

“Paul’s Divine Appointment”  
1 Timothy 1:12-16  
(Preached at Trinity, November 29, 2020)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul had received word of false teachers threatening the Church of Ephesus. They were tampering with the Gospel. This terrified Paul and so he left Timothy at Ephesus to set in order the truth of the Gospel.  
**1 Timothy 1:3 NAU** - "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,"
2. This letter has the purpose of instructing Timothy as he instructs the church. Paul’s chief focus is upon establishing the church upon the unshakable rock of sound doctrine. His great passion was the Gospel of Christ. He refers to it as “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.”  
It was this Gospel that God had entrusted into the care of Paul – **Verse 11**.
3. Paul never got over this. It was to his utter amazement that God would set him apart and entrust him with so great a ministry.  
**1 Timothy 1:12 NAU** - "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,"
- I. Paul begins by expressing his great gratitude to Christ for entrusting him with the Gospel
  - A. “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord”
    1. Before sharing the details of his conversion and calling Paul expresses his gratitude.
    2. Christians are a grateful people. Of all people, Christians have much for which to be thankful.
    3. Thanksgiving is our identifying mark  
**Ephesians 5:3-4 NAU** - "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; <sup>4</sup> and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks."
      - a. You may boast that you profess religion - the devil transforms himself into an angel of light
      - b. You may boast that you believe in God - the demons believe and tremble
      - c. But are you thankful? - While the demons blaspheme we sing forth the praises of God.
      - d. Ingratitude is a mark of fallen humanity  
**Romans 1:21 NAU** - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks"

- B. Paul's gratitude was fixed on two platforms
1. The wonder of his salvation. That God would save a sinner like him.  
**1 Timothy 1:15 NAU** - "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*."
  2. Second, Paul was filled with gratitude that God commissioned him to proclaim His Gospel
- C. Christians need to give careful attention to our attitude of gratitude
1. It is amazing that God has called us one of His own. That He has saved us from our sins.
  2. It is amazing that He has called us to serve Him. What is your attitude about your service? Are you serving Christ? Are you serving His church. Too often Christians grow weary and tired of their service. We should rejoice for the privilege of service - that we *get* to serve.
- II. Paul was amazed because of his past
- A. Paul saw himself as the greatest of all sinners
1. Paul's conversion was the prototype of all conversions  
As a young man John Newton was arrogant and insubordinate. His life was characterized by gross immorality. He later wrote, "I sinned with a high hand and made it my study to tempt and seduce others." He later became a slave-trader. On one journey, his ship was caught in a terrible storm and he was converted to Christianity and became increasingly disgusted with the slave industry.  
Like Paul, he never ceased amazement that God saved him.  
One of his best-known hymns described his amazement:  
Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,  
that saved a wretch like me.
  2. Paul declared:  
"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*."  
He uses the superlative *πρῶτος*  
It means first, chief, foremost  
The various translations capture the intensity of the word  
ESV and NASB – "the foremost"  
KJV – "I am chief"  
NIV – "I am the worst"
  3. Paul's life stood as testimony of the Gospel's power when the Law is properly applied. Paul was convicted of his lawlessness and declared guilty. He saw himself as justly condemned.
  4. Yes, the Gospel is offensive. The Law is a sharp dagger. It exposes and condemns. Yet, it is God's means of drawing sinners. It must not be excluded from the Gospel, no matter how unpopular.  
Too many are ashamed of the Gospel and ashamed to point men to their sin.

Robert Schuller wrote in his book on Self Esteem: “I don’t think that anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality, and hence counterproductive to the evangelistic enterprise than the unchristian, uncouth strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition.”<sup>1</sup>

B. Paul described the testimony of his life

1. He had been a blasphemer – blasphemy is a sin of the tongue. It is amazing Paul owns this sin because he had previously been a Pharisee. The word can also carry the idea of slander. Paul had spoken against Christ and His people.
2. He was a persecutor of the church – this noun is found only here but it is a form of the Verb used often. Paul zealously rounded up Christians and had them arrested.
3. He referred to himself as a “violent aggressor” - Paul was savage and cruel in his attacks on the church.  
**Acts 26:9-11 NAU** - "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup> "And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup> "And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities."
4. Before God’s grace transformed him, Paul’s life was consistent with those he described in **Verses 9-10**.

