional event and that we cannot expect men to be saved now-a-days after the same fashion. It is said that the incident was an exception to all rules, a wonder altogether by itself. Now, my text is a flat contradiction to that notion, for it assures us that, instead of the Apostle as a receiver of the long-suffering and mercy of God being at all an exception to the rule, he was a model convert, and is to be regarded as a type and pattern of God's Grace in other Believers. The Apostle's language in the text, "for a pattern," may mean that he was what printers call a first proof, an early impression from the engraving, a specimen of those to follow. He was the typical instance of Divine long-suffering, the model after which others are fashioned. To use a metaphor from the artist's studio, Paul was the ideal sketch of a convert, an outline of the work of Jesus on mankind, a picture of Divine long-suffering. Just as artists make sketches in charcoal as the basis of their work—which outlines they paint out as the picture proceeds—so did the Lord, in the Apostle's case, make, as it were, a picture or outline sketch of His usual work of Grace. That outline, in the case of each future Believer, He works out with infinite variety of skill and produces the individual Christian, but the guiding lines are really there. All conversions are, in a high degree, similar to this pattern conversion. The transformation of persecuting Saul of Tarsus into the Apostle Paul is a typical instance of the work of Grace in the heart.

We will have no other preface, but proceed at once to two or three considerations. The first is that— I. IN THE CONVERSION OF PAUL, THE LORD HAD AN EYE TO OTHERS, AND IN THIS PAUL IS A PATTERN.

In every case the individual is saved, not for himself, alone, but with a view to the good of others. Those who think the Doctrine of Election to be harsh should not deny it, for it is Scriptural—but they may to their own minds soften some of its hardness by remembering that elect men bear a marked connection with the race. The Jews, as an elect people, were chosen in order to preserve the oracles of God for all nations and for all times. Men personally elected unto eternal life by Divine Grace are also elected that they may become chosen vessels to bear the name of Jesus unto others. While our Lord is said to be the Savior especially of them that believe, He is also called the Savior of all men—and while He has a special eye to

the good of the one person whom He has chosen—yet through that person He has designs of love to others—perhaps even to thousands yet unborn!

The Apostle Paul says, "I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe." Now, I think I see very clearly that Paul's conversion had an immediate relation to the conversion of many others. It had a tendency, had it not, to excite an interest in the minds of his brother Pharisees? Men of his class, men of culture, who were equally at home with the Greek philosophers and with the Jewish rabbis, men of influence, men of rank, would be sure to enquire, "What is this new religion which has fascinated Saul of Tarsus? That zealot for Judaism has now become a zealot for Christianity—what can there be in it?" I say that the natural tendency of his conversion was to awaken inquiry and thought and so to lead others of his rank to become Believers. And, my dear Friend, if you have been saved, you ought to regard it as a token of God's mercy to your class. If you are a working man, let your salvation be a blessing to the men with whom you labor. If you are a person of rank and station, consider that God intends to bless you to some with whom you are on familiar terms. If you are young, hope that God will bless the youth around you. And if you have come to older years, hope that your conversion, even at the eleventh hour, may be the means of encouraging other aged pilgrims to seek and find rest unto their souls. The Lord, by calling

one out of any society of men, finds for Himself a recruiting officer who will enlist his fellows beneath the banner of the Cross! May not this fact encourage some seeking soul to hope that the Lord may save him, though he is the only thoughtful person in all his family—and then make him to be the means of salvation to all his kindred?

We notice that Paul often used the narrative of his conversion as an encouragement to others. He was not ashamed to tell his own life story. Eminent soul-winners, such as Whitefield and Bunyan, frequently pleaded God's mercy to themselves as an argument with their fellow men. Though great preachers of another school, such as Robert Hall and Chalmers, do not mention themselves at all, and I can admire their abstinence, yet I am persuaded that if some of us were to follow their example, we would be throwing away one of the most powerful weapons of our warfare! What can be more affecting, more convincing, more overwhelming, than the story of Divine Grace told by the very man who has experienced it? It is better than a dozen tales of converted Africans and infinitely more likely to win men's hearts than the most elaborate essays upon moral excellence! Again and again, Paul gave a long narrative of his conversion, for he felt it to be one of the most telling things that he could relate.

