

“Proclaim the Gospel”

April 29, 2018

1 Timothy 1:12-20

I. Introduction

I don't think it would surprise many of you to learn that the flow of sermons on Sunday mornings and the flow of the adult Sunday School class or the Wednesday night Bible study—both of which I teach—are different. Sermons are more formal, they follow a particular theme or thought for the morning. Because some people in the congregation have printed copies of the sermon, I really can't digress too much. On the other hand, the SS class and the Bible study are more informal—there are outlines for what we are studying but there are no printed copies of what will be said on a particular day. Because the sizes of the classes are usually 12 or less, they tend to be driven as much by questions or discussions as well as the outline for the night. We go off on side tracks—rabbit tracks; there are more personal examples or illustrations than we have in Sunday morning sermons. The differences would be obvious to any observer.

A similar difference is seen between Paul's Church Epistles, like the Book of Romans, and Paul's Pastoral Epistles, like 1 Timothy. In his Church Epistles, Paul sticks to the topic at hand—he may insert an example or observation but it will be on topic. In his pastoral epistles Paul is more intimate and goes off on side tracks for a bit before returning to the main topic. That's what we see today.

As Paul wrote in [1 Timothy 3:14-15](#), one of the reasons he wrote this letter to young Pastor Timothy was “that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God.” But as we saw last week in [1 Timothy 1:3-4](#) another reason Paul wrote was to put in writing what he told Timothy verbally, “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false

doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work-- which is by faith."

Writing about false doctrines, Paul had just made the point that keeping the Law doesn't bring salvation. The Law points out the sinfulness of man—as Paul wrote in [Romans 3:20](#), "Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." Rather, as Paul wrote in [1 Timothy 1:11](#), it is the "glorious gospel of the blessed God" that brings salvation through God's love and grace and mercy. So, before he went on, Paul reminded Timothy of what the true Gospel is capable of doing by giving his personal testimony.

II. Paul's Personal Testimony

A. What Paul used to be The grace of God and the power of God are seen in what Paul used to be. He was a blasphemer because he denied the deity of Jesus Christ—he had also forced others to blaspheme. When he was before King Agrippa in [Acts 26:11](#), Paul told how he "went from one synagogue to another to have them, i.e. Christians, punished, and (I) tried to force them to blaspheme." He was a persecutor who used physical power to destroy the church—following the death of Stephen, [Acts 8:3](#) records that "Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison." Paul called himself a violent man—we might call such a person a bully or a sadist. Before his conversion, seeing Christians humiliated and suffering brought him pleasure.

But by the grace and power of God, all that changed. From the beginning Paul emphasized that what he is is not by his own works but by "Christ Jesus our Lord." Turn to [Romans 3:21-24](#). Back in [1 Timothy](#) Paul wrote that through God's grace, he was strengthened. Paul reminded Timothy and the reader that all the things he accomplished weren't through his strength but through the strength of God—as he wrote in [Philippians 4:13](#), "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

B. How Paul was saved I don't think Paul ever got tired of telling the story of how he was saved. Paul wrote that the basic causes of his godless behavior were "ignorance" and "unbelief." Although Paul was a brilliant man and well educated, he didn't know who Jesus really was and what He had done. He wasn't like the Pharisees who had understood Christ's teachings and power but, in their pride, rejected the Son of God. But ignorance and unbelief were no excuse, Paul was still responsible for his sin. But, when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, he understood and repented—turn to Acts 26:9-19. Paul believed and the grace of God was powerful enough to redeem the worst sinner who was willing to repent.

The key words regarding salvation are "mercy" and "grace." God in His mercy did not give Paul what he did deserve; instead God in His grace gave Paul what he did not deserve. Grace and mercy are God's love in action. As John 3:16 says, God loves the whole world, but it is not God's love alone that saves us. Every person must decide what to do with Jesus—John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." Every person must choose, but salvation is a gift of God's grace—Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no-one can boast." God's grace is so abundant that it includes not only salvation, but the faith and love that accompany it. Turn to Galatians 5:22-23--a true Christian will be recognized by a growing faith and a growing sacrificial love.

Paul made it clear that salvation was not for him only—he wrote in 1 Timothy 1:15, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst." This "trustworthy statement" is a summary of the Gospel. Jesus didn't come to be the greatest teacher the world has ever known, although He was that. He didn't come to set a moral example, but He did that, too. He came into the world to save sinners. And if Jesus could save Saul of Tarsus—the worst of sinners, then He can save anybody. God transformed Paul.

