

Bible Text: 1 Timothy 1:12-17
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Anchored in Truth Ministries
1915 Avalon Ave.
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

Well, let's go back to 1 Timothy this morning, 1 Timothy, chapter 1, and we'll look at verses 12 through 17. In teaching the guys this week in our intensive on pastoral ministries, I kept completely in 1 and 2 Timothy and when I came to this text, it stirred my heart afresh and I thought, I think that would be a good word for a day when we're going to share in the Lord's table together and the day when we are going to accept new members into our local church family.

1 Timothy, chapter 1, beginning in verse 12. This is if Paul writing this letter to Timothy about his own pastorate there, what he's to do, how he's to structure the church, we've talked about all those things dozens of times. But before he gets started good, I think the point is, "Timothy, you need to be in all of Christ. You need to treasure Christ." And that's true for all of us, no matter who you are and what your role or place in God's church is or God's work is, first and foremost, you must be enthralled with Christ, and I think that's where Paul is coming from because he certainly was. 1 Timothy 1:12, he says,

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.

This passage, to me is if the Apostle Paul takes Christ as this multi-faceted diamond, and that would include Christ and his work as a multi-faceted diamond, and he turns it slowly to the light, so that another glorious dimension of Christ's person in Christ's work is reflected out to us. So let's unpack it in that way, if you will. I entitled this, of course, "The Mighty Jesus." The mighty Jesus, and let's look at it.

I. Notice first of all, Paul mentions his mighty strength, his mighty strength. There in verse 12 he says, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me." He says, "I thank" there means he's just great, grace, he has gratitude rather. He is very grateful for all that Christ has done for him when you consider where he came from and the things he was involved in.

Then he says, "I thank Him that He has strengthened me." You know, it takes God's strength to save us and it takes God's strength if we're gonna serve Christ faithfully in this world and through our local churches. The Bible says that we are all by nature without strength. For example, when Paul writes to the Romans in Romans 5:6, he says, "For while we were still helpless," the word "helpless" there means "sick and without strength." While we were spiritually sickly and had no strength, in that condition, "at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." You see, the reason men do not believe and be saved, the reason men do not honor Christ in their lives, the reason men do not faithfully serve Christ and advance Christ's kingdom is because they are too weak to do so. It's never an intellectual problem. It's never a philosophical issue. It's never that somehow Christian truth is beneath their level of esteem and elite understanding of things. No, it's because they're weak. Mankind is fallen. We have the weakness of intellect, so we cannot grasp the vital greatness of Christ and his kingdom. We have the weakness of heart, we cannot feel or treasure the greatness of Christ in his kingdom. We have the weakness of our will, we cannot bring ourself to initiate a devotion to Christ and his kingdom. We have a weakness of strengths and we could not even come close to enduring the rigors of following Christ and building his kingdom. You see, man is weak and that's why he doesn't come to Christ. He's not above it, as if he has some special, uh, goodness or virtue so he doesn't need this old Christian religion, instead, he's weak, and Paul said, "I thank Christ Jesus, that He has strengthened me." It's his strength that we need.

Sin has made us all deplorably weak. Now take Paul himself. Saul of Tarsus was his name, of course, before he was converted. I mean, as far as men go, he was a strong man, he was a determined man, a well-educated, even a brilliant man, he called himself "the Hebrew of the Hebrews," but in things pertaining to God and the kingdom of God, and the things that matter for eternity, Paul says, "I was deplorably, desperately weak." And so are all of mankind. And so are you and I until Christ strengthens us. You see, it was Christ's strength that came in us in enabled us to see our need of a Savior and see Christ as the only true Savior. It's Christ's strength that enables us to keep on keeping on and, and not fail in well-doing, going down the path in our lifetimes for Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 53:12 speaks of his strength, "Therefore, I will allot Him," that's Christ, "a portion with the great, And He will divide the spoils with the strong," or the mighty. In other words, Jesus here is the warring conqueror and he will obtain the spoils of victory. And by the way, you are his spoil. You are his spoils. He said, "I'm going after My children. They belong to Satan right now, they deserve the wrath of God, but I, the Jesus who is the Christ, will do everything required to make them My own." The spoils of his victory.

