

Subject: A Trophy of God's Grace

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:12-20

Paul was a man that Christ used to change the world, but first of all Christ had to change him. Here we find Paul's testimony. It is the testimony of God's saving grace and His glory. Paul could say: "I'm not what I ought to be, and I'm not what I'm going to be, but thank God I'm not what I used to be." God saved him and changed him. Paul was saved by God's grace and his life and ministry gave God glory. Paul gave his testimony of salvation by grace through faith in contrast to the false teachers. His testimony based on the Gospel of Christ was directly opposed to the false teaching mentioned in verses 6-10.

THE GRATITUDE THAT PAUL FELT (vs. 12)

Whenever Paul gave his testimony, he always put the focus on what God did for him. Paul was always thankful (literally, "I am having thanks"). He was forever thankful to Jesus Christ who enabled him, counted him faithful, and put him into the ministry. It was all what Jesus did, not what Paul did. If the Lord doesn't enable us, we're not able. *Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* This is the same word Paul used in verse 12. If the Lord doesn't count us faithful, we're not fit. Nine years passed between Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1-5) and his call as a missionary (Acts 13:1-4). If the Lord doesn't put us in the ministry, we had better get out of it. The Lord did something for Paul; He did something to Paul, and He did something through Paul. The Lord did something for us (at Calvary) so He can do something to us (at conversion) so He can do something through us (our Christian life).

THE GUILT THAT PAUL DESERVED (vs. 13)

What really humbled Paul was that he knew what kind of person he was before God saved him and called him into the Gospel ministry. He was a blasphemer (literally, to speak against or slander). He showed complete disrespect by speaking evil against Christ and the disciples. He persecuted (pursued, harassed) the church, the body of Christ, and he was injurious (a religious bully). He was violent and aggressive against Christians. But God had mercy on him because he was ignorant of Christ and therefore did not believe. His statement about ignorance was not a claim to innocence or an excuse, but it was an explanation. Paul was lost, but he didn't even know it. He thought he was truly doing God a service by protecting the Jewish religion against the Christians. Paul's conversion experience is recorded in Acts 9, 22, 26; Gal. 1, 2; and Phil. 3. His salvation came as a surprise to him and to the church. Paul thought he was too good to be saved, and the church thought he was too bad to be saved. But God's grace changed all that.

THE GRACE THAT PAUL RECEIVED (vs. 14-16)

God's grace made all the difference. *Ephesians 2:8-9*⁸ *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*⁹ *Not of works, lest any man should boast. 1 Corinthians 15:10* *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

- Paul described God's grace

It is exceeding abundant grace and it produces faith and love. Faith and love are God's gifts and not things we work up on our own. **Romans 5:20** *Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* God's grace is greater than all our sin.

- Paul declared God's grace

It is God's grace in Christ Jesus to save sinners. "O the love that drew salvation's plan, O the grace that brought it down to man, O the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary." This is one of the faithful sayings found in Paul's pastoral letters (1 Tim. 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Tit. 3:8). A faithful saying is a statement of some basic Christian teaching. It is worthy of all acceptance. Apparently these sayings were well known in all the churches. Paul considered himself to be the chief of sinners (first in rank). That was just the opposite of how he felt about himself before he was saved (Phil. 3). God's grace changes the way you look at Christ and the way you look at yourself.

- Paul demonstrated God's grace

The grace that saved Paul can save anybody. He is a supreme example of God's patience.

THE GLORY THAT PAUL OFFERED (vs. 17)

Paul is so thankful for what the Lord has done that he breaks out into praise. Salvation is by God's grace and for His glory. He is eternal (no beginning and no end). He is immortal (cannot die). He is invisible (spiritual, not physical). He is the only wise God. He deserves all honor and glory because of all He is and all He does. Amen means so be it or it is true.

THE GOOD FIGHT THAT PAUL FOUGHT (vs. 18-20)

Paul urged Timothy to remember his calling (the prophecies given about Timothy that confirmed his call to ministry). The call into ministry has an inward, personal element in which the person must feel God's call upon his life, and there is also an outward, corporate element in which the church confirms a person's call. Timothy's call involved fighting:

1 Timothy 6:12 *Fight the good fight of faith*

2 Timothy 2:3 *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*

2 Timothy 4:7 *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*

We must know what we are fighting for. Fighting the good fight involves fighting against false teachers and false teaching, and it involves keeping the faith and a good conscience (1:5). Paul switched from his analogy from army to navy. A good conscience is like the rudder on a ship that steers a believer through the dangers of sin and false doctrine.

The false teachers such as Hymenaeus and Alexander ignored their conscience and the truth and as a result they suffered spiritual shipwreck. Their lives were totally wrecked and ruined. This doesn't mean they lost their salvation. They were apostates who deliberately turned from the faith proving they never were saved at all (2 Tim. 2:17-18).

Paul said that he had delivered them to Satan (put them out of the church). They were no longer under the protection of God's people and His truth, but under Satan's control in the world. Paul hoped this would bring them to repentance and true faith so they would learn not to blaspheme. This was Paul with unique authority as an apostle and not something that is common for leaders in the church today.

The Christian life is spiritual warfare and being in ministry is the heat of the battle. Paul wants Timothy to understand that the stakes are high and the conditions are tough. It is not for the soft or faint of heart. But God's grace is sufficient.