C. Paul’s salvation was all of grace

1. It was by grace that he was granted mercy and forgiveness
  - a. Paul adds that as dreadful as his sin was, it was not sin against knowledge. He committed these acts in ignorance and unbelief. Paul is implying the particular wickedness of openly rejecting the plain teaching of the Gospel. Paul was acting ignorantly.
  - b. He received God’s mercy and pity  
**1 Timothy 1:14 NAU** - " and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus."
  - c. Paul takes his place among the ranks of those Jesus declared, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”
  - d. Paul did not know Christ. When Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus Paul asked, “Who are you Lord?”
  - e. This doesn’t mean Paul’s ignorance excused his sin. He was forgiven because of God’s mercy.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Daniel M. Doriani, and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 26.

2. Paul uses the expression “it is a trustworthy statement” five times in the Pastoral epistles, four in his two letters to Timothy. There is one additional in Titus.

Paul uses the same word translated “faithful” in **Verse 12**

(faithful, reliable, trustworthy) – he is referring to an irrefutable axiom.

**1 Timothy 1:15 NAU** - "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"

**1 Timothy 3:1 NAU** - "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*."

**1 Timothy 4:8-9 NAU** - "bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come. <sup>9</sup> It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance."

**2 Timothy 2:11-13 NAU** - "It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; <sup>12</sup> If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; <sup>13</sup> If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."

- a. Paul is talking about the Gospel – that Christ came into the world to save sinners.
- b. It is faithful and true. It is beyond dispute, worthy of all acceptance. This means it should be received by every man, woman, and child. All are left without excuse.
- c. There is a universal offer of grace, but it must be received individually.

3. Paul was saved by the wondrous grace of God.

D. It was also by this grace that Paul was equipped for ministry

1. Paul uses a wordplay to describe his commission.

In **Verse 11** he describes the Gospel as that of which he had been entrusted – the word is πιστεύω which is the verb meaning “to believe.”

In **Verse 12** Paul says “He considered me faithful.” – πιστός This is a noun, similar to the word, πίστις which refers to faith or belief.

In other words, Paul was considered faithful to be entrusted with Gospel. It was all God’s work. Paul didn’t make himself worthy. God made him faithful.

2. Paul often gave his credentials. He opened this letter with his apostolic credentials, “Paul, and apostle of Jesus Christ.” But this was not a claim of prideful arrogance, but of humble claim to the office Christ had bestowed upon him.

But Paul saw himself as unworthy. It was an infinite privilege for him to serve Christ.

- III. Paul described the great purpose of God in his calling and election  
**1 Timothy 1:16 NAU** - "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."
- A. Paul's life stands as an example and encouragement
1. Paul made it clear that he was a great sinner. Jesus Christ is a great Savior. He came into the world to save sinners.
  2. If Paul found mercy other great sinners have cause to hope. The mercy experienced by Paul serves as an example to all who trust Christ for eternal life.
  3. Paul's conversion was not unlike the conversion of every Christian. The circumstances may be different, but the essence of the Gospel applied is universal and unchanging.
    - a. Paul saw himself as a great sinner. This is true of us all.
    - b. We are saved by grace through faith – it is the work of God's great mercy.
  4. No sinner should consider himself too far gone for the grace and mercy of Christ to reach. "Christ came into the world to save sinners."
- B. By Christ's great patience He strengthens sinners for service  
**1 Timothy 1:12 NAU** - "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service"
1. Paul was not considered faithful because he had been faithful, but because the God of grace considered him worthy of faith. And this faith was given by grace alone.
  2. Every Christians is unique, and Christ equips us for His service uniquely.
  3. While His saving grace is the same for all sinners, He gives each of us differing gifts to use for His glory.  
**Romans 12:4-8 NAU** - "For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup> Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; <sup>7</sup> if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup> or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

Conclusion:

1. This is the wonder of God's grace in the life of sinners. He saves us by His grace and then equips us by His grace.
2. He then preserves us until we see Him face to face.