

**Letters From My Father**  
**Week 3**  
**1 Timothy 1:12-17 (CSB)**  
**"Lost and Found"**

**Introduction**

**For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For rarely will someone die for a just person — though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through Him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.** **Romans 5:6-11**

The most significant event in all of human history is the death, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus. He came to save sinners, and as Savior there is no one that He cannot save, no sinner that His blood cannot cleanse. And this wondrous gift was offered to us freely. No amount of good works can attain it, nor is any man more deserving of it. If salvation were to be obtained by doing good deeds, then no one could ever be saved. For:

**"...as it is written: There is no one righteous not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they deceive with their tongues. Viper's venom is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and wretchedness are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."** **Romans 3:10-18**

Doesn't exactly paint a very flattering picture of humanity now does it? But when a Holy and Righteous God looks down upon this sinful world, that is exactly what He sees. Total depravity. But the good news is that **God so loved the world**, (in spite of our sin) **that He gave His One and Only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)**. It is this wondrous message of grace and redemption that we, His people, are called to share with the lost and dying of this world.

The beauty of the Gospel is that it is available to any who will come by faith to be saved. It does not matter what "kind" of a sinner you are, for we are all sinners. Many throughout the ages have convinced themselves that they are too guilty to be saved, that somehow their sins are unforgivable. But the fact is; the only sin that cannot be forgiven in this world, or in the next, is unbelief. Jesus' blood is sufficient to cleanse every sin, but to reject Him, is to be forever condemned (**John 3:18**).

With this in mind, I would like to direct your attention today to the testimony of The Apostle Paul. When we think of Paul, we often think of the greatest missionary and arguably the greatest Christian that ever lived. After all, his story is laid out in great detail in the Book of Acts. And as if that were insufficient, his own writings make up the greatest majority of our *New Testament*! What an unstoppable force of faithfulness and devotion was Paul. But he was not always thus. In fact, in his earlier years, he was quite ruthless, filled with an unquenchable hatred for Christ and His Church. But Jesus saw in him something that Paul could have never imagined of himself. Where the world saw a merciless persecutor of the Church, Christ saw a great apostle! In his letter to Timothy, Paul shares a bit of his personal testimony. He reminds his young protegee' of the transforming power of God's amazing grace. For it was this grace that changed Paul from an *Enemy of God*, to one *Empowered and Entrusted* to become a living *Example*. Please allow me to explain.

### **Empowered and Entrusted (vs 12)**

***I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because he considered me faithful, appointing me to the ministry...*** ***1 Timothy 1:12***

Paul began his testimony by giving thanks to Christ for the work that He had done in Paul's life. He used two words to describe what The LORD had done for him, for which he was eternally grateful. The first word is "endynamoo" (pronounced en-doo-nam-o'-o) and is translated in the CSB as "strengthened". The word comes from a root word from which we get our word "dynamite". A better translation would be "our LORD Who has empowered me". You see, when Christ calls a person, He also empowers them with His Holy Spirit so that they are able to do what He has commissioned in them.

Every Believer who has received Christ as LORD is also empowered with this same Holy Spirit. So we are more than able, through Him, to be effective witnesses for Christ in the world. It is an all-sufficient empowerment that is at our disposal for every occasion.

***And if The Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then He Who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through His Spirit Who lives in you.*** ***Romans 8:11***

Paul wanted Timothy to understand that it is by The Spirit's power that we have been strengthened, and therefore, we have nothing to fear. To be a child of God is to be empowered to do the will of God.

The second thing that Paul was thankful for in his testimony is that Christ had "considered him faithful". The word for "faithful" is "pistos" in the Greek, and in this context, it is best represented as someone who is considered "trustworthy" or "entrusted". Paul had not only been empowered by The Spirit, but he was also "entrusted" with being an ambassador of Christ in ministry.

Every Believer has been entrusted with spiritual gifts (***1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12***), and those gifts have been given and entrusted to us that we will utilize them to take our part in the ministry of the body of Christ. We do not all have the same giftings, but we do all have gifts that accompany our salvation. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to utilize these gifts in order to fulfill the Church's great commission to go and make disciples.

***A manifestation of The Spirit is given to each person for the common good...*** ***1 Corinthians 12:7***

We, like Paul, should be grateful to Christ for His empowering and enabling, so that we may become effective witnesses for the kingdom of God. We should never look upon our calling with a reluctant sense of obligation, or as a burden, but rather, we should thank God that we too have been considered trustworthy to go into the world on His behalf. It is an honor to serve our God in this regard. And it is an honor that Paul knew he did not deserve.

### **Enemy (vs. 13-15)**

***...even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" — and I am the worst of them.*** ***Timothy 1:13-15***

Paul realized that he was a sinner saved by grace. In fact, it is obvious from his many writings on the subject that he carried a deep sense of regret for the man that he once was. Paul had not only once been a sworn enemy of Christ, but he had ruthlessly persecuted The LORD'S Church. He had pursued Christians with a vengeance, even considered overly zealous by those who had agreed with his mission. He had Believers imprisoned, if they refused to renounce Christ. And going even further, he had some of them executed as blasphemers for their testimony.

In all of these things, Paul actually thought that he was doing a service to God. As a Pharisee, he was convinced that Jesus was a heretic, and the world would be a better place were all Christians eradicated from the land. This zealous persecution was stopped dead in its tracks, when The Risen LORD Himself struck Paul down upon the Damascus road. From that day on, the murderer Saul was forever changed and became Paul the Apostle of Christ Jesus. His conversion was so dramatic that many thought he was putting on an act!

