

Fight the Good Fight
1 Timothy 1:12-17 (Week 04) 09/28/2025
God's Amazing Grace

This is my message written prior to being preached. Please excuse the bullet point format and any grammatical mistakes. This is meant to be spoken.

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:12-17)

Introduction and Review

- At **Bridges, Gary** and **Victoria** do a **great job** choosing songs that lead us to worship the Lord.
- They also give us a **good mix** of **traditional hymns** with more **contemporary songs**.
- I appreciate this, **because I love the deep theology found in many hymns**.
- And **unfortunately**, churches are **singing fewer and fewer of these hymns**.
- And even when they do, they **sometimes feel the need** to change the lyrics.

- This applies even to the most famous hymn ever, **Amazing Grace** by John Newton.
- **For example**, someone has changed the lyrics from...

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound! That saved a wretch like me!

- To...

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound! That saved and strengthened me!

- Yes, **as we will see today there is grace that strengthens!**
- But **Newton** was talking about a **grace** that does more than **strengthen**.
- He was **praising God** for the grace that saves ***the wretched (the worst) of sinners***.
- Of which he considered himself one. **Professor Brian Abel Ragen** comments:

While Newton believed that human beings were wretches, in desperate need of a Savior, these 20th-century adapters clearly believe that they and the congregations who sing their words are perfectly nice people... They are not bad—certainly not wretches; they have simply lost their way. They are not wicked; they merely have a handicap—a dysfunction—from which they hope to recover. Grace is amazing because it saves wretches, not because it puts a final polish on nice people. (Brian Abel Ragen)

- But it seems that in **our songs** and in **our sermons**,
- The **modern church** often downplays **our wretchedness, our depravity, our sin**.
- And the inevitable result of this is the **downplaying of God's Grace**.
- If we're not so bad then **God's grace (his unearned, undeserved favor in our lives,**
- **need not be so amazing!**

- But John Newton and more importantly **the Spirit inspired Apostle Paul would beg** to differ.
- In our **passage today 1 Timothy Chapter 1:12-17**,
- Paul testifies of how he (**a wretched sinner**) was transformed by God's Mercy...
- (which refers to **His Great Compassion**) and Amazing Grace.

- Now if you remember from last week, in **verses 8-11 of Chapter 1**,
- Paul's focus was on **the proper use of the law**, specifically the law's restraint of sin.

- Because the **Ephesian false teachers** were using the Law improperly,
- and instead of restraining sin it was leading people into sin.
- And Paul concludes **by emphasizing** the relationship between the Law, **sound doctrine and**

11 ...the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. (1 Timothy 1:11)

- And apparently as he considered **the gospel of Jesus Christ** with which he and been entrusted.
- His thoughts turned to **how by God's grace Christ had saved him from his Sin**.
- So, in **verses 12-16** Paul takes a short diversion, to proclaim **a bit of his personal testimony**.
- And his testimony, like the testimony of any true believer, focuses on **God's Amazing Grace**.
- He begins with...

1. God's Saint Strengthening Grace

- Often a testimony will begin with what your life was like before you came to Christ.
- **And Paul will get to that**, but first he speaks of **his current situation...**
- He probably does this in order to **encourage Timothy** in Timothy's current situation.
- As we have seen, **Timothy** is facing great challenges leading the **Ephesian church**.
- There are elders teaching different doctrine... leading people astray.
- And Timothy needs strength to endure, **So Paul begins by writing...**

12 I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, (1 Timothy 1:12)

- This is the grace that Timothy and any Christian (saint) needs **for life and ministry**.
- And here Paul expresses his **deep gratitude** that **Jesus** has not only appointed him to serve,
- but gives him the strength **for service**.
- Paul was appointed **an apostle to the Gentiles**, a **missionary**,
- **a messenger of the gospel of grace**.
- And his **effectiveness** in ministry didn't depend on his natural talent, **his education**,
- his experience or following the latest Christian fads.
- **Instead, he was strengthened (spiritually empowered) by Jesus Christ.**

- As he told the **Philippians**,

¹² ...I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:12-13)

- Paul was able to **continue in ministry** even though he faced many challenges and difficulties,
- not because of **his self-discipline** but because **he received strength from the LORD**.

