

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

What the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy in our text must have meant a great deal to this young pastor. But these words are recorded for us too! Like Timothy, we all need encouragement as we proclaim the Good News to the world, and as we claim the Good News for ourselves. So Paul says to all of us this morning:

**LOOK AT WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR ME!
SURELY HE WILL DO THE SAME FOR YOU!**

I.

After Paul's three years of proclaiming the Gospel in Ephesus, he left Timothy to continue the work. In his letter Paul commands Timothy to hold onto the truth and oppose false doctrine, regardless of the cost. He is to teach the proper place of men and women in the congregation; to encourage the leaders of the congregation in their work and correct them when necessary; to teach servants to honor their masters, and the rich not to trust in their riches; and to be a good example.

This is heavy stuff for a beginning pastor, or even an experienced pastor. Perhaps many of you may be saying to yourselves at this very moment, "I'm sure glad I have not been called to proclaim the gospel of the blessed God!"

But YOU have! For Christ commands all His followers to **"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you."** (Cf. Matt. 28:18-20)

Therefore these words to Timothy are also meant to encourage your proclamation of the Good News. Paul says "Look what Jesus has done for me!" He begins by giving thanks to Christ for "enabling" him and **"counting him faithful, putting him into the ministry."** True ministers of Christ do not make themselves ministers; Christ does. Paul did not become Christ's apostle because he had been "faithful," that's for sure!

Paul had been a **"blasphemer"** – he used the most hateful words against Jesus, the Son of God. He had been a **"persecutor"** of Christians. This word means that Paul used to chase down the followers of Christ the way one hunts wild animals without mercy. Paul confesses that he had been **"insolent,"** which means that he did all his blaspheming and persecuting with a proud and arrogant spirit.

But Paul had acted in **"ignorance."** This is the same ignorance which

Jesus described when He warned His disciples, **"Whoever kills you will think that he is serving God."** (Jn. 16:2) This is the same ignorance on the part of the Jews which nailed Jesus to the cross. Paul had also thought he was serving Jehovah God when he persecuted Christians. He was ignorant in his unbelief.

But Christ had chosen this "clay vessel." Jesus **"counted"** Paul **"trustworthy"** to be His apostle, **"enabling"** him for the ministry from his conversion to this very moment, which was only a year before he was martyred in Rome.

Timothy had also been chosen by Christ through His apostle Paul, as well as by the church in Ephesus. (1Tim. 4:14, 2Tim. 1:6). Christ makes His ministers. They do not make themselves. For when Christ commissioned all His believing disciples of all time to **"make disciples of all nations, . . . to baptize and to teach" according to all that He commands** (Mt. 28:19-20), He also gave His Church the authority to Call men to represent Him and to assist the church in its work.

We have a seminary student among us who is already proclaiming the glorious and blessed gospel because of the enabling of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that our Lord will also count him faithful and place him into the public ministry of the gospel when he receives the call of His Savior from a body of Christians.

What a privilege and honor for a pastor or missionary to proclaim the glorious and blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! – and What a huge responsibility it is to be faithful! But Christ has commissioned every one of you also to proclaim the Gospel of Christ wherever you are! All of us were by nature ignorant unbelievers before our conversion to Christ! We were all His enemies, no better than Paul! Yet we have received the general call and commission to proclaim the Gospel.

Did any sinner provoke Jesus more than Paul? But instead of striking him down, as we might expect, our Lord's **"grace"** was **"exceedingly abundant"** toward him! Along with the working of grace in Paul came the **"faith and love"** that were so necessary in his ministry. Shall we not expect the same enabling grace? Whether we are chosen by Christ through a specific call into the public ministry, or by means of our general call as the disciples of Christ, let us not be discouraged! Paul rather encourages us to proclaim the Good News to the world. He says: Look at what Jesus has done for me!

II.

