

Sermon 4: Paul's View of Self and His Ministry

Text: 1 Timothy 1:12-17 “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Purpose: The purpose of this section of the epistle was to communicate to Timothy, how Paul viewed himself and God's decision to entrust him with the precious gospel message.

Question 1: How did Paul view himself and the ministry entrusted to his care?

Question 2: How should we respond to the way he viewed himself and his ministry?

Six facts about Paul's view of self that should characterize every servant of Christ:

Fact 1: Paul recognized the goodness of God: 1:12 “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry...”

- **I thank Christ Jesus our Lord:** He expressed gratitude to God
- **Who hath enabled me:** He recognized the way that God enabled him to fulfill his ministry
- **He counted me faithful:** In spite of all that God knew about Paul, He still chose to place him into an apostolic ministry

Implication: I need to stop and reflect on the many ways that God has dealt kindly with me, in the same way that Paul reflected on the way that God had dealt kindly with him.

Fact 2: Paul recognized his own unworthiness: 1:13 “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious...”

- **Who was before:** Paul recognized that he was a totally different man because of his conversion.
- **Blasphemer:** Someone who spoke slander against the church and the name of Christ
- **Persecutor:** Someone who took painful action against Christ and the church
- **Injurious:** Violent, cruel, arrogant

Acts 7:57-8:3 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Implications:

- There is no room for self-centered pride in the lives of Christian ministers.
- There is no room for a condescending attitude toward other Christians.
- There is hope even when people seem beyond hope.

Fact 3: Paul recognized his former ignorance: 1:13 “I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief...”

- **I obtained mercy:** God looked compassionately upon Paul as an unconverted man, and dealt kindly with him in spite of His arrogance and pride
- **Because I did it ignorantly in unbelief:** Paul was a passionate man who had a very diligent principled approach to what he did, however his guiding principle was off and the results were disastrously wrong.

Implication: Admitting we are wrong is one of the most difficult things we ever do, and that is exactly what Paul is doing here. Let’s be willing to admit our faults humbly.

Fact 4: Paul recognized the personal transforming power of the gospel: “And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus...”

- **The grace of our Lord:** Paul’s transformation was entirely rooted in the undeserving favor of God.
- **Exceeding abundant:** This grace was full and rich toward Paul.
- **With faith:** Prior to his conversion he was a unbeliever rejecting the person and work of Christ, but the grace of God poured into his heart turned him into a bold witness of the person and work of Christ.
- **With love:** Prior to his conversion he was an arrogant, violent man, but the grace of God poured into His heart transformed him into a man full of Christian live.

Implications: Like Paul, we need to recognize that Christian love and a steadfast faith are rooted in God’s abundant grace, not our own goodness or wisdom.

Fact 5: Paul recognized that the timing of his conversion was part of God’s personal redemptive plan: 1:15 “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, 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 show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting...”

- **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners:** This statement reveals why the Father sent His Son into the world
- **Of whom I am chief:** Paul viewed himself as the foremost sinner. A vicious opponent of the Christian faith, not just a self-centered fleshly dominated man, but a militant, well-known opponent of the truth
- **That in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering:** God demonstrated His incredible patience in His dealings with Paul.
- **A patter to them:** Anyone can be saved and used by God, just like Paul was saved and mightily used by God.

Implication: God delayed Paul’s conversion in order to demonstrate His purpose, magnify His glory, and reveal His power to save the most unlikely person.

Fact 6: Paul’s reflection of God’s dealings with Him caused Him to worship: 1:17 “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen...”

- This section closes in the most appropriate way possible.
- Truth properly internalized must become truth expressed in worship.

Final Thoughts: Healthy Christianity...

- Will never lead to abusive arrogant leadership.
- Will never lead to self-righteous condescension.
- Will lead to hopeful evangelism.
- Will lead to humble gratitude and passionate worship.