The same lord who appointed him serve also gave him the strength to serve.

- And God will do the same thing for Timothy **and for us**.
- As we are appointed (called) to ministry of any kind...
- From teaching Sunday School, to running Tech, to sharing the gospel with your friends and neighbors.
- God will give you **the strength** you need to serve,
- **He will empower you to accomplish what he calls you to do.**

- **And why will he give us strength?**
- Well, notice Paul says that Christ Jesus our Lord **has given him strength**.

because he judged me faithful,

- Jesus judged (counted) Paul faithful (or trustworthy).
- So much so **that in verse 11** we saw that God had **entrusted Paul with the gospel**.
- God had confidence that Paul would be a reliable **minister of Jesus Christ**.
- And therefore, **he gave him the strength he needed to carry out his ministry**.
- Now this doesn't mean that Paul **had proven himself worthy or trustworthy**.
- Who could ever be **worthy** of being an **apostle** (a messenger, representative) of Jesus Christ?
- In fact, the whole point of this passage is that Paul **was unworthy to receive God's grace**.
- So, it's not that Paul (in himself) **was trustworthy**, so God trusted him with the gospel.
- And appointed him to serve.
- Instead, by **God's grace at work in his life**, **God made Paul faithful (trustworthy)**.
- It was by **God's gift (his grace)** that Paul was strengthened **and made faithful for service**.
- And the same thing is true for us.
- Never think that because you're **not good enough** to be used by God, that God won't use you.
- No one, including Paul, Including Timothy was/is good enough.
- We all need God's strength.
- And never think that you will **fail miserably** in the ministry God calls you to.
- Because again, if God calls, he strengthens and he empowers you to be faithful in ministry.
- And for that, Paul expresses his deep gratitude. ***I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, (1 Timothy 1:12)***

- Paul is extremely thankful to Jesus for the privilege of **serving him**.
- And this should be an example to us as well.
- **How often do we thank God for the ministry He's given us?**
- Whether that ministry is to **your family, the church, or the world**.
- When you read and explain the Bible to your kids or grandkids,
- When you **stuff bulletins** or **make coffee**, or run the **Slides**, or teach **Sunday School**,
- or **share the gospel** with your neighbors or **do whatever it is that you do in service**.
- **It's all service to the LORD!**
- And we should thank him for the **great privilege of serving in his name**.
- But sometimes we grow **ungrateful** because **we're tired of ministry**.
- Like Timothy, we face challenges, ridicule, maybe we feel unappreciated.
- As one Pastor proclaimed, **"Ministry would be great if it weren't for people"**
- So, we complain about having **to serve** the Lord rather than **thanking him for the privilege**.
- Or we can grow **too proud to be grateful**.
- We're tempted to think that **God should thank us for our service**.
- But Paul gives us a **great example here**, he had been entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- As an apostle, a missionary, a teacher, a writer of much of the New Testament,
- he faced many challenges, including ridicule and persecution.
- But when things got tough, he didn't give up.
- And he didn't let his position go to his head.
- **He maintained a humble Grateful heart**.
- He continued to **Thank God for choosing him and giving him the strength to serve**.
- **Let us do the same...**
- So, we have seen **God's Saint Strengthening Grace**.
- Now we turn to...

2. God's Superabounding Grace

- Paul began his testimony with **his current situation**.
- He thanks God for the strength he needs to carry on the ministry of service God had appointed him to.
- But there was a time **when Paul** (formerly known as Saul) was **no servant of God**.
- And so, in **verses 13-14** he continues his **short personal testimony**,
- Telling us of **his conversion to faith in Jesus Christ**,
- How God (by his grace) brought him **from past sinfulness to present service**.
- He begins his testimony with his **wretched past**,

¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. (1 Timothy 1:13)

- **This is no exaggeration.**
- Paul/Saul was present for the stoning of Stephen, **the church's first martyr.**
- And in the **book of Acts**, **Luke** tells us...