Whether he stood before Felix or Agrippa, this was his plea for the Gospel. All through his Epistles there are continual mentions of the Grace of God towards himself—and we may be sure that the Apostle did right to argue thus from his own case—it is fair and forcible reasoning and ought by no means to be left unused because of a selfish dread of being called

egotistical! God intends that we should use our conversion as an encouragement to others and say to them, "Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what He has done for my soul." We point to our own forgiveness and say, "Do but trust in the living Redeemer and you shall find, as we have done, that Jesus blots out the transgressions of Believers."

Paul's conversion was an encouragement to him all his life long to have hope for others. Have you ever read the first Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans? Well, the man who penned those terrible verses might very naturally have written at the end of them, "Can these monsters be reclaimed? It can be of no use whatever to preach the Gospel to people so sunken in vice." That one Chapter gives as daring an outline as delicacy would permit of the nameless, shameful vices into which the heathen world had plunged! And yet, after all, Paul went forth to declare the Gospel to that filthy and corrupt generation, believing that God meant to save a people out of it! Surely one element of his hope for humanity must have been found in the fact of his own salvation—he considered himself to be, in some respects, as bad as the heathen, and in other respects even worse! He calls himself the foremost of sinners (that is the word) and he speaks of God having saved him foremost, that in him He might show forth all long-suffering. Paul never doubted the possibility of the conversion of a person, however infamous, after he had himself been converted! This strengthened him in battling with the fiercest opponents—He who overcame such a wild beast as I was can also tame others and bring them into willing captivity to His love!

There was yet another relation between Paul's conversion and the salvation of others, and it was this—It served as an impulse, driving him forward in his lifework of bringing sinners to Christ. "I obtained mercy," he said, "and that same Voice which spoke peace to me said, "I have made you a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name among the Gentiles." And he did bear it, my Brothers and Sisters! Going into regions beyond that he might not build on another man's foundation, he became a master builder for the Church of God. How indefatigably did he labor! With what vehemence did he pray! With what energy did he preach! Slander and contempt he bore with the utmost patience. Scourging or stoning had no terrors for him. Imprisonment, yes, death itself, he defied—nothing could daunt him! Because the Lord had saved him, he felt that he must, by all means, save some. He could not be quiet. Divine love was in him like a fire and if he had been silent, he would, before long, have had to cry with the Prophet of old, "I am weary with restraining." He is the man who said, "Necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." Paul, the extraordinary sinner, was saved that he might be full of extraordinary zeal and bring multitudes to eternal life! Well could he say—

"The love of Christ does me constrain

To seek the wandering souls of men! With cries, entreaties, tears to save,

To snatch them from the fiery wave.

My life, my blood, I here present,

If for Your Truth they may be spent!  
Fulfill Your Sovereign counsel, Lord!  
Your will be done, Your name adored!"

Now, I will pause here a minute to ask a question. You profess to be converted, my dear Friend. What relation has your conversion already had to other people? It ought to have a very apparent one. Has it had such? Mr. Whitefield said that when his heart was renewed, his first desire was that his companions with whom he had previously wasted his time might be brought to Christ. It was natural and commendable that he should begin with them. Remember how one of the Apostles, when he discovered the Savior, went immediately to tell his brother? It is most fitting that young people should spend their first religious enthusiasm upon their brothers and sisters. As to converted parents, their first responsibility is in reference to their sons and daughters. Upon each renewed man, his natural affinities, or the bonds of friendship or the looser ties of neighborhood should begin to operate at once, and each one should feel, "No man lives unto himself."

If Divine Grace has kindled a fire in you, it is that your fellow men may burn with the same flame! If the eternal fount has filled you with Living Water, it is that out of the midst of you should flow rivers of Living Water! You are blessed that you may bless—whom have you blessed? Let the question go round. Do not avoid it. This is the best return that you can make to God—that when He saves you, you should seek to be the instruments in His hands of saving others! What have you done? Did you ever speak with the friend who shares your pew? He has been sitting there for a long time and may, perhaps, be an unconverted person—have you pointed him to the Lamb of God? Have you ever spoken to your servants about their souls? Have you broken the ice sufficiently to speak to your own sister, or your own brother? Do begin, dear Friend.

You cannot tell what mysterious threads connect you with your fellow men and their destiny. There was a cobbler once, as you know, in Northamptonshire. Who could see any connection between him and the millions of India? But the love of God was in his bosom and Carey could not rest till, at Serampore, he had commenced to translate the Word of God and preach to his fellow men! We must not confine our thoughts to the few whom Carey brought to Christ, though to save one soul is worthy of a life of sacrifice—but Carey became the forerunner and leader of a missionary band which will never cease to labor till India bows before Immanuel! That man mysteriously drew, is drawing and will draw India to the Lord Jesus Christ! Brother, you do not know what your power is! Awake and try it!

