

# GOD'S PATTERN

## **TEXT: I TIMOTHY 1:15-17**

### **Introduction:**

1. The apostle Paul recognized that his conversion was for a “pattern” or an example of the grace of God and the power of God to transform a sinner into a saint (I Tim. 1:16).
2. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said:  
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, an example 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, an 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.
3. Paul’s conversion is a pattern for us. God has graciously given us His pattern, and we are to follow it as closely as possible.
4. In Exodus 25:9, the LORD told Moses to build the tabernacle –  
“According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.”
5. Moses had no right to change a thing. The tabernacle was to be built “according to all that I shew thee” (Ex. 25:9).
6. Later on in the same chapter we read this in verse 40, “And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.”

7. The tabernacle on earth was to be patterned exactly after the tabernacle up in heaven (cf. Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:8-12, 24; Rev. 11:19; 15:5).
8. Today in this dispensation there is no tabernacle or temple here on earth. Today we meet with God in here in the local church.
9. God has given us His pattern for the local church and we are to follow His pattern as closely as possible.
10. First Timothy 3:15 says, “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

### **I. A PERFECT PATTERN FOR BELIEVERS (“to them which should hereafter believe”—1:16)**

1. Paul says in I Timothy 1:16, “that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern...”
2. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ is our perfect pattern. First Peter 2:21 says, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”
3. Acts 10:38 says our Lord “went about doing good.” Are you going about “doing good”?
4. Regrettably, some Christians aren’t doing much good.
5. I mentioned how God gave Moses the pattern for the tabernacle. Students of Scripture have noted how the tabernacle was a beautiful picture and type of Christ. The tabernacle symbolized the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people. John 1:14 says, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt (set up His tabernacle) among us.”
  - The tabernacle had only one door. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only door into heaven. He said, “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9). And He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).
  - All who passed through the door to the tabernacle had to pass by the bloodstained altar. The brass altar (Exodus 27:1-8) is a type of Christ our sacrifice (John 1:29). Man has no access to God apart from the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - The laver of brass (Exodus 30:17-21) symbolizes Christ our cleanser who cleanses us from defilement (Eph. 5:25, 26; John 17:17). Christ continually cleanses through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3).

- The golden candlestick (Ex. 25:31; 37:17) pictures Christ, the Light of the World (John 8:12).
  - The mercy seat was the cover on the top of the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:17-21). The mercy seat was where the high priest placed the expiatory blood. The mercy seat is the Old Testament throne of grace.
6. The apostle Paul says in I Timothy 1:16 “that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern”
  7. “Longsuffering” is one of God’s attributes. Psalm 86:15 says, “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.”
  8. Unsaved friend – it is precisely because God is longsuffering that you are not in hell right now. Second Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”
  9. Because God is longsuffering, He gives sinners time to repent.
  10. Remember our Lord was crucified between two thieves. This was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Isaiah 53:12 says, “He was numbered with the transgressors.”
  11. According to Mark 15:32, both thieves railed on our Lord – “And they that were crucified with him reviled him.”
  12. Our Lord was longsuffering and He gave both of them time to repent. One did repent and was gloriously saved. Our Lord said to him, “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).
  13. But the other thief refused to repent. Romans 2:4 says, “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”
  14. The impenitent thief despised God’s goodness and forbearance and longsuffering. He soon died and went to hell.
  15. The apostle Paul “obtained mercy” (I Tim. 1:16). Paul’s conversion is a wonderful demonstration of God’s mercy and longsuffering. And Paul understood the significance of it when he wrote, “that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern (for an example) to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

## **II. THE BIBLE GIVES US THE PATTERN FOR SALVATION**

1. First Timothy 1:15 says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

2. A person cannot be saved until he first recognizes that he is lost.
3. The great evangelist George Whitefield used to say, “Jesus will take in the devil’s castaways.” A respectable woman named Lady Huntingdon used to object to this expression, until one day she heard one of Whitefield’s converts give his testimony.
4. It is sad that so many people are confused about salvation, when the Bible gives us very clear instructions (Romans 10:9-13).
5. God wants all men to be saved (I Tim. 2:4).
6. Salvation is in Christ alone – not through religion or a church, etc. (I Tim. 2:5).
7. Salvation is not gained by good works (II Tim. 1:9; Eph. 2:8, 9).
8. Salvation is only by the true Gospel (I Cor. 15:1-4).

### **III. LET US FOLLOW GOD’S PATTERN**

1. Some Christians believe the standards set forth in Scripture are impossible to attain. They insist it is unreasonable to expect believers today to live up to the high standards found in the Word of God.
2. Excuses abound.
  - “No one is perfect!”
  - “We’re just sinners saved by grace.”
  - “After all, this is 2010. No one can live like that today!”
  - “This is New York. You can’t expect Christians to live strict a Christian life in this wicked city.”
3. One hundred years ago, Andrew Murray said, “Our preconceived opinions blind us, and our environment exercises a powerfully deluding influence.”
4. Beloved, do not be deceived! “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).
5. Malachi 3:6 says, “For I am the LORD, I change not.”
6. God gave us the apostle Paul as our pattern to follow (I Tim. 1:16), and Paul frequently exhorted Christians to follow his example (cf. I Cor. 11:1; II Thess. 3:7-15).
7. Some have wondered – why follow Paul when we can follow the Lord Jesus Himself?
8. But most people think it is too difficult to follow Christ. He is God manifest in the flesh. He is perfect. He is sinless, etc.
9. But Paul is different. He was the “chief” of sinners (I Tim. 1:15).
10. Paul was a “blasphemer” and “injurious” (1:13).
11. HA Ironside said sinners need not fear they are too bad for Christ because, “The chief of sinners has been saved already; so you can only trail along behind.”

12. God demonstrated what He can do for a sinner when He reached down and saved Saul of Tarsus, and transformed him into the great apostle Paul.
13. God wants you and me to be a pattern for other believers (cf. I Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7).

**CONCLUSION:**

1. When we consider the deplorable condition of most churches today, and we look to the Word of God, it becomes apparent that most churches are not following the pattern God has set for us in the Bible.
2. Churches today are extremely worldly. Unbiblical teachings are being taught and widely accepted. Immorality is rampant.
3. Christians are not praying, not reading their Bible, not giving, not winning souls, etc.
4. Let us get back to God's pattern!