¹ ...Saul approved of his execution. (Acts 8:1)

- Paul took part in murder.
- He was also **the ringleader** of the **terrible persecution** that followed...
- **Luke continues...**

³ But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. (Acts 8:3)

- Before he came to Christ, Paul was a **thoroughly wretched individual.**
- The fact that he committed his crimes in the name of God made them all the **more outrageous.**
- He believed **that eradicating the church** was one of the **best ways for him to serve God.**
- As he, **in an earlier testimony**, explained to **King Agrippa**:

⁹ "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities. (Acts 26:9-11)

- This was **Paul's sinful wretched life** right up until the time he encountered Christ.
- He's told us the before, and then he turns to the **after.**
- **He explains,**

¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy... (1 Timothy 1:13)

- By his glorious grace, **God had mercy (compassion) on me a wretched sinner.**
- He didn't give me what I deserved, **which would have been death and Hell.**
- Instead, **he gave me mercy**, he forgave my terrible sins.
- In **Acts chapter 9**, Luke records Paul's first encounter with Jesus Christ.
- He was on the road to Damascus, with letters in hand to continue his persecution of Christians.
- But Jesus Christ met him along the way,
- And there by God's grace Paul received forgiveness for all his violence, all his blasphemy,
- and all his persecutions.
- **As someone has said, by the grace and mercy of God, the fiend became a friend.**
- And why did Paul receive this mercy?
- Well, he gives what seems to be at least **a partial explanation:**

I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13)

- Before he became a Christian, **Paul hardly knew what he was doing.**
- In fact, when Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus,
- Paul was so surprised that he said,

⁵ ...“Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting (Acts 9:5)

- He was persecuting **Christ almost unwittingly.**
- Now this doesn't mean that **Paul's ignorance and unbelief** somehow qualified him for salvation,
- or made his actions any less sinful.
- **He was still guilty.**
- God never excuses sin because **of mitigating circumstances.**
- Nevertheless, God had mercy/compassion/pity on **Paul's desperate spiritual condition** of ignorance and unbelief.
- **But ultimately,** Paul (and anyone) receives **mercy because God is merciful.**
- **As he explained** in his letter to **Titus...**

⁵ [God] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy... (Titus 3:5)

- Like John Newton and us all, it was only by God's gracious **mercy** that Paul **was found when he was lost** and **enabled to see when he was blind.**
- And when Paul was converted, **he not only received mercy, but he also received grace.**
- Again, Grace is the undeserved, unmerited favor of God, **which Paul received in superabundance:**
- **Verse 14...**

¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 1:14)

- That word overflowed is the Greek *hyperpleonazo* (*Hyper-Ple-Na-Zoh*)
- ***Hyper meaning super and ple-na-zoh meaning abundant.***
- Paul didn't receive a **little grace...**
- He received an **exceedingly abundant grace.**
- And as **the ESV makes clear**, this superabounding grace is grace **that overflows.**
- It's like a huge downpour that cannot be contained **and causes rivers and lakes to overflow.**
- It is the kind of grace described by **Julia Johnston** in her 1911 Hymn,
- **Grace Greater Than All Our Sin...**

***Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured, There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.
Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin. (Julia Johnston)***

- **Johnston's hymn** reminds us that God's superabounding grace flows from the cross of our Lord.
- The only reason we can experience the God's overflowing grace,
- is because of the blood of Christ flowed freely for our sins.
- Now Paul also tells us that as part of **God's superabounding grace**, he also received...

