



Sermon - 04/23/2017
1 Timothy 1:12 – 17

I want you to turn to 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 12. We're continuing through the text. When I grew up church had a couple revivals a year. And you always had some evangelist who would come in and he would tell you at some point, some night, he would give his testimony. Inevitably his testimony would sound better, that he enjoyed life better before Christ than after Christ. I mean he would tell you about all the cool things he did, the times he got drunk, funny things he did and he'd go through all this stuff. And he'd be really pumped talking about all the stuff he did. And then he'd come to this day and go, "And I've met Jesus now and I'm excited about my walk with Christ." And you kind of left the feeling going, "I don't know if I want to go here because it sounded better over there."

Paul's going to give you his testimony today. Now he's going to do the opposite of what all these guys did growing up. He's going to pump up his present walk versus his old walk. He's pretty strong about who he thinks he is in a bad way. So walk with me. Listen to what he says beginning in verse 12.

¹²I give thanks to the one who's empowered me, Jesus Christ our Lord, because he considered me faithful, by putting me in ministry.

Now listen to what he said. He said I'm really excited to Jesus because he's empowered me for a ministry that he felt I could do. Now obviously when he's standing there and the Sanhedrin has decided to kill the first Christian publicly, Stephen. They're so angry that they're going to stone him and they want to do it with all they can. So they take their jackets off so they can really get a round up going. And they drop them at Saul's feet. He's now known as Saul. And they drop them at his feet and he protects their coats while they just get off on Stephen. I don't think it's at this point that God looks down and goes, "Yeah, he's going to be good in the ministry." I don't think it's good when that is over and they realize nobody's done anything. So they pull him in and go, "Listen, here's some warrants, head out of the country, go north, go to Syria, go to Damascus. A bunch of these Christians have run up there. Go get them. Bring them back. We'll do to them here what we just did to Stephen." So he's on the way. He's got his court orders. He's got his warrants. He's heading up. I doubt when he's got those warrants in his hand, particularly what he's going to say in a minute, that God looked down and said, "Boy! This guy's my guy." But on the way a bright light hits him. It's so bright it blinds him. He falls down and then here's the interesting thing in the text in the Greek. In the book of Acts it says,

everybody heard a voice, but only Paul really understood the words. And so Jesus says, “Why are you persecuting me?” He said, “Lord who are you?” And he said, “I’m Jesus whom you’re persecuting.” Now he says, “OK.” And he goes over to a city where Jesus says to wait. He says, “I’m going to send a guy to you.” Now he’s there blinded, but he’s waiting and he’s decided that what he heard is correct. And sure enough this guy shows up and tells him about the ministry. He says, “OK. Listen. God’s decided you’re legit now. You’ve listened to what his Son has said about himself. So here’s the deal. Two things. You can impact the world. You’re going to preach the gospel before kings. But it’s going to be really bad. You’re going to get beaten up and you’re going to suffer a whole lot while you do this.” Paul says, about his new life, he says, “Listen I am just grateful that I have this calling, I have this ministry, God looked down and because of my response to his son, he said, ‘You know what I think this guy can do it.’ And then he’s given me the power to do it.” He says, “I’m pumped! Even though I know.” If you want to know how bad it was go read 2 Corinthians 11. He talks about being in the ocean, a night and a day, talked about being beaten three or four times, talks about, and he spends basically his entire life in jail. He spends it in Caesarea, he spends it in Rome, his last moments of life are going to be 2 Timothy 4 where he’s in a jail cell because he’s a criminal. Every other time he’s been in jail is because he’s a preacher. This time he’s in jail because he’s a terrorist. He burned Rome according to the emperor. So he’s going to be brought out and his head cut off because he’s in jail as a criminal. And so it’s tough, but he said, “You know what I am so pumped about the fact that Jesus, one – considered me worthy, two – gave me the power to preach to kings and stand in the middle of hurt.” He says, “I’m just pumped about that.” So there’s his new life, right. Now he goes to his old life. Look in verse 13:

¹³But the former I was a blasphemer, one who persecuted, and an insolent man.

Now it’s interesting he says three things, right. Now watch what he says. He says, “Man I love where I am today. But let me tell you where I used to be. It was not good.” You don’t finish that verse and think he enjoyed his past life more than he does his new life. He says, “I was a blasphemer.” That is I sinned against God. “I persecuted people.” I sinned against people. And then this Greek word we get the English word hubris from this. “I was an insolent, angry, I’ve got it together, and I’m coming after you kind of man. I’ve sinned against myself.” He says, “In my past life I don’t look back at that and think it was cool. I don’t look back there and think, ‘Wow! This is a great time to live.’ I don’t tell you funny stories. I’m telling you that when I lived in my past life, listen, I blasphemed God, I beat up other people, and I hurt myself. I don’t look back here and think this is good.” Let me tell you something. If you look back on your former life before Christ and it looks more fun then you are in Christ, something’s wrong with who you are. He looked back here and said, “Man I don’t even like to think about it because I hated God, I hated people, and really at the end of the day I hated myself; sinned against me, sinned against God, sinned against other people. And I’m telling you when I look at my past life, it’s not good. But watch this.

