



# 1 Timothy

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**And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, 1 Timothy 1:12**

Paul bursts into praise because of the words he just said in the previous verse –

“...according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.” He probably stopped for a moment and thought, “God counted me – even me – worthy of this honor. How can it be?”

As readers of the word, we may place Paul on a super-spiritual level, but he certainly didn't feel that way. He will explain his time before Christ in the coming verses, but for now he says, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord.” To thank someone for something generally means that they have obtained from the person something they did not previously possess. Paul directs his thanks to the Lord because it is He, as he says, “who has enabled me.” The word translated as “enabled” is one which indicates that an outward source of strength is bestowed. The word “empowered” conveys the thought well.

In this, Paul claims that the strength required to conduct his affairs in conveying the gospel came from Christ and not from himself. This is in accord with the words of the Lord when He spoke to the disciples the words of John 15:5, “without Me you can do nothing.” Paul confirms this in his own life as an apostle.

Next, he states why the Lord enabled him. It is “because He counted me faithful.” As the Lord is omniscient, this is not an “after-conversion” judgment, but a “pre-conversion” judgment. The Lord saw the makeup of Paul, and knew that it was exactly what was needed to meet the

grueling demands of the office which would be placed upon him. In the verses ahead, Paul will describe some of his negative traits, showing his unworthiness to hold the position he was placed in. However, Jesus looked at his positive attributes and knew that with the proper guidance, Paul was the right man for the task which lay ahead.

Because of this, Paul says that it was for this reason that the Lord put him “into the ministry.” What may be a better translation is that the Lord had “appointed him to His service.” The word translated here as “ministry” is not simply one used as a reference to a religious duty. Rather, it is a general word which covers both secular and religious affairs. Paul was called into the service of the Lord, having been appointed by Christ specifically because he was reckoned as faithful.

Life application: Each of us has a general makeup which determines who we are. The Lord knows that makeup, and He will use it for His purposes. If we run ahead and jump into a ministry that fails, we shouldn't be upset at the Lord. Rather, we should praise Him for ending something that was not meant to be. Having said this, there are many “ministries” which are highly successful, but which are not conducted in accord with the words of Paul in the pastoral epistles. Success in a ministry which is not in accord with the word of God is not a successful ministry at all. Let us not delude ourselves into thinking that a church is sound because it is growing, popular, well-funded, etc. A successful ministry is one which is first and foremost aligned with the word of God.

**...although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.** 1 Timothy 1:13

Paul now contrasts his state in Christ to his life before Christ. He just said in verse 12, “He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry.” In contrasting words, he explains his life as a Pharisee, and as a strict adherent to the Law of Moses, saying words which place Christ Jesus as the object of his words. He begins with, “although I was formerly a blasphemer.”

As an observant Pharisee, how could he be a blasphemer? Unless Christ is the end of the law for all who believe, which He is, this couldn't be the case. But in failing to come to Christ, he had rejected the entire purpose of the law. His words here show that adherence to the law is enmity with the Lord! The two are incompatible. God cannot smile upon one who attempts to be justified by the deeds of the law when Christ has fulfilled that law. It is blasphemy to attempt to do so.

After this, he says he was “a persecutor.” The first word, blasphemer, applies to his conduct toward God. This word now applies to his conduct towards God's people. The word he uses,

*dióktés*, is only found here. It is a person who pursues and hunts down another. His actions in this regard are well described in the book of Acts.

And then next, he says that he was “an insolent man.” This word, *hubristés*, is found only here and in Romans 1:30. One can see the modern word “hubris” in it. It indicates “someone ‘damaging’ others by lashing out with a nasty spirit.” It is someone who revels in hurting others. Again, as noted above, Paul uses these words to describe himself as a man strictly adhering to the Law of Moses.

How is it that those who feel they are right with God by adhering to the law think that they are acceptable to God? Such is not the case. It shows that all, including law-observers, are in need something else. It is something that Paul says he found with the words, “...but I obtained mercy.” One who obtains mercy is a person who needed mercy. Paul found this, despite his wretched condition. Through the law comes the knowledge of sin, but in Christ both grace and mercy are found. Paul then qualifies his statement by saying, “because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.”

The word “ignorantly” gives the sense of lacking the proper knowledge of the matter. He looked at the law as a means to an end, failing to see that Christ is the end of the law. His efforts were intended to please God through the law, and through destroying those who were not in conformity with it. But he found that he was the one who was in the wrong. It was those he persecuted who were adhering to the “fulfilled law” found in Christ. The law wasn’t a means to an end, it was ended.

Paul’s words here are contemplated by some to indicate that ignorance of a law will lead to a mitigation of the punishment, or even complete forgiveness of the penalty for infractions of the law. This is not Paul’s intent here. Though it is true that those who sin in ignorance may receive a lessening of punishment, it is not true that one will stand guiltless for ignorant violations of the law. Atonement of sin must be granted, and that can only be found in Christ the Lord. Those not covered in Christ will be judged accordingly.

Life application: In Christ, even the worst of offenses can be forgiven. If you have a sin which wears you down because of its enormity, you must realize that it has been forgiven if you have come to Him. Do not be so presumptuous as to assume that your sin is greater than His ability to forgive. Cast away the feeling of guilt, and replace it with an attitude of confidence in your forgiveness, and of praise for how it came about!