14 ...faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 1:14)

- Overflowing from this superabounding grace came **both faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.**
- **With grace came faith in Christ and love for Christ.**
- Now as **evangelical Christians** we know we're **saved by grace through faith.**
- And we're **the first to say** our salvation comes not by works of righteousness, but by God's grace.
- We know we can't earn, and we don't deserve to be saved.
- And yet we sometimes want to take **at least a little credit** for our salvation.
- God supplies the grace, **but we supply the faith.**
- And when **God does his part** and **we do our part**, we're saved by grace through faith.
- However, Paul says, that faith (and love) come not from us, **but from God's overflowing grace.**
- **Philip Ryken**, in his commentary on **1 Timothy**, puts it this way...

God holds out the free gift of eternal life, but we are too sinful to take it. Our hands are curled up in defiance and rebellion. So, God takes us firmly by the wrist, uncurls our fingers, presses his grace into our hands, and wraps our fingers back around it. We lay hold of eternal life with the hand of faith, but God opens the hand. (Philip Ryken)

- **Paul is the perfect example of this.**
- He was strolling along the **Damascus Road in his sinfulness**,
- with no thought or intention of coming to Christ.
- He wasn't a seeker; he had no inclination of faith in Jesus.
- He had no real love for God or Man.
- But Christ appeared to him and blinded him, and by His grace,
- bestowed upon his loveless and faithless heart.
- **Faith in Christ and love for God and Man.**
- Paul's conversion was **the superabounding gracious work of God** from beginning to end.
- And the same is true for every believer, **our circumstances may vary.**
- We probably weren't blinded on the road to Damascus.
- But each of us has a story to tell about how **we first encountered Jesus Christ.**
- And we can all say...

14the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 1:14)

- Amen

- So, Paul has **testified to God's overflowing grace in his conversion.**
- How he was a sinner than was saved by **the superabounding grace of God.**
- And to reinforce this point, **and apply it to us all he turns to...**

3. God's Sinner Saving Grace (v. 15-16)

- Again, the details may be different but...
- Paul's personal testimony of God's amazing, superabounding grace for a wretched sinner,
- **is basically the story of every Christian.**
- **Paul is not in some special category,**
- but only one of **many sinners** who've been saved and became productive servants in the kingdom of God.
- **True, from our perspective, his sins were worse than most,**
- Especially since **he persecuted the church of Jesus Christ.**
- **Nevertheless, every true Christian has received what Paul received.**
- Mercy, overflowing grace, faith and love in Christ.
- And so, **in verse 15**, the apostle takes his personal experience **and applies it to every Christian...**

15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners... (1 Timothy 1:15)

- This trustworthy saying was possibly from an **early Christian hymn or creed.**
- We can almost imagine seeing it on posters and bumper stickers at the Christian bookstores in Asia Minor. – **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.**
- Here Paul affirms **the truth of this saying.**
- Have no doubt, **Jesus Christ really did come into the world to save sinners.**
- This truth deserves to be **wholeheartedly accepted** by everyone,
- because it contains **the heart of the gospel**, from the **incarnation to the atonement.**

Christ Jesus came into the world

- This speaks to the fact of **Christ's conception and birth** (the incarnation),
- God became man, Emmanuel God with us and God as one of us.
- The very Son of God **left all the glories of heaven** to become a human being.
- **And why did he do that?**

to save sinners

- To **deliver them from sin and death** into the hands of God.
- This statement speaks **to the fact of the atonement,**
- of **Christ's sacrificial death on the cross for sinners.**

- A **sinner** is anyone who is **alienated/separated from God** by their **disobedience**.
- But the very reason **Christ came into the world** was to deliver **his people from sin**.
- And to **bring about their reconciliation with God**.
- He atoned for **their sins** by the blood he shed on the cross.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners

- This is the heart of the gospel, **from the incarnation to the atonement**.
- And this is **a hopeful thing for sinners to know!**
- This statement gives the **only qualification** needed to **be saved by Christ**.
- Take comfort in **this qualification** if you sometimes **doubt your salvation**.
- The only thing you can contribute to your salvation is the sin from which Christ came to save you.
- Christianity is the **only religion** in the world that is **for bad people**.
- In one way or another, every other religion says people **can become good enough for God**.
- But what if we aren't good enough?
- And what if, because of sin, **we can never be good enough**.
- **What if Paul is right when he says...**