C. What Paul became The grace of God turned the persecutor into a preacher, and the murderer into a minister and a missionary! Paul was called and commissioned by the risen Christ. Paul's change was so drastic that you may remember that the Jerusalem church thought that it was a trick, and they had a hard time accepting Paul as one of them—Acts 9:26 says, “When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. “

Paul not only became a minister and missionary, he also became an example. It was through saving Paul that Jesus Christ could “display His unlimited patience.” Paul's point was that if the Lord was patient with the worst of sinners, no one is beyond the reach of God's grace. “As an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life,” Paul was living proof that God can save any sinner. Those who fear that God cannot save them need only to consider the case of Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle Paul. The grace of God can change any sinner.

D. A Doxology Thinking of the love and grace and mercy that changed this wretched man, Paul couldn't finish his testimony without giving praise to the One True God who saved him and changed him; he wrote: “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. “

III. Instruction to Timothy

Having finished his testimony, Paul returned to his original topic—encouraging and strengthening Timothy. He wrote, “Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight.”

Summarizing what he had written earlier, Paul reminded Timothy that God had chosen him for this ministry. It would seem that some of the prophets in the local church had been led by the Spirit to select Timothy for service. It wasn't easy serving God in pagan Ephesus, but Timothy was a man under orders, and so he obeyed. God had chosen him and sent him. Paul assured him that with God's

strength, he would be able to fight the good or noble fight against Satan—as [Romans 8:31](#) says, “**If God is for us, who can be against us?**”

Paul warned Timothy that the only way to succeed was to hold fast “**to faith and a good conscience.**” “**Holding on to faith**” means to hold fast to the revealed truth of the Word of God.

Unlike those who turn away from the faith, Timothy was to remain devoted to the Word of God—turn to [2 Timothy 4:1-3](#). To preach the Word means more than to proclaim with ones lips, it also means to live it in one’s life. Turn back to [2 Timothy 2:15](#)—the only way to correctly handle “**the word of truth**” is to study it and learn it in your heart and to put it into action—this is holding on to faith.

As he wrote earlier, Paul reminded Timothy that a good conscience is important in every Christian’s life and ministry. If undamaged, the conscience is an internal warning device that reacts to a person’s behavior. When behavior is good, it produces feelings of well-being, peace, contentment and calm. When behavior is evil, it produces guilt, shame, remorse, fear, and despair. A good conscience is the result of a pure life. A life lived as God wants.

Paul wrote that it is possible for professed Christians to *shipwreck their faith*. They do so by sinning against their consciences. Bad doctrine usually starts with bad conduct, and, often, with secret sin. Hymenaeus and Alexander must have deliberately rejected their good consciences in order to defend their ungodly lives. Paul doesn’t tell us exactly what they did, except that their sin involved blaspheming in some way.

Being “*handed over to Satan*” removes the insulation and protection afforded by being with believers. Such people are out from under God’s hand of blessing and they are fully under Satan’s control. Delivering someone to Satan implies discipline and disassociation from the local church. When a Christian refuses to repent, the local church should exercise discipline, excluding the professing Christian from the protective fellowship of the saints, making such a person vulnerable to

the attacks of Satan and, hopefully, able to see the error of their ways so that they repent and are welcomed back into fellowship with other Christians.

IV. Conclusion

Last month's memory verse was **Romans 3:23**—do you still remember it? “**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**” As we read earlier, that was the purpose of the Law—to demonstrate that everyone is a sinner. This month's memory verse is **Romans 6:23**, say it with me, “**For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” God doesn't grade on a curve—the wages, the result of sin—any sin—is death—an eternity in hell. Do you really believe that? Jesus said in **John 3:18**, “**Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.**” As the 2nd half of **Romans 6:23** says, “**The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.**”

If you do believe that and if you have made Jesus your Lord and Savior, then He has given you a mission—we call it the Great Commission: **Matthew 28:19-20**, “**Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**” You may not be asked to go as a missionary like Paul or the Adrovers or the Bassetts—two missionary couples that we support as a church. You may not be called to be a evangelist or pastor standing in front of groups of people, but you—every Christian—like Timothy, are called to fight the good fight and to hold on to faith and a good conscience. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:16**, “**Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**” Turn to **Ephesians 6:10-18**. This is your calling as a child of God. This is God's command to you, “**Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.**” Proclaim the Gospel in your actions as well as in your words.