Well, his mighty strength. Notice, econdly, let's turn that diamond and look at another beautiful facet: his mighty calling. Calling. Now he says here in verse 12 as we continue on, "because He considered me faithful, putting me into service," that is, calling me into his service. In Acts 9:15, the apostle writes about this calling from God into the service of Christ and his church, "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine,'" that's referring to Paul. He's a chosen instrument of mine "to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel." That's why Paul continued on when he wrote to the Corinthians and says, uh, "I have nothing, in effect," I'm amplifying here, "I have nothing really to brag about or boast about if I'm faithful to Christ." He says, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel." In other words, "I didn't sign up for this. I didn't volunteer for this. A call was placed on me and I am under compulsion now to do that which Christ laid hold of me to do." And by the way, this applies to all of us. Matter of fact, the called is one of those blessed and special titles for all who are saved that is so neglected in the modern church age. How often do you introduce yourself and say, "Well, you know, I'm, I'm the called." It's kinda, uh, seems like we don't want to say that because it, it may be is, is, is proud sounding or or arrogant or elitist, but the Bible uses it over and over and over again to designate those who are Christians, those who belong to God. For, for example, 1 Corinthians 1:24, "to those who are," definite article, "the called," he's referring to the believers at the church at Corinth, you're the called. God reached out to you and placed you in his family and in his service.

Uh, Acts 2:41 and 42 is a good verse to show us something of the call that is on all of us. Um, there's a dual nature to the Christian call. You're called to salvation to believe on Christ, and then you're called into service for Christ until we all get home to heaven, where we will finally serve Jesus perfectly. You see, that's what grieves us down here is we don't serve our Lord well. What grieves us down here is there's something in us since the new birth that desires to honor him and please him and glorify him and actively serve him, and we continually fall short. Aren't you glad we remain under grace? What a gift that is. So the call of God includes salvation and service. Paul was called to a special service of apostleship. Now you and I do not have that, but we're all called to service.

Um, again, Acts 2:41 and 42, "then, those who had received his word," that's the call and your name is placed on salvation's roll at that point, they "were baptized," that's joining the local assembly of believers there, Now that's the call and your name is placed on the service roll. You're called to salvation and your name is on the salvation's roll. At the same time, you're called to a local church to serve him, and that's the service roll. "And there were added that day about 3,000 souls," verse 42, "and they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship and to the breaking bread of prayer and prayer." So here we have the salvation's roll and the service roll, and then, if you will, the equipping roll. Pastors are now to equip you, to instruct you from the word, to admonish you, to model for you, to reprove you when necessary, to stay with the service. He called us to salvation, and equally so he called us to service. There's, there's no, there's no hesitancy, there's no spot, there's no space between the Apostle Paul, Saul of Tarsus, coming to faith in Christ and immediately saying, "I was entered into this service for my Savior." So those of you young people who are praying about baptism, you're on the right track. Don't be diverted. Don't, don't back up. That's the next thing.

The only logical thing. It's the commended thing to make your profession faith through baptism and get on the service roll of God in the local church. Now it's very true, we, we serve God in the workplace, we serve God in the community as we represent Christ everywhere we go, but there's that central, uh, foundational element of service with just when you're baptized and become a member of Christ's local church,

All right, his mighty strength, his, his mighty calling. Now let's go, thirdly, to his mighty mercy. I'm glad God is mighty in mercy. What a glory. So, so it's as if Paul moves that diamond a little bit more and another brilliant facet of the beauty and the wonder and the might of Christ is shown forth. Verse, uh, 13, "even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy." What a contrast and what a paradox. Paul was a hardened sinner. He hated the church. He hated Christ, and he was under the commission of the Jewish legal authorities that everywhere he could possibly go, he was to crush the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Actually, this word, a, a violent aggressor, it has, has the idea of a brutish, domineering. It's, it's if a raging bull enters a room and just wants to trample to death whatever is in front of it. Paul says, "That's what I was, a raging bull of torrent and force and power to crush out God's church. And in that condition I was shown mercy." You know what that is, brothers and sisters? That's mighty mercy right there. That's just not little mercy, that's just not a small type of mercy, that's a great, great mercy.

Paul, who showed no mercy to Christ or to Christians, yet became the object of God's great mercy. I've often said it's, it's hard to define these terms in one little phrase here and there, but I've often said that grace is getting what we don't deserve, grace is God's favor. God says, "I'm gonna favor you even though you don't earn it, you haven't earned it, rather, don't deserve it." Mercy is the other side of the coin. Mercy is God saying, "I am not going to give you what you do rightfully deserve. Grace, I'm gonna give you what you couldn't deserve, and mercy is I'm going to withhold that which every molecule of your being cries for My judgment and wrath, but I am not going to do that. I'm going to show you mercy through the merits of my Son Jesus Christ."