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

- What if we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,
- What if we cannot meet God's Holy Righteous Standards.
- **What then?**
- Well, then Christianity is the **only religion** that offers real hope.
- If we are **wretched sinners**, then **Christianity** is our only option.
- Jesus Christ is the only **one who can or will save us**,
- **because he came into the world to save sinners**.
- There is a wonderful story about a sinner who came to faith in Christ through this very verse.
- It comes from the **early days of the English Reformation**,
- when the Cambridge scholar **Thomas Bilney** first read the **New Testament in Greek**,
- **He writes...**

At the first reading, I chanced upon this sentence of St. Paul (O most sweet and comfortable sentence to my soul!) in 1 Timothy 1. "It is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be embraced, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief and principal." This one sentence, through God's instruction and inward working, which I did not then perceive, did so exhilarate my heart, being before wounded with the guilt of my sins, and being almost in despair, that even immediately I seemed unto myself inwardly to feel a marvellous comfort and quietness. (Thomas Bilney)

- That comfort sustained **Bilney** to the end of his life,
- when he was burned at the stake for his faith in Jesus Christ.

- And we who are sinners should **experience that comfort as well.**
- Because, it is **only sinners** who find mercy and superabounding saving grace in Jesus Christ.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners

- Then Paul adds a personal, and somewhat surprising note...

sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

- The word foremost is the Greek *protos*, where we get words like *prototype*.
- ***It means first but not first in order but foremost.***
- The apostle literally identifies himself as the “foremost” or “chief” or **worst** sinner of them all.
- Now there are two basic **ways to interpret Paul’s testimony** that he is the **foremost of sinners**.
- Either, the Holy Spirit has revealed to him that he is actually the worst sinner who has and will ever live.
- Or, **as Paul has grown in Christ**,
- even as the Holy Spirit has been conforming him to his Savior’s image,
- he has also become increasingly aware of his own sinfulness.
- And I think this is probably the better interpretation.
- I think Paul, like all of us, knows himself better than he knows any other person.
- He only saw the outward sinful acts of others.
- But he knew the internal sin he struggled with.
- And so, from Paul’s perspective, **he really is the foremost of sinners.**
- And if that’s the case then these words apply to all of us.
- We can put on Paul’s Sandals if you will, and we who know our sins better than any others,
- can say... **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.**
- And this makes **the gospel of grace** personal to each one of us.
- Jesus Christ didn’t just come to **save sinners in general**,
- he came to save me (**a foremost sinner**) in particular!
- And this is **crucial for us to understand**,
- Because becoming a Christian means making **a personal commitment to Christ**
- and **a personal confession of sin.**
- “***Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners***”—this is a universal truth.
- ***Of whom I am the foremost***—this is the universal truth applied to my situation.
- As John Stott says,

The universal offer is one thing; its individual acceptance is another. (John Stott)

- You can believe everything about **the facts of the offer**,
- You can believe **in the incarnation**, the atonement, the resurrection.
- You can even believe that **YES Christ came into the world to save sinners**.
- But you must go beyond believing the facts
- and **accept that those facts apply to you specifically**.
- The question is not; do you believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for sins.
- The question is **Do you believe that when Jesus was dying on the cross he was paying the price for your sins?**
- **That you are a sinner and Christ died for your sins!**
- If you've never considered the fact that Jesus died for your personal sins.
- Then you have never truly **put your faith in Jesus Christ** for the forgiveness of your sins.
- **And I would encourage you to do that today, now even!**
- Because, we **are not able to receive God's saving grace**,
- until we admit we are sinners, **because**

Jesus Christ came to save sinners.