This is what Paul meant when he said that he had acted in ignorance and unbelief. He had not set out to blaspheme against God, but he had done so unknowingly. But ignorance is no excuse for being a lawbreaker. If you get pulled over for speeding, you can't get away with it simply by saying you didn't know the speed limit! Paul was thoroughly convinced that he had been doing the right thing, but he was still guilty in the eyes of heaven. Many sinners do not realize that they are, in fact, sinners. They deceive themselves as to their own "goodness" by believing that they are just as morally upright as everyone else. Therefore, they do what they think is right in their own estimation. But the very best a man can do will still fall short of God's glory. Therefore to reject Christ is to be eternally condemned.

Do not miss the reality of what had transpired in the life of Paul the Pharisee. He was a known murderer, whom God forgave and called into the ministry. Jesus saw something in Paul that no one else could see. Where everyone else had seen nothing but a man bent upon evil retribution, Christ saw the most effective preacher of the gospel who would ever live! God sees in us what no one else ever could, and He chooses to save us in spite of ourselves. And that, my friends, is why it is called "Amazing Grace!"

Paul declared that God's grace had "overflowed" in the particular case of his own salvation. A prefix that Paul liked to use is "*Hyper*" (pronounced *hoo-per* in the Greek). So, when he described this "overflowing" of God's grace towards him, he described it as "*hyperpleonazo*", which literally means to be "*super-abundant*". I believe that Christians today would be so much easier to get along with if we were constantly reminded of just how wretched we were before Christ did His wondrous work in us. For we are no better than the worst of sinners in this world. And if it were not for the overflowing, super-abundance of God's grace, we would be hopelessly lost. Or as Paul has so eloquently stated:

**"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — and I am the worst of them."**

We who were once the enemies of God, have been reconciled to Him by the blood of Christ. And in this truth, and only this truth can we find anything of which to boast. Were it not for Christ, we would have no hope in this life, or the one to come. I love that Paul said this was a "**trustworthy saying deserving of full acceptance.**" For until we come to accept that we are wretched sinners, deserving of nothing save condemnation, we can never truly comprehend the grace that God offered by sending His One and Only Son into the world to die for us. In order to be saved, we must first recognize Jesus for Who He is, The Son of God, Who came and died to save us. And then, we must realize just how bad we need saving.

We, like Paul, are the worst of sinners and were it not for our Savior's overflowing grace, we would be hopelessly lost.

**But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** **Romans 5:8**

**Example (vs. 16-17)**

***But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.***

Paul goes on to explain the reason that he had been shown such mercy albeit undeserved. By the extension of His great patience with Paul, Christ converted him from the worst of sinners to a minister of the gospel. Thereby making Paul a great “example” for others. The word translated here as “example” is “*hypotyposis*”, and it is a compound form of the word *typos* (pronounced *too’-pos*) which was used to describe and *impression or stamp*. Thomas had used this word to say in disbelief, “*Unless I see the print (typos) of the nails, I will not believe.*”

What Paul is saying here is that Christ was using Paul as a “*indelible mark*” or a “*proof*” to demonstrate that if someone as guilty as Paul could be saved, then anyone could! The grace of God is sufficient to save the very worst of sinners. And Paul was a living example of this fact! The humility of this verse is powerful and effective. There was no pride remaining in Paul, but rather, a realization that apart from the love of Christ, he was nothing, and yet despite this reality, Christ chose to redeem and forgive him. And if Christ would redeem Paul, He could redeem anyone. No sinner is beyond the reach of God’s love!

Can you imagine how effective the witness of the Church would be if we all shared in this kind of humility? If we truly realized how wretched we are apart from Christ and would merely allow ourselves to be used as proof to the world that Jesus can save anyone? With all pretension removed, no longer being impressed with ourselves, we would become all the more effective in our witness. No lost sinner would feel looked down upon by our religious zeal, but rather, they would see our efforts as an attempt to rescue them as we too were once rescued. Is it any wonder that Paul was so effective in the planting of churches? He never forgot what he was before, so he treated others with the same incredible patience and love that he received in Christ Jesus. Now that’s an effective witness!

And just as soon as Paul recounts the great mercy, love, patience and grace that he had received, he cannot help but burst into a hymn of praise for His LORD and Savior.

***“Now to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”***

In closing today, I would like for you to consider and reflect upon the worst thing that you’ve ever done in your life. Something that you would be completely ashamed at the mere thought of anyone else ever knowing about. And after you have reflected upon this for a few moments, I would like for you to take that particular sin and imagine nailing it to the cross of Christ, then walking away and leaving it there forever. For you see, Christ died for your sins. Not just the one in particular but all of them. And He has promised that if you will place your faith in Him and ask for his forgiveness, then He will in fact, forgive you.

All of your sin can be nailed to the cross, and you can walk away from them forever. And Christ Himself will empower you and entrust you with His gospel message. So that you too can be a “type” or “example” that if God could forgive you, He can forgive anyone. There are those out there that your personal testimony can reach better than anyone else, but you must be willing to acknowledge what you were, and demonstrate what you are now upon receiving the abundant grace of Christ Jesus. People must see the change in you, so that they will know that they too can be changed.

In Christ, we go from being the enemies of God, to the empowered and entrusted, so that we may be seen as an example for a world that is enslaved to sin. They need to see in us that Jesus... Saves! Or as the hymn writer has so eloquently said: “*Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I’m found. Was blind, but now... I see.*”

And let every sinner saved by grace say... Truth!!!