Now again, we, I don't like to mention mercy unless I mention an amplification of what mercy involves, because the Bible teaches that the God of mercy is the God who feels pity. Now listen to me, he feels pity, he feels sorrow for the most undeserving. My, my, my what a God. You say, I, I wish I could take my brain and your brain and program into our brains the depth of our lacking before the Holy God, the weightiness, the weightiness of our wickedness before this Triune Holy God, and God looks on us and sees our deplorable condition, he, he sees the worm that we are and God says, "I feel pity for them." He didn't have to. He could throw us all into judgment and been just. He didn't have to but God in his heart, the great heart of God, says, "They're the most wretched and violent and despicable and offensive beings I could imagine, yet I feel pity for them." You know, aren't you glad God's not like me? And aren't you glad God's not like you? We don't do that. It takes God to have that kind of great mercy.

He feels deeply for us, but also it means, mercy means he acts greatly in mercy on our behalf. He feels it. He acts upon it. How many times have I failed my Lord and maybe a

brother or sister in Christ when I feel something deeply for them and I, I didn't write that card, I didn't make that phone call, I didn't put my hand on the shoulder and said, "Man, I, I'm praying for you." I've done it a lot, but I believe I failed at it a lot too. But here's the thing about God: he don't fail. He never misses it. He never falls short in any way, shape or fashion in this mighty mercy.

The Bible says in Ephesians 2 for him being rich in mercy, it means mercy is ever present within him, and there's a far greater supply than even you could exhaust. He sees us in our miserable state and comes to us. The old songwriter wrote, "He saw me plunged in deep despair and flew to my relief. For me, he bore the shameful cross and carried all my grief." Paul says, "You gotta know something, Timothy, He, He's the mighty God but, O glory, He's mighty in mercy." Mighty in mercy. Are you listening to me, child of God? You can't out-sin the mercy of God. Can't do it. "You may, Pastor, if I just bow my neck and try to be as corrupt and evil and wicked the rest of my life, I couldn't out-sin?" No, you can't out-sin the mercy of God, and by the way, if you're a child of mercy, you don't want to out-sin the mercy of God. It stirs your heart to say, "O Christ, help me serve You better! Help me serve You better."

Well, number four, Paul moves that diamond and says, "I need to show you another glorious dimension and facet of our Lord in His work, His mighty sovereign grace." His mighty sovereign grace in verse 14, "and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus." You see, in any true understanding of what is just and what is right, we only deserve God's disfavour. Ephesians 2:3 reminds us we "were children of wrath." That means when you're a one-celled human being in the womb of your mother, every fiber of your being as a one-celled human being in the womb of your mother called for God's wrath against you. It was your very core being, your very nature but God chose to have grace on us. It means in his perfection he chose and said, "I'm gonna pour out favor on that undeserving one." Very akin to mercy, but a different type of thing in grace. Jesus, you see, is the grace ambassador. He brings grace to us. God's unmerited favor toward us. Grace mean God has changed his view of us, and God has changed his action toward us. His view of us was one of deep, deep displeasure and disdain and now that has changed to a joyous and sweet smile of acceptance and love.

It is just beyond my comprehension, I cannot take it into my heart, I cannot cogitate the reality of it in my mind that this holy God would just on the merits of Christ say, "You've gone from the object of my displeasure and wrath to the object of my great, great love and favor." Child of God, when you walk out of this building today and you get into your car and you drive out on Avalon Avenue or wherever it might be, you are a child of God's divine favor through the merits of the Son Jesus Christ. Hold your head up high. He's for you folks. He's for you. That's why the Bible said if God is for us, who can be against us? Can disease be against me and have any capacity to overcome me? Absolutely not. Even Joe Biden can't hurt us folks. The Supreme Court can't hurt us. You know, we've got absolute fools and idiots running our country. I mean that literally and obviously. We do, but Jesus is for us. He favors us.

Grace, mighty sovereign grace. Paul goes from this violent blasphemer, this persecutor to, to one who now is by God's favor, a great servant of the church, one trying to build up the church. You see, when grace comes upon us, God changes us. You couldn't change yourself, you couldn't make yourself joy in this God. Oh, you could come up with religion and will go through some motions and call yourself okay, man's good at that, but that's didn't mean your heart's changed. You, you can't cause your heart to change, but when God saved you, the regenerating power of the Spirit of God made you a new creature in Christ Jesus all through sovereign grace, a favor we don't deserve, that is. You see, now my heart is changed and I love him. My mind is now changed and I respect him. My eye is now changed and I look to him. My hands are now changed and I reach for him. My feet have been changed and I run to him. He is my resource, my rest, and my reward, all because of sovereign grace. He chose to favor me.

