

## Chief Sinner to Chief Apostle

(1 Timothy 1:12-17)

- A. In these verses, Paul acknowledges his unworthiness and Christ's amazing grace which saved him and made him a minister, enabling him for the task. c/w **EPH 3:8; 1CO 15:10.**
- B. NOTE: Christ put Paul into the ministry.
1. This was the reason Christ arrested him on the road to Damascus. **ACT 26:16-18.**
  2. The Holy Ghost confirmed Christ's election of Paul to the ministry. **ACT 13:1-3.**
  3. The Holy Ghost also confirms our election to sonship. **ROM 8:14-17.**
  4. The bringing together of elected sons with elected ministers is how churches are built and perfected. **EPH 4:11-13.**
- C. He says that Christ "...hath enabled me..." (v. 12).
1. The proof of a ministerial call is discerned in ability.
  2. The ability to teach the truth is the one "professional" qualification of the ministry. **1TI 3:2; 2TI 2:2, 24; TIT 1:9.**
  3. Those whom Christ calls to minister, He also makes "...able ministers of the new testament..." (**2CO 3:5-6**). They should declare "live and do," not "do and live," no matter how much other men might promote the latter or blend it with the former.
  4. Only some are given the ability and call. **1CO 12:28-30; JAM 3:1.**
    - a. All are not given the same burden/blessing *quantitatively*. **MAT 25:14-15.**
    - b. But all who thus receive are expected to use it *qualitatively*.  
**MAT 25:20-26; JOH 21:15-22; 1PE 4:11.**
  5. Ministers are but vessels of grace and are tools in God's hands. Factionalism and boasting are thereby excluded. **1CO 3:4-7; 4:6-7.**
- D. God had *counted* Paul faithful. v. 12.
1. This cannot mean that Paul was "full of faith" in the sense that he was believing the gospel, for at the time of his conversion, Paul was in unbelief. v. 13.
  2. But Paul was faithful in the sense of having a sincere allegiance and loyalty to his God, even though in ignorance. This would explain his words in **ACT 23:1.**
  3. Apollos was also a fervent unconverted man whom God made a minister. **ACT 18:24-28.**
- E. Paul had been a case study in misdirected zeal prior to conversion. **ACT 22:3-5.**
1. When one persecutes the church, God takes it personally. **ACT 9:4; ZEC 2:8.**
  2. He earnestly thought he was doing right. **ACT 26:9.**
    - a. This shows us that sincerity alone will not justify us before God.
    - b. In retrospect, Paul's zeal had been more for Jewish tradition than it had been for God, and like his countrymen, he was blinded by the letter of the law so as not to see the spiritual message of the Law: the righteousness of Christ.  
**GAL 1:14 c/w ROM 10:4.**
    - c. Not all zealous affectation is good. **GAL 4:17-18.**
    - d. Zeal must be guided by knowledge to be of true spiritual value. **ROM 10:2.**
  3. Properly ordered zeal is required of saints.  
**JOH 2:17; COL 3:22-23; TIT 2:14; REV 3:15-16, 19.**
- F. Paul's conversion in spite of his waywardness reminds us of God's saving grace in regeneration. v. 13 c/w **TIT 3:3-5.**
- G. It is commonly said that the one sin which God will not forgive is unbelief. Yet Paul said, "...I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."
1. If unbelief is a sin that God will not forgive, then all men are hopelessly lost.
  2. The unbelief of man does not thwart the faith of God. **ROM 3:3.**

- a. Man's unbelief of God's declared past power to create, destroy or deliver does not negate the facts of (for example) Creation, the Flood, or the Red Sea.
  - b. Man's unbelief of God's faith in His Son's blood to save His people by grace does not overthrow His will to do so. **ROM 3:24-25 c/w JOH 6:37-39.**
  - c. Man's unbelief of God's promises of earth's future destruction by fire will not prevent that either. **2PE 3:5-7.**
3. If God has sworn in covenant to show mercy unto someone, even their unbelief will be forgiven. **ROM 11:27-32; 2TI 2:13.**
  4. It is true that "...without faith it is impossible to please him..." (**HEB 11:6**), but this does not mean that man's unbelief forbids God from *pleasing Himself* in saving men.
  5. Saul of Tarsus was lacking in true faith and love, but not Christ. This is what grace is all about. **v. 14.**
- H. The fact that Paul had been persecuting saints out of ignorance is noteworthy.
1. Paul's actions were not willful, presumptuous violations of the truth. But his ignorance did not utterly excuse him. **LEV 5:17.**
  2. Our High Priest does take ignorance into consideration in His dealings with us. **NUM 15:27-30; LUK 12:47-48; HEB 5:1-2.**
- I. Paul became the premier example of God's longsuffering of sinners and the whole purpose of Christ's advent. **vs. 15-16.**
1. The chief of sinners was made into the chief apostle. **GAL 1:21-24; 2CO 11:5.**
  2. That Christ should suffer long with such a sinner as Paul should teach us that:
    - a. the vilest offenders are not beyond the reach of saving grace.
    - b. the greatest enemies of the truth may be turned into its ardent supporters.
    - c. caution should be used in deciding for God who belongs to Him and who does not. **2TI 2:17-19.**
    - d. when some people seem unaffected by the truth of the gospel, God can still get through without it. **2CH 33:9-13.**
    - e. saints may need to be patient in tribulation while God deals with their abusers. **LUK 18:7; 2TH 1:7-9.**
    - f. as Christ suffered long with Paul, so saints should suffer long with each other. **1CO 13:4; COL 3:12-13.**
- J. Having considered God's mercy towards sinners like himself, Paul lifts an anthem of praise to God. **v. 17.**