But all of us are still such poor sinners, and poor witnesses for Christ because of the flesh which still clings to us and harasses us. Isn't this why we desire the Lord's Supper today! Surely we also need encouragement as we claim the Good News for ourselves. Paul did. Look at verse 15. Paul says: **"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."** That Jesus came into the world to save sinners is truly good news! But some would say that such news is too good to be true. Therefore Paul adds that this good news is **"faithful and worthy of all acceptance."**

Why do we grow tired of listening to radio and television news broadcasts? Well, not only is much of the news bad news; but it is often difficult to determine whether we can trust the news. The Gospel of Christ is entirely different! Not only is it good news – the very best news a sinner can hear – but it is also **faithful and worthy of our full acceptance and trust.**

Why is that? First, because it comes from God, whose every word and work is done in connection with the truth. The **"glorious gospel of the blessed God"** (1Tim. 1:11), committed to Paul, to Timothy, and to us, is not an invention of man, but the revelation of God to man. Since the fall into sin, all the religions invented by man are based on the hope of gaining acceptance with God by one's works and obedience according to Law. But law-religion saves no one! For Scripture declares that **"by the law is the knowledge of sin,"** not the assurance of salvation!

Paul wrote to the Galatians: **"If there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by (means of) the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."** (Gal. 3:21-22) Believe what? The Good News revealed by God and proclaimed to the world!

This glorious Gospel is also true and worthy of our acceptance because God Himself invested the LIFE of His holy Son in order to bring about the salvation of sinners. Jesus Christ, the eternal "Word," came into the flesh of man in order that He might die on the cross as payment for the sins of the world, and declare to the world that He alone is **"the way"** to God, **"the truth, and the life."** Now the God of heaven and earth, Who is holy and true cannot go back on His promise to save all who trust in the saving merits and blood of His Son. He can't take Jesus Christ down from the cross, or put His holy Son back in death's tomb from which He raised Him!

Finally, this glorious Good News is worthy of our full acceptance because of what is freely offered. Wouldn't you accept a five gallon bucket of gold it

was freely offered to you? How about a million dollar mansion? – But the Good News from heaven is that heaven itself and all its eternal blessings and riches are yours through the blood of Jesus Christ! If there is anything that is worthy of our acceptance, it must be the **Good News that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”!**

This is especially good news to those who know they are sinners, and say with Paul, **“I am the chief of sinners”!** Didn’t we all confess in the hymn we just sang that each of us is “chief of sinners”? So Paul would emphasize that what Jesus had done for him, He has done and will do also for us!

There are many moments in our lives when our hearts are so convicted of sin that we may think we can’t be forgiven. – Our sins are too great because they are against God Who loves us! They cause such great harm to others! They are too often repeated! They are too horrible even to confess! – You may be inclined at this very moment to say with Paul, “I am the chief of sinners.” But you should never be so full of despair that you say to yourself, “My sins are so great they cannot be forgiven by God.”

For although Paul a blasphemer of Christ, persecutor of Christians, and a hateful hunter of them – he received **“MERCY.”** Why? Paul tells us: **I received mercy “so that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern of those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”** Twice in these verses Paul says that he received **“mercy.”** The reason for this mercy was not something in Paul, but something in Christ – His “longsuffering.” Paul was shown such mercy so that he might be a **“pattern”** or better, **“an outstanding model”** for future believers, including you and me!

Did anyone provoke Jesus more severely than Paul? Therefore, no other repentant sinner should despair of receiving **“mercy”** when he has sinned, no matter how great his sin, or how often repeated!

God’s mercy in Christ toward sinners cannot be drained or exhausted. If you begin to think so, then remember David, the adulterer and murderer, or Peter, the denier of our Lord. Remember John Newton, the slave trader, who had hunted down and mistreated his fellowmen to enrich himself; and then, after his conversion to Christ wrote “Amazing Grace.” Above all, let us look at Paul, who says: “What Jesus has done for me, he will surely do for you!” Amen.

“Now to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” (V. 17)