Number five, Paul takes that gem and he turns it a little bit further says there's another facet of the glory and wonder of our great Savior you need to know. Notice his mighty ambition, his mighty ambition. Look at it there in verse 15, "It is a trustworthy statement," now that that means this is something we all absolutely agree on, we all know this is true, Paul is saying. "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." This was Jesus' commission from the Father. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now the Father is going to send him again not to save sinners but to rescue his church and extend his retribution and wrath on all those who would not come to Christ. But in this first coming, he came to save sinners. This was his commission, this was his driving ambition. That's why Jesus said, "I did not come to do My own will but the will of Him, My Father, who sent Me." And he performed the task perfectly. You know, that's what I love about Jesus is Jesus never fails. He cannot fail. Listen to me: there will not be one of the lowliest, tiniest little sheep that he will not bring safely home. He fulfills the task appointed to him by the Father. You talk about eternal security. Oh my goodness. The only way you could lose what Christ purchased is you have to conquer Christ and that can't be done.

Well, John, 17:4, Jesus said, "I have glorified thee," he's talking to the Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth, having finished," past tense rather. "accomplished the work which thou has sent me to do." What was that work? Well, his work was what his ambition was, to save the lost. "I'm saving Our children, Father. I've got it all done." John 6:39, and "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."

Now the apostle says here at the beginning of verse 15, it, it was Christ's commission and, as we're calling it, his mighty ambition that he came into the world to save sinners and then Paul says, "among whom I am foremost of all." Paul says, "I don't know a greater sinner than me. I don't know anybody that ought to endure the wrath of God more than me. I don't know anyone that ought to be banished into outer darkness and suffering and justly endure that for eternity to fulfill the great justice of God. I don't know anybody that deserves that," Paul would say, "more than me. God came into the world in the person of His Son Jesus Christ to save sinners, among whom I'm for most of all."

Number six.: Christ's mighty commission. Commission, well, I mean the commissioning of Paul in this sense, Paul says, "Here's the commission that Christ has given us," and it's quite a mighty commission when you consider all that's involved here. In verse 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." "My commissioning," Paul says, "your commissioning, my commissioning is to be the example of what God can do with worthless sinners." He said, "That's what I am. That's why my, my commission, whatever else it involves involves me being an example of what God can do with sinners like us."

He talks about there for those who would believe, "I'm an example for those who would believe." The Greek really means those destined to believe. God has those who are destined to believe, and I'm an encouragement to them that Christ will save you, Christ will cleanse you, Christ will forgive you. Christ's mercy is adequate for you, his grace is abundantly supplied to you and he will cleanse you and keep you as his own for time and for eternity. Paul says, "I'm an example of that." And God saved you, my friend, with the primary purpose to use you, that you might encourage and bless others that they might draw nearer to Christ and find salvation in Christ, and then faithfully serve Christ. You see, that's what makes a good church, people who are grateful they're not going to hell, people who are grateful they're no longer under the wrath of God. And they ought to be people that this God would show such love and unmerited favor toward them. If I could just get that in your heart. I've never lacked for anybody to do anything in this church. If I can be a great motivator and a great organizer and a great strategist and a great visionary, and God's given me some of those gifts, but that doesn't matter if the heart doesn't say, "O God, I'm grateful. And Jeff Noblit might be crazy, but he's still my pastor and I want to serve You. I will serve You in your church. I can't get over what You've done for me."

Brother Matt preached to us, I forgot which time, but he was challenging us to take our July Jubilee, that's what we'll call it, July Jubilee. It's not Jubilee for some of y'all because y'all gotta do a lot of work but we take a little down time and take off and then we come back ready to go to work. Not just grateful that you got the break, but far more than that grateful that you have a Christ who will never leave you nor forsake you. A Christ who will not – listen to me – who will not let you perish. What a glory. He's given you the commission to serve him and to be an example to the world, "Hey, look at me." You know, whatever else we have, we have our testimony, amen? I mean, you can say what you want, slice it however you want, uh, scrutinize, investigate what this guy could do or this lady could do but at the end of the day we're sinners saved by grace. As my brother told me this last week, no, we're saints who sin. That's probably better. We have a commission to live out an example of what Christ could do with sinners.

VII. Paul turns that stone a little bit more, and there's another glimmering, glorious facet: Christ's mighty exultation. Well, we've been exalting him the whole time, but Paul comes here to something of a doxology, if you will. "Now to the King eternal, immortal." First of all, he, he just grasped three, I guess you would say, attributes of God here. It's as if

he's saying, "Timothy, think on this a little bit now. The King eternal." In other words, there's no other king like him.