Did you never read this passage—"You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him"? Now, the Lord has given to His Son power over all flesh, and with a part of that power Jesus clothes His servants. Through you, He will give eternal life to certain of His chosen—by you and by no other means will they be brought to Himself! Look about you, regenerate man! Your life may be made sublime.

Awaken yourself! Begin to think of what God may do by you! Calculate the possibilities which lie before you with the eternal God as your helper! Shake yourself from the dust and put on the beautiful garments of disinterested love to others and it shall yet be seen how grandly gracious God has been to hundreds of men by having converted you!

So far, then, Paul's salvation, because it had so clear a reference to others, was a pattern of all conversions. Now, secondly—

II. PAUL'S FOREMOST POSITION AS A SINNER DID NOT PREVENT HIS BECOMING FOREMOST IN

GRACE AND, HEREIN, AGAIN, HE IS A PATTERN TO US.

Foremost in sin, he became also foremost in service! Saul of Tarsus was a blasphemer and he is to be commended because he has not recorded any of those blasphemies. We can never object to converted burglars and chimney-sweepers of whom we hear so much, telling the story of their conversion. But when they go into dirty details, they had better hold their tongues! Paul tells us that he was a blasphemer, but he never repeats one of the blasphemies. We invent enough evil in our own hearts without being told of other men's stale profanities. If, however, any of you are so curious as to want to know what kind of blasphemies Paul could utter, you have only to converse with a converted Jew and he will tell you what horrible words some of his nation will speak against our Lord! I have no doubt that Paul, in his evil state, thought as wickedly of Christ as he could—considered Him to be an imposter, called Him so, and added many an opprobrious epithet. He does not say of himself that he was an unbeliever and an objector, but he says that he was a blasphemer, which is a very strong word, but not too strong, for the Apostle never went beyond the truth. He was a downright, thoroughgoing blasphemer who also caused others to blaspheme. Will these lines meet the eye of a profane person who feels the greatness of his sin? May God grant that he may be encouraged to seek mercy as Saul of Tarsus did, for "all manner of sin and blasphemy" does He forgive unto men!

From blasphemy, which was the sin of the lips, Saul proceeded to persecution, which is a sin of the hands. Hating Christ, he hated His people, too. He was delighted to give his vote for the death of Stephen—and he took care of the clothes of those who stoned that martyr. He hauled men and women to prison and compelled them to blaspheme. When he had hunted all Judea as closely as he could, he obtained letters to go to Damascus, that he might do the same in that place. His prey had been compelled to quit Jerusalem and flee to more remote places, but "being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them unto strange cities." He was foremost in blasphemy and persecution! Will a persecutor read or hear these words? If so, may he be led to see that even for him, pardon is possible! Jesus, who said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," is still an intercessor for the most violent of His enemies!

He adds, next, that he was injurious, which, I think, Bengel considers to mean that he was a despiser. That eminent critic says—blasphemy was his sin towards God, persecution was his sin towards the Church, and despising was his sin in his own heart. He was injurious—that is, he did all he could to damage the cause of Christ and he thereby injured himself. He kicked against the pricks and injured his own conscience. He was so determined against Christ that he counted no cost too great by which he might hinder the spread of the faith! And he did hinder it terribly—he was a ringleader in resisting the Spirit of God which was then working with the Church of Christ. He was foremost in opposition to the Cross of Christ!

Now, notice that he was saved as a pattern, which is to show you that if you also have been foremost in sin, you also may obtain mercy as Paul did! And to show you yet again that if you have not been foremost, the Grace of God, which is able to save the chief of sinners, can assuredly save those who are of less degree! If the bridge of Grace will carry the elephant, it will certainly carry the mouse! If the mercy of God could bear with the greatest sinners, it can have patience with you! If a gate is wide enough for a giant to pass through, any ordinary-sized mortal will find space enough. Despair's head is cut off and stuck on a pole by the salvation of "the chief of sinners." No man can now say that he is too great a sinner to be saved—because the chief of sinners was saved 1,800 years ago! If the ringleader, the chief of the gang, has been washed in the precious blood and is now in Heaven, why not I? Why not you?

