

Amazing Grace

Bible Study Fellowship

Paul is the Pattern



J. Michael Schroeder

Amazing Grace Bible Study Fellowship is a non-denominational church fellowship dedicated to the publishing of the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16), and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery of Romans 16:25 and Ephesians 3:3. Our goal is to study the Bible in accordance with 2 Timothy 2:15, in order to become established in the truth of it according to Romans 1:11; to the end that we might come into conformity with the will of God for our lives according to Romans 12:3.

Amazing Grace Bible Study Fellowship
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1 Tim 1:15-16

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. 16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Paul clearly states in this passage that he is the “first” of “a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

What, exactly, is this pattern he is speaking of, in which he claims to be first? It is the way in which he was placed in the family of God, that is, the way in which he was “saved.” But the astute Bible student might question the contention he makes of being the “first” here, as even he himself admits that there were others “in Christ before me.” (Romans 16:7) Certainly those in Christ before Paul would include the 12 and those thousands that positively responded to their preaching in the early part of the Acts ministry.

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The only way to explain this apparent paradox is to understand that Paul (as the Pharisee Saul), in his Damascus road experience, got saved into something entirely different than the 12 and their adherents. And indeed that must be the case, as he could not have been included in what they were in, because he identifies himself in verse 13 of 1 Timothy 1, as “a blasphemer,” and Matthew 12:31 says that blasphemers could not be saved into the program of salvation/redemption given the 12.

So what was Paul saved into? In four different passages in his epistles he calls it “the body of Christ,” “the body;” “one body” “the church which is his body” This “body” is part of something Paul called “the mystery,” which he said was never revealed before he revealed it in his 13 epistles.

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