Exodus 15:18 says the Lord shall reign forever and ever. He's the forever King. That was one of the things that was so, put such trepidation and fear in the hearts and minds of people who lived under absolutely monarchies and that was if we get a good king, what's gonna happen when he's gone? If we get a good king, that, that is beneficent and, and gracious and kind and, and cares for us. A lot of them didn't, by the way. What would happen if he's gone? And all of these blinded unbelievers in our world today, you know in the world today they're looking for a savior. They're looking for a savior and they think the next guy that gets elected to office is gonna be the new savior. Well, he's not but we've got a forever King. We have a King that you can't depose, you can't stop, you can't thwart, he does not change. We'll talk about that now. He's the forever King and, by the way, we are his forever child.

The he says he's immortal. He has immortality, he's incorruptible, he cannot be destroyed. You see, God is made of such stuff that can never decay, wither, diminish, be thwarted, changed, mitigated against. Nothing. He's immortal. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. He changeth not. Sin and all its corroding forces are powerless to him. In fact, not only the sin and the corruption of sin and, and that's why my knee hurts and my back hurts, it's because skin has corrupted our bodies and they grow weak and they grow feeble and stuff starts, stops working. Now I had a thing in my vision the other day and it looked like a, a, a retina tear or something and he said, "No, just the gel in there's messed up. It'll be okay." Then how did it get messed up? He said, "You're getting older." All of this degradation that we have in this temporal physical realm, Jesus not only is not touched by it, Jesus reverses it. He's placed in you an eternal seed as a part of his new creation, the very eternal life of God has been placed in you and he has started germinating that thing inside your heart, first of all, to change your affections and your heart to love and joy in God and his Son Jesus Christ, and then the day is coming when he will take your physical body, he may lay it in the grave but he'll give you a brand new glorified body because he reverses the course of corruption. Not only can it not touch him, he reverses it for us.

He's immortal and then invisible, verse 17, another attribute, unseen, no man has seen God at any time. Paul is saying to Timothy, "Timothy, I don't know what's going to happen to you, I just got out of prison." We know by 2 Timothy he's back into prison. We know while he's writing 2 Timothy his execution is imminent but he said, "You know, our God, He's, He's with me." Our, our God is everywhere. Being infinite in being, he has no limits. He's omnipresent. He's omnipotent. He's omniscient. No place, there is no place where he is not present. There is no power to which he is not superior. There is no knowledge to which he cannot confute. He is invisible.

Then he says he's the only God. 1 Timothy 6:15 says he's "the blessed and only Sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords." Psalm 86:10, "You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God."

So now he comes to our response to all of this, last phrase of verse 17, "the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." Now here's the thing, him being the only God, he's going to receive honor and glory forever and ever. Here's the question: are you going to honor him and glorify him by being an object of his favor, one of his saved children, or being the object of his wrath. But either way he's going to be honored and glorified. That's going to happen. Uh, news flash: this whole thing's not about you. This whole thing's not about you, not primarily it's not about you. In a very real sense, the only reason I'm saved and you're saved is God needed wicked sinners to save so he could show off how big and wonderful and gracious and loving and forgiving he is. It's not about you, it's about him. I'm telling you what, he's gonna split that sky one day and return for his church and everyone will see with utter clarity and no denial as they bow on their face and scream for mercy at the glory of our returning God and King. Everybody on that day will know he's the only God. Maybe everyone on that day will honor him and glorify him. Aren't you glad we're on the welcoming committee? All mercy and all grace and we're on the welcome committee.

When he says "honor," that means of highest value, in all glory. The glory word has the idea of opinion. What it means is by any right calculation, by any right or true calculation, we come to the conclusion he's deserving of all honor and praise and glory forever and ever, Paul says, that means for time and eternity. Paul said, "I just want to remind you, Timothy, of His mighty strength, of His mighty calling, of His mighty mercy, of His mighty sovereign grace, of His mighty ambition, of His mighty commission, and of His mighty exaltation."

As we come to this time of receiving members and then we'll all take the Lord's Supper together, I think that's a good place to camp just to get our minds that whatever else we will do during the Lord's Supper here in a moment, every one of us come to this table together as the foremost sinner of all. You're the worst sinner you know. I'm the worst sinner I know. But we've been cleansed and we've been pardoned, we've been shown mercy and grace, but then God said, "You commune one to another in Me." In Christ, our bond is precious and special and wonderful and holy and blessed and so we take the Lord's table in a moment together because he has done something that's made us more one, we have more connecting us than any other collectivity known to mankind, even husband and wife, even immediate family cannot compare to the church because you may lose your family but you don't lose the church, and when you get to heaven there will not be husbands and wives and families as we know it today, but there'll be the church.