

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Paul's First Letter to Timothy – Part 3

I. Exposition of Chapter One (Continued).

A. Verses 12-17 – In these verses Paul gives his testimony and expressed his thanks and praise to God for what He has done in his life.

“Beginning with verse 12 the tone changes. From verse 12 to verse 17, Paul bursts forth in praise and thanksgiving for the grace of Christ and the mercy of God. Paul thanked Christ for three things: strength, trust, and a call to service.

No doubt Paul was seeking to encourage Timothy by recounting his own reception of grace.”¹

1. Verse 12 – “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry,”

a. The word “thank” here, is the Greek word “*charis*” which is more often translated as the word “grace.” Another example of this word being used for giving thanks is found in **II Corinthians 2:14**.

b. Paul gives thanks to “...Christ Jesus our Lord...”. Concerning this Dr. Bob Utley writes:

“This is one of the rare occasions when Paul directs his prayer to Christ instead of the Father. He possibly does this here because it was Jesus whom he heard on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 9:4–5; 22:7–8; 26:15).”²

c. “...who has enabled me...” – The word “enabled” means; “to empower, invigorate; to summon up vigor, put forth energy; to acquire strength, be invigorated, be strong.”³ Paul acknowledged the fact that it was only through the empowerment of the Lord that he was able to accomplish what he did in ministry. This is the same word translated “strength” in **Philippians 4:13** which reads:

“I am strong for all things in the One who constantly infuses strength in me.” – Kenneth Wuest Translation⁴

d. “...counting me faithful...” – The word “faithful” means: “pertaining to being trusted—faithful, trustworthy, dependable, reliable”.⁵

1) The Lord preserves the faithful. **Psalm 31:23**.

2) The Lord will bless with more authority. **Matthew 25:21**.

3) Blessings abound to the faithful. **Proverbs 28:20**. The word “abound” means; “abundance in quantity and quality.” The word “blessings” means; “a good favor bestowed upon another”; “prosperity”.

4) The Born Again believer is empowered to be faithful by the Holy Spirit.- **Galatians 5:22**.

5) We must be proven faithful in smaller things before the Lord gives us bigger things – **Luke 16:10-12**.

e. “...putting me into the ministry...” – The word “ministry” is often misunderstood. It simply means; “the role or position of serving”.⁶ This means that every believer is supposed to be in the ministry because the role of serving is for everyone. But, of course, there are different kinds of ministry (serving). – cf. **Acts 6:1-4; I Corinthians 12:5**. D. Edmond Hiebert writes:

“Not skill or knowledge but faithfulness is the first qualification for a minister of Christ (**1 Cor. 4:2**). The evidence of the divine regard of him as faithful was his appointment to service. This quality of faithfulness, which seems to be the reason why the Lord chose him for this great work, Paul in **1 Corinthians 7:27** refers to as a gift of grace which he had obtained from the Lord. Paul here does not speak of his appointment to ‘apostleship’ but rather to ‘service.’”⁷

¹ *The Complete Biblical Library: Acts – Revelation, Volume 2*, (Empowered Life, Tulsa, OK, 2016.), 885.

² Robert James Utley, *Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy*, vol. Volume 9, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 17.

³ *Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary*, William D. Mounce and Rick D. Bennett, Jr. (e-sword version 1993).

⁴ Kenneth S. Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), Php 4:10–13.

⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 376.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 460.

⁷ D. Edmond Hiebert, *First Timothy*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1957), 39–40.

2. Verse 13 – “...although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.”

- a. “...formerly a blasphemer...” – “a person who defames someone or something”⁸ It also means “slanderer” or “insult.”⁹
- b. “...a persecutor...” – To “persecute” according to the dictionary means; “to harass or punish in a manner designed to injure, grieve, or afflict *specifically*: to cause to suffer because of belief”¹⁰ Dr. Hiebert writes:

“He has been a ‘blasphemer’ of the name of the Lord Jesus in the truest sense of that terrible word. He repudiated Christ’s Messianic claims and stamped Him as an impostor. His sin was double-dyed because he himself thus spoke against the Lord and tried to force others to do the same (Acts 26:11). As a fiery ‘persecutor’ he vigorously pursued the Lord’s people as one chases an animal (Acts 22:4), and that even unto foreign cities.”¹¹

- c. “...an insolent man...” – The word “insolent” means; “an overbearing, violent person.”¹²
- d. “...but I obtained mercy...” – “Mercy” means; “to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need”¹³ In acknowledging his former life of rebellion and sin against Christ, he realizes the incredible mercy God had shown him. He recognizes his “serious need” as someone away from God, though he was very religious. When writing to Titus, Paul declares the mercy of God again when he writes:

“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,” – Titus 3:3-5

- e. “...because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” – “Ignorantly” means; “to not have information about—‘to not know, to be unaware of,’”¹⁴ The word “unbelief” simply means to be “faithless” to “not believe.” Paul did not fight against Christ and Christianity out of a rebellion against God and His plan. He fought Christianity actually believing he was fighting for truth and for the true religion – Judaism. In other words, he thought he was fighting on God’s side instead of against God. He, like his fellow Jews, had “...a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” (Romans 10:2).

“Even though I was previously a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;” – I Timothy 1:13 – New American Standard Bible

3. Verse 14 – “And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” – Paul continues to give praise to God and, in humility, declares that “...the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant...” – In explaining the difference between “grace” and “mercy”, it’s been said that “mercy means we don’t get what we deserve” and “grace means we get what we don’t deserve.” In other words, because of God’s mercy, we are saved from God’s wrath, and because of God’s grace, we receive eternal life and forgiveness. “Grace”, in this context, means; “graciousness.” The Bible says it’s “...by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” (Ephesians 2:8). Paul further states that this grace “...was exceedingly abundant...”. This is often translated as, “superabundant.”

“And the grace (unmerited favor and blessing) of our Lord [actually] flowed out superabundantly *and* beyond measure for me, accompanied by faith and love that are [to be realized] in Christ Jesus.” – I Timothy 1:14 – Amplified Bible

- a. “...with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” – In contrast to his former life of unbelief and hatred, Paul states that “...in Christ Jesus”, there is now “...faith and love...”.

“Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus.”
I Timothy 1:14 – New Living Translation

⁸ Louw and Nida, 433.

⁹ Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, William D. Mounce, Gen. ed. (Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, 2006.), 67.

¹⁰ Inc Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

¹¹ D. Edmond Hiebert, First Timothy, Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1957), 40.

¹² Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary, William D. Mounce and Rick D. Bennett, Jr. (e-sword version 1993).

¹³ Louw and Nida, 750.

¹⁴ Ibid., 335.