

**Message #5****I Timothy 1:12-17**

I love the way H. A. Ironside begins his discussion of these verses: “There is tremendous power in Christian testimony. All who are saved are not called to be preachers; all do not have the gift of teaching. But all who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ ought to have something to say about the great change that comes into the life when Christ is received as Saviour and owned as Lord” (Ironside, p. 31).

The Apostle Paul never got tired of testifying for God. He never got over the fact God saved him and he never got over the fact that God put him into ministry.

Now the context of this very personal section of Scripture is very important. There were people who desired to teach things pertaining to the Law, when they really didn’t know what they were talking about. To these people, it was not just faith in Christ that made one right with God; but it was faith plus an entangled maze of keeping the O.T. Law. Paul wanted to contrast a false teacher’s perspective with a true teacher’s perspective of salvation and to Paul, it was all God’s grace.

**A TRUE PERSPECTIVE OF THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL IS ONE THAT CONTINUALLY THANKS AND PRAISES GOD BECAUSE HE SAVES WRETCHED SINNERS AND THEN ENTRUSTS THEM WITH MINISTRY.**

**REASON #1** – Paul thanked God because of God’s strength. **1:12-13**

The word “strengthened” is an aorist participle. What this means is that Paul is looking back to a specific point in time when God strengthened him. The particular word is an intense word, which speaks of an intense inner strengthening.

There can be no better demonstration of the power of God that hit Paul than when he was stopped on the road to Damascus, dead in his tracks and saved by God, and entrusted with the Grace Age ministry of the entire Gentile world (Acts 9:1-6, 15). Paul was heading to Damascus to murder Christians and God, by His power, stopped him. Paul never forgot about the reality of this kind of power, and it was something for which he continually thanked God.

**Empowerment #1** - Paul was thankful because God strengthened him to the point that God considered him to be faithful. **1:12a**

Here is an amazing thing. Paul is thanking Christ for strengthening which He gave, which enabled him to be classified by God as faithful. In other words, Paul viewed faithfulness as a strengthening of God. The same God that saved Paul strengthened Paul.

**Empowerment #2** - Paul was thankful because God strengthened him to the point that God put him into ministry. **1:12b**

H. A. Ironside said he had seen people go into ministry for many reasons:

- 1) Because of the advice of family or friends.
- 2) Because of a purely worldly ambition.
- 3) Because of a compassion for souls.
- 4) Because of a humanitarian concern for the world.

Ironside said some of these reasons seem good, but none of them are right. The only right reason for going into ministry is because God puts a person into ministry (Ironside, pp. 34-35).

The word “put” is one that means Paul believed God placed him or set him in ministry (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 445). The middle voice of the participle indicates that not only did God put Paul in ministry, He did it in and of Himself for His own purposes. The aorist tense points back to the moment God saved Paul. God put Paul into service the moment He saved him.

The word “service” is a general term often used for ministry. It is the word diakonia, which refers to service ministry (G. Abbott-Smith, pp. 107-108). By using this word, rather than apostle or teacher, he is amazed that God would use him in any ministry and he believed that any service ministry in the church was an enablement from God.

**(Characterization #1)** - Paul was previously a blasphemer. **1:13a**

Paul was a blasphemer in the worst way. He not only spoke against God himself, he also tried to force others to speak against God (Acts 26:9-11).

**(Characterization #2)** - Paul was previously a persecutor. **1:13b**

The term “persecutor” is one that means Paul put Christians to flight. He followed after them eagerly in order to silence them.

**(Characterization #3)** - Paul was previously violent. **1:13c**

The term means Paul went after Christians in order to injure them. This characterization was no exaggeration; he had, as John Calvin said, a rage against Christianity that was cruel (Calvin, p. 35).

Now it is one thing to be an ignorant unbeliever; it is quite another to go on a crusade against believers, trying to get them to turn away from God. One might ask why would God save and strengthen one who blatantly ridiculed Jesus Christ and tried to destroy all who believed in Him. The answer to this question is found in the last part of the verse—because Paul acted ignorantly in unbelief.

We may appreciate the words of Duane Litfin: “Willful disobedience triggers God’s wrath (Num. 15:22-31; Heb. 10:26). But God deals gently with the ignorant and misguided (Heb. 5:2) (*Bible Knowledge*, p. 732).

### **REASON #2 – Paul thanked God because of God’s grace. 1:14-16**

#### **Fact #1 - God’s grace was more than abundant. 1:14a**

The actual word “abound” is one that, in and of itself, means to super-abound (Smith, p. 364). The word “more than” is the preposition huper, which means to abound in such a way that is far above and beyond and more valuable than anything else (*Ibid.*, p. 457).

In other words, Paul viewed the grace of God as the ultimate reason for his salvation and ministry.

#### **Fact #2 - God’s grace contained faith and love. 1:14b**

As I understand the text, Paul is saying the grace package came with or included faith in Jesus Christ and a love for Jesus Christ. Paul had been a violent aggressor against Christianity. He hated Jesus Christ and he hated anyone who believed on Christ. God’s grace not only gave Paul faith in Jesus Christ; it also gave Paul a love for Jesus Christ. As one writer said, “Everything Paul lacked, God’s grace had more than amply supplied” (Litfin, p. 733).

#### **Fact #3 - God’s grace was for the worst sinners. 1:15**

Paul saw himself as the “foremost” of sinners. He was one who not only didn’t believe and sinned like every other unbeliever (Eph. 2:3), but he was one who actually tried to kill anyone who believed. He was at the highest level of sin—he was a personal sinner and he persuaded other sinners not to believe and he persecuted those who did believe.

Jesus Christ did not come into this world to save good people; He came to save the worst of sinners.

#### **Fact #4 - God’s grace is for a critical purpose. 1:16**

God’s grace saves terrible sinners to become an example for others who will believe. God wants people He saves to be examples to others of ones who have been touched by the grace of God. The greatest enemy of Christianity was saved by God’s grace to be an example to others that God’s grace can save the worst kind of sinners.

As Paul reflected on the power God had given him, and as he reflected on the grace God had abundantly given to him, he burst out into worshipful praise. He went from thanking Christ to worshipping Christ.

**Worship Statement #1** - Jesus Christ is the King. **1:17a**

The noun “king” used in the Roman world referred to one who had total sovereign and royal power.

**Worship Statement #2** - Jesus Christ is eternal. **1:17b**

Only God has no beginning or ending.

**Worship Statement #3** - Jesus Christ is immortal. **1:17c**

The word means Jesus Christ cannot perish, He cannot die. He went to the cross once, He faced death once; but Jesus Christ is alive. He is a living Savior, not a dead one. He is immortal and in Him is life.

**Worship Statement #4** - Jesus Christ is invisible. **1:17d**

You cannot physically see Jesus Christ today, but His power is on display every time a sinner is saved.

**Worship Statement #5** - Jesus Christ is the only God. **1:17e**

J. Vernon McGee said, “Don’t tell me that Paul did not teach that the Lord Jesus was God. ...here he gives this wonderful testimony to that” (Vol. 5, p. 435).

Perhaps you are here today and you are a wretched sinner. Jesus Christ came into this world to save one like you. He did that for me and He will do that for you. If you want to enter into a wonderful new relationship with God, invite Jesus Christ into your life. Believe on Him for eternal life and you will be saved.