After Paul was saved, he became a foremost saint. The Lord did not allot him a second-class place in the Church. He had been the leading sinner, but his Lord did not, therefore, say, "I save you, but I shall always remember your wickedness to your disadvantage." Not so! He counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry and into the Apostleship, so that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles! Brother, there is no reason why, if you have gone very far in sin, you should not go equally far in usefulness! On the contrary, there is a reason why you should do so, for it is a rule of Grace that to whom much is forgiven, the same loves much—and much love leads to much service. What man was more clear in his knowledge of Doctrine than Paul?

What man more earnest in the defense of the Truth of God? What man more self-sacrificing? What man more heroic? The name of Paul in the Christian Church stands, in some respects, very next to the Lord Jesus! Turn to the New Testament and see how large a space is occupied by the Holy Spirit speaking through His servant Paul! And then look over Christendom and see how greatly the man's influence is still felt—and must be felt till his Master shall come! Oh, great sinner, if you are even now ready to scoff at Christ, my prayer is that He may strike you down at this very moment and turn you into one of His children—and make you to be just as ardent for the Truth as you are now earnest against it, as desperately set on good as now you are on evil! None make such mighty Christians and

such fervent preachers as those who are lifted up from the lowest depths of sin and washed and purified through the blood of Jesus Christ! May Grace do this with you, my dear Friend, whoever you may be.

Thus we gather from our text that the Lord showed mercy to Paul. That in him, first, it might be seen that prominence in sin is no barrier to eminence in Grace, but the very reverse! Now I come to where the stress of the text lies.

### III. PAUL'S CASE WAS A PATTERN OF OTHER CONVERSIONS AS AN INSTANCE OF LONG-SUFFERING.

"That in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe." Thoughtfully observe the great long-suffering of God to Paul. He says, "He showed forth all long-suffering." Not only all the long-suffering of God that ever was shown to anybody else, but all that could be supposed to exist—all long-suffering—

"All Your mercy's height I prove, All its depth is found in me,"

as if he had gone to the utmost stretch of his tether in sin—and the Lord had strained His long-suffering to its utmost!

That long-suffering was seen, first, in sparing his life when he was rushing headlong in sin, breathing out threats, foaming at the mouth with denunciations of the Nazarene and His people. If the Lord had but lifted His finger, Saul would have been crushed like a moth! But Almighty Wrath forbore and the rebel lived on. Nor was this all—after all his sin, the Lord allowed mercy to be possible to him. He blasphemed and persecuted at a red-hot rate—and is it not a mar-

vel that the Lord did not say, "Now, at last, you have gone beyond all bearing, and you shall die like Herod, eaten of worms"? It would not have been at all amazing if God had so sentenced him. But He allowed him to live within the reach of mercy and, better still, He in due time actually sent the Gospel to him and laid it home to his heart. In the very midst of his rebellion the Lord saved him! He had not prayed to be converted, far from it! No doubt he had that very day along the road to Damascus profaned the Savior's name and yet mighty mercy burst in and saved him purely by its own spontaneous native energy! Oh mighty Grace, Free Grace, victorious Grace ! This was long-suffering indeed!

When Divine Mercy had called Paul, it swept all his sin away, every particle of it—his blood shedding and his blasphemy, all at once, so that never man was more assured of his own perfect cleansing than was the Apostle! "There is therefore now," he says, "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" You know how clear he was about that— and he spoke out of his own experience! Long-suffering had washed all his sins away. Then that long-suffering, reaching from the depths of sin, lifted him right up to the Apostleship, so that he began to prove God's long-suffering in its heights of favor.

What a privilege it must have been to him to be permitted to preach the Gospel! I should think sometimes when he was preaching most earnestly, he would half stop himself and say, "Paul, is this you?" Especially when he went down to Tarsus, he must have been surprised at himself and at the mighty mercy of God. He preached the faith which once he had destroyed! He must have said many a time after a sermon, when he went home to his bedchamber, "Marvel of marvels! Wonder of wonders, that I who once could curse have now been made to preach—that I, who was full of threats and even breathed out slaughter, should now be so Inspired by the Spirit of God that I weep at the very sound of Jesus' name and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord!"

