

July 9, 2017

## “Not What I Once Was”

### Focal Passage: 1 Timothy 1:12-20 (NASB)

Cross References: Matthew 18:15-22; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Titus 3:9-11; 1 Peter 4:1-5

**Lesson Idea:** We should praise God that we are not what we once were, but have received His grace and mercy in Christ Jesus our Lord.

#### BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

July 2 Psalms 96-102	July 3 Psalms 103-105
July 4 Psalms 106-107	July 5 Psalms 108-114
July 6 Psalms 115-118	July 7 Psalms 119:1-88
July 8 Psalms 119:89-176	July 9 Psalms 120-132

**Background:** Paul overflowed with praise for the mercy and grace of his salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord. He felt that his life before Christ made him the chief of sinners; but knew that Christ Jesus' mercy was greater than even the greatest of sins.

#### 1 Timothy 1:12-17 Abound in the Mercy of Christ

*12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; 14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. 15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. 16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

#### DISCUSSION:

- v 12. For what did Paul thank Jesus? What trait did Paul say was the reason he was called into the service of His Lord? Is that a trait that Jesus would find in you? Why or why not?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

We often see our Christian service as a matter of volunteering. Yet as Christians, in regard to Jesus and His

church, we are not volunteers. We are slaves. We are duty bound servants of Jesus, and faithfulness is expected of such servants.

You don't have to be smart to be faithful; you don't have to be talented or gifted. Faithfulness is something very down-to-earth, and every one of us can be faithful in the sphere God has given us.

Many people wait to be faithful. We tell ourselves, "I'll be faithful when I'm in such and such a position." That's nonsense. We should be faithful right where we are at - our faithfulness is shown in the small things.

**Putting me into the ministry:** *Ministry* simply means "service." In the original language of the New Testament, there is nothing "high" or "spiritual" about the word. It just means to work hard and serve. Yet for this former blasphemer and persecutor of God's people, this was a great honor.

- v 13. How did Paul describe his life before Christ? Why did he receive mercy?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

**Because I did it ignorantly in unbelief:** Ignorance and unbelief never excuse our sin, but they do invite God's mercy, because sin in ignorance and unbelief makes one less guilty than the believer who sins knowingly. Yet it was not Paul's ignorance that saved him; it was the exceeding abundant grace of God (God's unmerited favor).

- v 14. What is the difference between "mercy" and "grace?" How did the grace of the Lord abound in Paul's life?
- v 15. What was the "trustworthy statement," and why did it deserve to be fully accepted? If Paul said that he was the "foremost of all" sinners, where would you rank yourself in that list? Why?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

**Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners:** Jesus came to save sinners, not those living under the illusion of their own righteousness. It is the sick who need a physician (Mark 2:17).

Since Jesus came into the world to save sinners, this is the first necessary qualification for being a child of God - being a sinner. Sinners are not *disqualified* from coming to God, because Jesus came to save them.

We also see the great danger in taking the terms sin and sinner out of our vocabulary. Many preachers deliberately do this today, because they don't want to

offend anyone from the pulpit. But if Jesus came to save sinners, shouldn't we identify who those sinners are? How else will they come to salvation?

**Of whom I am chief:** Paul's claim to be the chief of sinners was not an expression of some super-pious false humility. He genuinely felt his sins made him more accountable before God than others.

Aren't we all equally sinners? No; "All men are truly sinners, but all men are not equally sinners. They are all in the mire; but they have not all sunk to an equal depth in it." (Spurgeon)

Paul felt - rightly so - his sins were worse because he was responsible for the death, imprisonment, and suffering of Christians, whom he persecuted before his life was changed by Jesus (Acts 8:3; Acts 9:1-2, 1 Corinthians 15:9, Galatians 1:13, Philippians 3:6).

In Acts 26:11, Paul explained to Agrippa what might have been his worst sin: *And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.* He compelled others to blaspheme Jesus. . .

..." No man can now say that he is too great a sinner to be saved, because the chief of sinners was saved..." (Spurgeon)

iv. There are worse kinds of sin; sins that harm God's people are especially bad in God's eyes. We must soberly consider if we are guilty, now or in the past, of harming God's people.

- v 16. According to Paul, what was the reason he found mercy? What example did Paul serve? What should this teach us about sharing the Gospel with others?
- v 17. In this doxology, how does Paul describe God? What do each of the terms mean to you? Which do you cherish the most today, and why?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

**Now to the King eternal:** Paul could not think of how bad he was, and how great the salvation of God was, and how great the love of God was, without simply breaking into spontaneous praise... **Be honor and glory forever and ever:** Knowing all this about God, Paul couldn't stop praising Him. If we ever have trouble worshipping God, it is because we don't know Him very well.

## 1 Timothy 1:18-20 Fight the Good Fight

*18 This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, 19 keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. 20 Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.*

**DISCUSSION:**

- v 18. With what was Paul entrusting Timothy? Paul reminded Timothy of the prophecies made concerning him. What has God said about you that you need to remember? (Consider both statements other believers have spoken over you AND ESPECIALLY those things that God's Word says about you and all believers.)

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

Apparently, God had spoken to Timothy through others through the gift of prophecy and the words were an encouragement for Timothy to stay strong in the difficulty right in front of him. It may have been a description of Timothy's future ministry; it may have been a warning against being timid in his work for God. Whatever it was, God wanted Timothy to draw strength from it in his present difficulty.

We shouldn't think it strange that God would speak to us through others in a prophetic manner; but should take care to *test all prophesy* (1 Corinthians 14:29) according to both the Word of God and the witness of the Holy Spirit in others.

- v 18-19. How do you *fight the good fight*? What does it mean to "*keep*" *faith and a good conscience*?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

**That by them you may wage the good warfare:** The focus is not the prophetic word Timothy heard in the past. The focus is on battle right in front of him now, where he must wage the good warfare - that is, "*fight the good fight.*" (KJV)

Timothy had a job in front of him, and it was going to be a battle. It wasn't going to be easy, or comfortable, or carefree. He had to approach the job Paul left him to do in Ephesus as a soldier approaches battle.

This gave Timothy still another reason to remain in Ephesus. He should sense a responsibility to stay when he felt like leaving because he was like a soldier in a battle, who could not desert his post.

**Faith and a good conscience:** These are essential when battling for the Lord. They protect against the

spiritual attacks of doubt and condemnation. Timothy had to have the **faith** that God was in control, and would guide him as Timothy continued to seek him. He had to have a **good conscience**, because his enemies would be attacking him, and if Timothy had not conducted himself rightly, they would have good reason to attack. A good conscience isn't just a conscience that approves us, but one that approves us because we've been doing what is right - it is connected with good conduct.

- v 19-20. What would it mean to "suffer shipwreck" in regard to your faith?
- v 20. Why does Paul mention Hymenaeus and Alexander by name? What does it mean "*to be handed over to Satan*?" What did Paul hope they would learn through it?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

***Whom I delivered to Satan:*** From other New Testament passages we can surmise that he did this by putting them outside the church, into the world, which is the devil's domain. The punishment was a removal of protection, not an infliction of evil.

- Read Matthew 18:15-22; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Titus 3:9-11; 1 Peter 4:1-5. How should discipline be handled in the church?

**APPLICATION:**

- ✓ What does your testimony about God's grace and mercy sound like? Write out a doxology of praise to your King eternal.
- ✓ How are you fighting the good fight? Have you abandoned your post, or are you being faithful?
- ✓ What role does faith play in your life?
- ✓ Are you keeping a clear conscience? Why or why not?