I received mercy

I love what he does in this text. Remember what we talked about in the first chapter? We talked about the fact that grace is when God forgives your sin and mercy is when he deals with the misery and the consequence out of your sin. Those two Greek synonyms pretty much, now they

usher in and out of each other, if you have grace you're going to have mercy. You can't get mercy without grace. But they are a little bit distinct and so when he says here, I want you to listen, he says, "Listen. I'm so excited about where I am today. I've got a ministry, I've got the power of Christ, it's incredible. I used to really be bad. And here's the cool part. God gave me mercy." What he says is I was so bad he should have beaten me up. He should have punished me. He should have done something mean to me. He should have had a couple years where I had some bad things. He said, "Listen. He didn't do that. Even after all I did. After my blasphemy, my persecution, my attack on myself. Listen he still gave me mercy. He did not punish me. Christ took my punishment." Now watch this:

[because I acted without knowledge in unbelief.](#)

Now listen. One of the most profound statements he's ever made right there. What's the first thing Jesus said on the cross? Father, what'd he say? Forgive them. Why? The don't know what they're doing. There is no lost person in Bryan/College Station that knows what he's doing. He says, "When I was blaspheming he thought he was honoring." When he was persecuting he thought he was doing what God should do; kill off these people that have rejected the Jehovah of the Old Testament. "And when I did it with passion and fury, I thought it was OK. But I acted ignorant. I really didn't know what I was doing." Look at this:

[¹⁴But the grace of our Lord super abounded with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.](#)

He says, "Listen. I found God's grace." Now we're back to the word grace. He says, "I should have been punished, I wasn't, but let me tell you something. I found his grace. I was insane. I was blaspheming. I was persecuting. I was beating myself up. Had no idea, but when, when Jesus spoke to me and I heard his voice, I realized, 'Oh man! I've been a blasphemer. I've killed his people. I thought it was great when they stoned Stephen. I held the coats. And I was arrogant in about who I am.' But now I know. I had no idea then, but now since Jesus spoke to me I now know the truth." Now I want you to listen to something. You stay where you are in 1 Timothy. We're coming back. Trust me. I want you to listen. Jesus is in Caesarea Philippi, really cool spot, beautiful part of the Jordan River, the beginning of the Jordan River, garden area. "Who do people say I am?" They go through the thing. "Who do you say I am?" Peter said, "You are the Christ; the son of the living God." Now listen to this. Jesus answered and said to him, "You're blessed Simon Bar-Jonah! Because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." Now listen. "And I'm telling you that you're Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hell cannot prevail against it." Now listen to what he just said, OK. He said, "I will build my church." Now listen because we've missed this as Baptists. Peter said, "I know who you are." Jesus said, "That's right. You didn't learn that from me on a physical to physical basis. My Father told you that. I'm going to build my church on those two things. It's not going to be built just on people that hear the gospel. It's going to be built on people that hear the gospel and the Holy Spirit confirms that gospel in their heart." So he says, "Listen. I'm going to building my church on people like you that my Father has spoken." And So Paul's an example. He's on the road. He doesn't get it that he's a blasphemer. Jesus speaks to him, he goes, he kneels down, and he says, "OK. You're right. I'm wrong." And now ministry power. Now listen. This is why the Bible makes that scary statement that says Jesus said you can be forgiven for anything except one deal; you blaspheme

the Holy Spirit. Now blasphemy, we don't translate that word, it's blasphemous, we transliterate it. If you translate the Greek word blasphemy, it really just means to speak against, to disagree with. If Paul, when he's on the road, and he gets blinded and he hears the voice, now he has a choice. He can say, "You know what. I don't want it. I don't want it. I like what I'm doing. I like the fact that I'm climbing in Israel. I like the fact that I'm an important Rabbi. I like the fact that I'm really somebody here. And if I do this. I don't want to do this. I don't want to be persecuted. I don't want to have this. So I'm telling you I'm not in." Now listen. Prior to this he's not known who he is. But when he hears that voice and he says "No" no when he blasphemes he knows what he's doing. Now when he persecutes, he knows what he's doing. Now when he's insolent in his spirit, he knows what he's doing. And now he doesn't act in unbelief. Now he acts in total understanding of who he is. The Bible says, in Hebrews twice, today if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. You don't get tons of chances. But when you hear it, when you hear the Holy Spirit speak to you, you now have a choice. You either yield or don't yield. But listen. It doesn't matter whether you don't yield. Now you know the truth. And now you're going to live with it and if I die, if I look at Jesus when he speaks to me and I say, "No." And I die in that no, I die in my disagreeing with what the Holy Spirit told me about Jesus. Listen. If I die in the no, I have no hope. If I die in the yes, his grace and his mercy flood my life. That's why he says, "I really don't like my old life. The new one's way better. I don't face punishment. I don't face sin. Going to heaven when I die. I chose yes. Yeah I get shipwrecked once in a while, but it's still a good life." You say, "Well, yeah, but maybe it's just for Paul. I mean after all he saw a big light, heard an audible voice, maybe it's just Paul that gets that." Yeah, no. Look at verse 15.