- As Jesus said himself,

¹³ ...I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. (Matthew 9:13)

- Do you believe that **you are** at least **among the foremost of sinners?**
- And it's important to use the **present tense** because that's what Paul does.
- His testimony is not that he **was the foremost of sinners**,
- but that he

is the foremost of sinners, he says "I am the foremost"

- That word "**am**" is the Greek verb ***eimi* – AY-MEE**
- It's the same word Jesus used throughout John's gospel when he said...
- **I am** the bread of life, **I am** the good shepherd, **I am** the resurrection and the life, etc....
- And for you grammar buffs ***eimi*** is in the ***first person singular present tense, indicative mood***.
- Present meaning now (when Paul wrote these words) and indicative meaning real or factual.
- Paul says ***"I am really the foremost of sinners"***
- And yes, when he **wrote these words** his sins had been forgiven.
- He had been **redeemed, reconciled, justified**,
- he had been **counted reckoned righteous** by God.
- And he, like all believers, was in the **process of sanctification**.
- He was becoming more and more like Jesus Christ.

- He was **an apostle** of Christ
- He was entrusted with the gospel and had been appointed to serve.
- He was a saint of God, *it's interesting in Ephesians 3:8 he writes...*

⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints (Ephesians 3:8)

- Paul was both **the foremost sinner and the least of all the saints**.
- Some might say that **Paul had a self-esteem problem**.
- But I think he had a clear understanding of **both his own depravity**,
- and his continual need for God's amazing grace.
- And that should be true for all believers...
- Even though we've received God's amazing saving grace,
- even though we're saved saints.
- We must daily depend on God's amazing strengthening grace as we seek to serve him in this world.
- **Paul understood this!**
- Again, he had clearly come to a deep awareness of his own sinfulness.
- But at the same time, **he was growing in grace and service to God**.
- And we must do the same, **as we continue to grow in grace and service to the LORD**.
- We must **never forget our own depravity**, our own wretchedness, our own sin.
- That yes, we are saints, **our sins have been forgiven**, we are no longer under condemnation.
- But we are **also sinners**, and we must continue to rely on the grace of God and the Power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin in our lives.
- The grace that saved us from our sin,
- **is the grace that will sustain us in our fight to overcome sin**.
- Then in **verse 16** Paul continues his **sinner saving testimony...**

¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. (1 Timothy 1:16)

- Again, the apostle **declares that he received mercy (compassion from God)**.
- Again, he identifies himself as the **foremost of sinners**.
- His point is that **if God can transform** the foremost of **sinners into an apostle**,
- **There must be no limit to the power of his grace**.
- Even a murderer, and a sworn enemy of Christ can become a servant of God.
- If God can save Paul, **of all people**, then he can save anyone.
- **So Paul** serves as an example for us all.
- Every Christian can see himself or herself in Paul's conversion,
- even though many aspects of it were unique.

- Not every convert **enters the kingdom of God** with blinding light and the visible,
- audible presence of the risen Christ.
- Not every testimony is identical to Paul's, nor should it be.
- But his conversion experience on the **Damascus Road** gives hope to everyone because it shows the **full extent** of God's **perfect patience, grace and mercy**.
- God is **compassionated**, slow to judgment, giving sinners time to repent.
- In his **grace** God is willing to put up with **a lot from people**, as he did from Paul.
- And so, Paul puts himself forward as the example for those who

“believe in him (in Christ) for eternal life.”

- **Yes, you must believe that you are a sinner, but that will not save you.**
- In fact, some people think that because **they are a really bad sinner** they can't be saved.
- I've heard people say, **it's too late for me, the things I've done can never be forgiven.**
- But Paul's point in **verse 16** is that **no sinner is beyond forgiveness...**
- **However**, it's not enough to believe you are a sinner,
- **You must also take Christ for a Savior.**
- Everyone who **does believe in him** receives eternal life.
- **Earlier** I quoted the words of John Newton's hymn "Amazing Grace."
- That hymn was written from **personal experience**,
- **for Newton himself** was among **the worst of sinners**.
- At the age of eleven he took to the sea, where he had many adventures:
- He was forced into the navy.
- He was captured and flogged for **desertion**.
- He despaired almost to the **point of suicide**.
- Eventually Newton became a slave-trader, **a hard and wretched man**.
- **But he was shown mercy.**
- As he feared for his life in stormy seas, he threw himself on the grace of God, which he found in abundance.
- Later he testified,

How wonderful is the love of God in giving his Son to die for such wretches!