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you do not measure long-suffering unless you take it in all its length from one end to the other and see God in mercy not remembering His servant's sin, but lifting him into eminent service in His Church. Now, this was for a pattern, to show you that He will show forth the same long-suffering to those who believe! If you have been a swearer, He will cleanse your blackened mouth and put His praises into it! Have you had a black, cruel heart, full of enmity to Jesus? He will remove it and give you a new heart and a right spirit! Have you dived into all sorts of sins? Are they so shameful that you dare not think of them? Think of the precious blood which removes every stain! Are your sins so many that you cannot count them? Do you feel as if you were almost damned already in the very memory of your life? I do not wonder at it, but He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! You have not gone farther than Saul had gone and, therefore, all long-suffering can come to you and there are great possibilities of future holiness and usefulness before you! Even though you may have been a street-walker or a thief, yet if the Grace of God cleanses you, it can make something wonderful out of you! Full many a lustrous jewel of Immanuel's crown has been taken from the dunghill! You are a rough block of stone, but Jesus can fashion and polish you and set you as a pillar in His Temple!

Brother, do not despair! See what Saul was and what Paul became—and learn what you may be! Though you deserve the depths of Hell, yet Grace can lift you up to the heights of Heaven! Though now you feel as if the fiends of Hell would be fit companions for such a lost spirit as yourself, yet believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall one day walk among the angels as pure and white as they! Paul's experience of long-suffering Grace was meant to be a pattern of what God will do for you—

"Scripture says, 'Where sin abounded, There did Grace much more abound.' Thus has Satan been confounded, And his own discomfit found. Christ has triumphed! Spread the glorious news around! Sin is strong, but Grace is stronger! Christ than Satan more supreme! Yield, oh, yield to sin no longer, Turn to Jesus, yield to Him— He has triumphed! Sinners, henceforth Him esteem."

Again—



V. THE MODE OF PAUL'S CONVERSION WAS ALSO MEANT TO BE A PATTERN.

And with this I shall

finish. I do not say that we may expect to receive the miraculous Revelation which was given to Paul, but yet it is a sketch

upon which any conversion can be painted. The filling up is not the same in any two cases, but the outline sketch. Paul's conversion would serve for an outline sketch of the conversion of any one of us. How was that conversion worked? Well, it is clear that there was nothing at all in Paul to contribute to his salvation. You might have sifted him in a sieve without finding anything upon which you could rest a hope that he would be converted to the faith of Jesus! His natural bent, his early training, his whole surroundings and his life's pursuits all lettered him to Judaism and made it most unlikely that he would ever become a Christian. The first Elder of the Church that ever talked to him about Divine things could hardly believe in his conversion. "Lord," he said, "I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem." He could hardly think it possible that the ravaging wolf could have changed into a lamb! Nothing favorable to faith in Jesus could have been found in Saul—the soil of his heart was very rocky, the plow could not touch it and the good Seed found no root-hold. Yet the Lord converted Saul and He can do the same by other sinner, but it must be a work of pure Grace and of Divine power, for there is not in any man's fallen nature a holy spot the size of a pin's point on which Grace can light! Transforming Grace can find no natural lodging in our hearts—it must create its own soil and, blessed be God, it can do it, for with God all things are possible! Nature contributes nothing to Grace and yet Grace wins the day! Humbled Soul, let this cheer you! Though there is nothing good in you, yet Grace can work wonders and save you by its own might!

Paul's conversion was an instance of Divine power and of that alone, and so is every true conversion. If your conversion is an instance of the preacher's power, you need to be converted again! If your salvation is the result of your own power, it is a miserable deception from which may you be delivered! Every man who is saved must be operated upon by the might of God the Holy Spirit—every jot and tittle of true regeneration is the Spirit's work! As for our strength, it wars against salvation rather than for it. Blessed is that promise, "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power." Conversion is as much a work of God's Omnipotence as the Resurrection—and as the dead do not raise themselves, so neither do men convert themselves!

But Saul was changed immediately. His conversion was once done and done at once. There was a little interval before he found peace, but even during those three days, he was a changed man, though he was in sadness. He was under the power of Satan at one moment and in the next he was under the reign of Grace! This is also true in every conversion. However gradual the breaking of the day, there is a time when the sun is below the horizon and a moment when it is no longer so. You may not know the exact time in which you

passed from death to life, but there was such a time, if you are, indeed, a Believer! A man may not know how old he is, but there was a moment in which he was born. In every conversion there is a distinct change from darkness to light, from death to life, just as certainly as there was in Paul's. And what a delightful hope does the rapidity of regeneration present to us! It is by no long and laborious process that we escape from sin! We are not compelled to remain in sin for a single moment. Grace brings instantaneous liberty to those who sit in bondage. He who trusts Jesus is saved on the spot! Why, then, abide in death? Why not lift up your eyes to immediate life and light?

