

1 Timothy 1:12-17

In today's passage, we have what you might call a brief recap of the Saul to Paul story as he shares with "Timothy, my loyal child in the faith." Timothy was a young man who yielded to Christ's calling to help build His church and we have Paul sharing with him the road that lies ahead.

As we look at the first couple of verses in this passage, we notice first Paul's current "condition" of life. Paul says, "our Lord gives me strength". Paul doesn't take the credit for his strength. He is giving Jesus Christ the credit for his strength.

Paul does not attribute his strength to the fact that he had done something on his own or gone to seminary and completed "Apostle 206" or from reading *Become an Apostle in 30 Days*. He credits Jesus Christ with the strength given him.

Paul also does not say that he was faithful when Jesus put him into the ministry; rather, Jesus counted him faithful. The Greek term for "counted" means to think or to esteem or to regard.

Think of it this way, when we have a car loan or a mortgage, usually one does not have enough money to pay for the purchase in full, but the loan company counts us as faithful that we will repay the loan.

When Jesus put Paul into the ministry, Paul had not shown one single act of faithfulness to the Lord, in fact it was the opposite. But God put Paul into the ministry. And think about how many times God used 'marginal' people to do great things: Moses (a murderer), David (an adulterer), and even a couple questionable men as disciples.

And knowing what we know about Paul and the trials and tribulations of his life after his conversion, Paul needed all the strength he could find, and Jesus was going to be the source of his strength. Paul is quick to give credit where credit is due.

What is Paul doing here exactly? I think he is giving young Timothy some sound advice spoken from experience. Timothy will be able to face any trials and tribulations that are to come if he relies on the strength of Christ.

The Christian lifestyle is not just on Sundays, but it is an everyday way of life. It is a life that is seen when things are going fantastic, and it is a lifestyle that is seen when we things at the worst.

Involvement in the ministry of Jesus Christ is a good thing. It is something the Lord expects of us. But like Jesus counted Paul faithful, we too must have the same mindset. God will use us and counts us as faithful. It is up to us to live out that faith. As we prove ourselves faithful, the Lord will make greater opportunities for ministry available to us.

So, how are handling the way we are doing ministry already in our care?

Jim Cymbala, Pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle and Author of *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, says...

*"For all of us involved in preaching the gospel, performing music, publishing Christian materials, and all the rest,... Jesus is not terribly impressed with religious commercialism. He is concerned not only whether we're doing God's work, but also how and why we're doing it. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, his main questions for me will have to do not with the growth or the budget of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, but with why I pastored this church (and) in what spirit." "If you sing in a choir, the question is not just if you're on your note; it's why you are singing at all." "If you teach a class, are you doing it*

*with a heart that radiates God's love for the students, or for some other reason?"*<sup>1</sup>

How are we doing our teaching, our witnessing, our serving? In our larger family in the body of Christ, we need to be sure we are faithfully doing our part as well. While I think we are doing a good job in those areas, I think it is something that we always must keep at the forefront of our minds and continue to do it for the right reason, for the glory to God.

Let's move on to the next part of the passage, verses 13-15. Look at the reputation Paul had before he became a believer. In verse 13 he admits he was a *blasphemer*, a *persecutor*, a *violent* man and in verse 15 he calls himself the worst of all sinners. Paul doesn't say, "I was" the worst of sinners, he says "I am."

The best part is that Paul's story doesn't end there. Yes, he did have a reputation for being a rotten sinner, but let's look at his reconciliation – the point at which he came into a proper relationship with the Lord.

For God, it didn't matter how bad Paul's past life had been, it didn't matter about what Moses or David had done in the past. Paul was shown mercy.

Grace was poured out on Paul in abundance and not just grace, but faith and love found in Jesus Christ, the same grace, faith, and love that has been poured out on us. Grace that was, cannot be earned but is freely given by God and abundant in nature.

We've looked at Paul's past and considered his reputation before coming to Christ and the fact that he was reconciled to God so what is Paul's purpose?

Paul's testimony included his source of strength and his being set apart for service. His past and the awful reputation he had, was changed through the glorious reconciliation he experienced when he became a believer. Paul's purpose was twofold, to be an example and to exalt God.

First, those who knew Paul well and the kind of man he had been were probably amazed at the transformation that took place in his life when he became a believer. What an amazing testimony Paul had. If God could transform a man like Paul, then there was hope for all of us sinners.

Secondly, our lives are to bring glory to God. Paul wanted to glorify God and that should be our desire as well. Notice in verse 17, the praise that pours forth from Paul toward God. He has just been recalling his past and the glorious grace and mercy of God that saved him, and now he can't help but break forth in praise for the Lord who has worked in his life in such a mighty way.

I want our time together to be practical for our lives today. So here are some things I think we can take from this passage today and apply to our lives:

1. Are we seeking for strength from the Lord? We will find it by reading God's word, fellowshiping with other believers, praying, and confessing sin in our life. As we are rightly related to the Lord, God will equip us and give us the strength necessary to do God's work.
2. Are we faithful in the ministries that the Lord has appointed us to? All of us have been given special opportunities of service for the Lord. Are we doing those acts of service to glorify Christ or to glorify ourselves?

3. Are we taking advantage of opportunities to use our own lives as an example to others to show them how they can become a believer and receive eternal life?
4. Are we exalting God? Is praise our practice or do we prefer to grumble and complain?

Hopefully we have been challenged with many things from the Word of God today. Let's do as James instructed and not simply be hearers of the word but doers as well. Let's take time throughout this week to reflect on this passage and truly examine our own lives to see if there are things the Lord is leading us to change.

"When we have found God good, we must not forget to pronounce God great; and God's kind thoughts of us must not at all lessen our high thoughts of God, but rather increase them. God's gracious dealings with us should fill us with admiration of God's glorious attributes: *'To God be honor and glory for ever and ever.'*"<sup>2</sup> Amen.

1. Jim Cymbala, Fresh Wind Fresh Fire, pg. 69
2. Matthew Henry Commentary, Zondervan Publishing House, p.1888