- Even after he was saved, Newton continued to confess his need of God's amazing grace.
- He wrote in one of his letters,

In defiance of my best judgment and best wishes, I find something within me which cherishes and cleaves to those evils, from which I ought to start and flee, as I should if a toad or a serpent was put in my food or in my bed. Ah! how vile must the heart (at least my heart) be.

- Newton did not despair, however.

- Before closing the letter, he quoted **Paul's words to Timothy**:

I embrace it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. (John Newton)

- And every Christian knows how to complete Newton's quotation in the quietness of a believing heart: **"of whom I am the foremost."**
- **So**, we've seen Paul's brief, **yet powerful testimony** to God's Amazing Grace.
- How his **Grace Strengthens the Saints**.
- How his **Grace is Superabounding**.
- And how his **Grace Saves Sinners**, even and especially the foremost, the worst.
- **And what should...**

4. Our Response to God's Amazing Grace (be).

- Well, for those who've yet to **receive the mercy and grace of God**,
- To those who are still condemned by their sins, **the response is clear**.
- No matter what sins you've committed in the past,
- No matter how antagonistic you have been to God, to Christ, to Christians, to the Gospel.
- No matter how great a sinner you are!
- **Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners.**
- Therefore, wait no longer, confess that you are **among the foremost of sinners**.
- And as we **saw in verse 16...**

believe in him for eternal life.

- Believe, Trust in Christ who gave his life as sacrifice **for your sins**.
- Trust in Christ who is the **only one who can save you from your sins**.
- Trust in Jesus Christ **as your personal Lord and Savior**.
- Knowing your sinful state, believe in Him **for Eternal Life!**
- **AMEN!**
- Now what about those who have received the amazing strengthening, superabounding, saving grace of God.
- How should we **respond to the truth of this passage...**
- Well, **Paul leads the way here...**
- **In verse 17** he concludes this section with a **resounding response** that we should all share.
- After sharing **his testimony**, after he remembers and reflects on the grace of God in His life.
- He **seems to explode into worship and praise** to God.

¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17)

- It's as if he is saying, yes God will meet you personally,
- he will bestow his mercy and grace upon sinners to turn and trust in Him.
- But never forget who this grace giving, sinner saving God truly is...
- God is **the king of the ages**:
- He is the eternal King who sovereignly governs every age before creation, after creation,
- to the final age, and on into eternity.
- God is **immortal**: He is not subject to decay or destruction and therefore is in the most absolute sense **"imperishable, incorruptible, and immortal."**
- God is **invisible**: the physical eye cannot see him. He...

16 ...dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. (1 Timothy 6:16)

- All that human beings have ever seen of him (other than the incarnate Christ) are glimpses of his glory.
- He is **the only God (mono theo)**.
- He is unique, He alone is what he is.
- Of himself God has declared,

18 ...I am the LORD, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:18)

- And this is the God who freely gives us mercy, superabounding grace, faith and love.
- This is the god who strengthens saints.
- This is the God who came into our world to save sinners.
- This is the God (fellow Christian) who has saved you from the depths of your sinfulness.
- And therefore, this is the God that deserves all of our...

honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

- **Prayer...**
- Like Paul we must respond to God's strengthening, superabounding saving amazing grace,
- with thanksgiving, praise, worship, honor and glory forever and ever.
- And I can think of no better way to do that right now than by joining together and sing **AMAZING GRACE by John Newton**