Paul proved his regeneration by his faith He believed unto eternal life. He tells us over and over again in his Epistles that he was saved by faith, and not by works. So is it with every man! If saved at all, it is by simply believing in the Lord Jesus. Paul esteemed his own works to be less than nothing and called them dross and dung, that he might win Christ, and so every converted man renounces his own works that he may be saved by Grace alone. Whether he has been moral or immoral. Whether he has lived an amiable and excellent life, or whether he has raked in the kennels of sin, every regenerate man has only one hope—and that is centered and fixed in Jesus alone! Faith in Jesus Christ is the mark of salvation, even as the heaving of the lungs or the coming of breath from the nostrils is the test of life. Faith is the Grace which saves the soul and its absence is a fatal sign. How does this fact affect you, dear Friend? Have you faith or no?

Paul was very positively and evidently saved. You did not need to ask the question, "Is that man a Christian or not?" for the transformation was most apparent! If Saul of Tarsus had appeared as he used to be, and Paul the Apostle could also have come in, and you could have seen the one man as two men, you would have thought them no relation to one another. Paul the Apostle would have said that he was dead to Saul of Tarsus, and Saul of Tarsus would have gnashed his teeth at Paul the Apostle! The change was evident to all who knew him, whether they sympathize in it or not. They could not mistake the remarkable difference which Grace had made, for it was as great as when midnight brightens into noon. So it is when a man is truly saved—there is a change which those around him must perceive. Do not tell me that you can be a child at home and become a Christian, and yet your father and mother will not perceive a difference in you! They will be sure to see it. Would a leopard in a menagerie lose his spots and no one notice it? Would an Ethiopian be

turned white and no one hear of it? You, masters and mistresses, will not go in and out among your servants and children without their perceiving a change in you if you are born-again! At least, dear Brother or Sister, strive with all your might to let the change be very apparent in your language, in your actions and in your whole conduct. Let your conversation be such as becomes the Gospel of Christ, that men may see that you, as well as the Apostle, are decidedly changed by the renewal of your minds!

May all of us be the subjects of Divine Grace as Paul was—stopped in our mad career, blinded by the glory of the heavenly Light of God, called by a mysterious Voice, conscious of natural blindness, relieved of blinding scales and made to see Jesus as one All-in-All. May we prove in our own persons how speedily conviction may melt into conversion, conversion into confession and confession into consecration!

I have done when I have enquired how far we are conformed to the pattern which God has set before us. I know we are like Paul as to our sin, for if we have neither blasphemed nor persecuted, yet have we sinned as far as we have had opportunity. We are also conformed to Paul's pattern in the great long-suffering of God which we have experienced. And I am not sure that we cannot carry the parallel farther—we have had much the same Revelation that Paul received on the way to Damascus, for we, too, have learned that Jesus is the Christ! If any of us sin against Christ, it will not be because we do not know Him to be the Son of God, for we all believe in His Deity because our Bibles tell us so. The pattern goes so far—I would that the Grace of God would operate upon you, unconverted Friend, and complete the picture by giving you like faith with Paul. Then will you be saved as Paul was! Then, also, will you love Christ above all things, as Paul did, and you will say, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." He rested upon what Christ had done in His death and Resurrection, and he found pardon and eternal life at once and became, therefore, a devoted Christian!

What do you say, dear Friend? Are you moved to follow Paul's example? Does the Spirit of God prompt you to trust Paul's Savior and give up every other ground of trust and rely upon Him? Then do so and live! Does there seem to be a hand holding you back and do you hear an evil whisper saying, "You are too great a sinner"? Turn round and bid the fiend depart, for the text gives him the lie. "In me, first, has Jesus Christ showed forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on His name." God has saved Paul. Back, then, O devil! The Lord can save any man, woman or child and He can save me! Jesus Christ of Nazareth is mighty to save and I will rely on Him. If any poor heart shall reason thus, its logic will be sound and unanswerable. Mercy to one is an argument for mercy to another, for there is no difference, but the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him!

Now I have set the case before you and I cannot do more. It remains with each individual to accept or refuse. One man can bring a horse to the trough, but a hundred cannot make him drink. There is the Gospel—if you want it, take it—but if you will not have it, then I must discharge my soul by reminding you that even the gentle Gospel—the Gospel of love and mercy has nothing to say to you but this, "He that believes not shall be damned."—

"How they deserve the deepest Hell, That slight the joys above! What chains of vengeance must they feel Who break the bonds of love!"

God grant that you may yield to Almighty Love and find peace in Christ Jesus!