¹⁵This saying is faithful and worthy of all acceptance,

In other words I don't care if you're on Jupiter. This saying is legit. Doesn't matter where you are in the universe, this saying is legit. Here it is. Listen to this. I love it.

that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,

He didn't come to the world to condemn us. He didn't come to the world to kick dirt in our face. He didn't come into the world to say, "Hey! You aborted a child, let me tell you how bad you are." That is not why he came in. He didn't come in to condemn us. He came in to save us because everyone of us in here is a sinner, so every one of us in here has a shot at being forgiven through the grace and the punishment removed in the mercy. He came to save us. That's his purpose. Paul says, "I don't care where you're going in the universe, buddy, it's a truthful saying." Then I love this next thing. Look at this.

of which I am the chief.

He says, "I am not the SEC champion in sinners. I'm not the Big Twelve champion in sinners. I hold the national championship. I got the ring. There isn't anybody worse than me. I blasphemed. I persecuted. I was bitter against myself. I'm telling you, though, I found a new life that is unbelievable." What a powerful testimony. I don't want my old life. I like my new one. You getting shipwrecked; don't care. You fought the wild beast in Ephesus; I don't care.

You got beat a bunch of times; I don't care. You been in jail a bunch; I don't care. My sin's gone. My punishment is gone. I don't care. Look at this.

¹⁶But I was mercied because of this, that in me, Jesus Christ might show first his unbelievable patience as an example to those about to believe in him resulting in life everlasting.

He says, "Jesus gave me mercy so he could hold me up and say," now remember something, OK, the Holy Spirit wrote this Bible. Holy Spirit basically just told you if he can save Paul, he can save you. You've done nothing worse than Paul's done. And if he's saved, you can be saved. It's a great statement. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what you've done. But you don't understand, preacher, it doesn't matter. His grace, his mercy, is conditioned not on you, but on the blood of his son. There isn't anything you could do that offsets his blood. I'm golden. I don't want to go back to that old life. And then he says:

¹⁷To the King of the ages, eternal, invisible, the only God, honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

He can't let it go. He says, "Man I don't want to go back here. I want to stay where I am." So listen. At some point, particularly living in America, at some point the Holy Spirit is going to come to you and say, "Jesus is who he says he is. You are who you think you are. And you need his forgiveness." Now listen. Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart. At that moment you say yes or no. Now listen. You have to make a decision. It killed me. I'm home last Sunday night and I'm flipping channels which is what men do. I'm flipping channels and I pull up the pastor of the biggest church in Texas, his Easter sermon. So I'm thinking, "OK. We'll see how this pans out." It was outstanding. Talked about the old covenant. I mean I was literally just glued and shocked. Talked about the old covenant that the high priest went in and killed a lamb for his sin and then killed a lamb for everybody else's sin. They had to do it over and over and over and over because the blood wasn't good enough, but that Jesus came. And his blood was different. He only did it once because his blood was good and it worked and his blood covers over our sin. He used that word. And I'm sitting there watching this and going, "Wow!" And then here's what he did. He basically after really an excellent statement on Easter, he basically stepped out to the crowd and said, "You have it. It's yours. Just received it. Don't worry about it. You're golden. Everything's OK. He died for you. You're great. Go home and rejoice in your forgiveness." I can't do that. His blood is for everybody, but not everybody gets it. He will speak to you about that sacrifice. He will say, "Listen I'll give you my grace, I'll wipe away your sin. I'll give you my mercy. You will not face a single punishment over it ever. But you've got to accept what I tell you about my son." If I die in the no I miss everything. I die in the yes I'm OK, I don't care what you've done. Thief on the cross mouths Jesus for about 3 hours. Was there a bright light for him? Not that we know of. As a matter of fact the Bible says darkness came at one point. Audible voice to him? Not that we know of. Why? Because God and Jesus are not talking. They're separated. I don't know how, but somehow this guy figures it out. And he looks over at Jesus, he looks over first at his buddy and goes, "Back it up man. This is our fault, it's not his." And then he said, "Lord remember me when you come in your kingdom." What did he say? "Hey. Today you will be with me in paradise. I'm going to wipe your sin away and I'm not going to punish you one bit. Even though you've lived so wickedly

they put you on a cross and you've done it wrong your entire life, don't care. My grace will wipe away your sin. My mercy will take away your punishment. You are OK as of now." I don't know how he heard it. Doesn't matter. I don't know how you hear it. God speaks to everybody in a different way. But I'm going to tell you something. He will speak, he will make the offer, and you have to decide whether you're in or not.

Let's pray.

Father what a great testimony. He hated his past life. He loved what he had in you even though he will die in a jail cell. Father I ask you today if there is a single person here that today's the day you speak to them, Father let them know your grace is absolutely super-abundant, that your mercy will follow that grace, they will experience no punishment, their sins will be removed, if they die in the yes to what your Spirit says. Father make that real; make that clear today. Thank you, thank you that the new life is always better than the old life. In Jesus Christ name.