



Connect Church

Connect to a GREATER GOD, to a GREATER COMMUNITY, and to a GREATER LIFE

Thank God I'm Not What I Use to Be

Theme: Thank God

Tez Andrews, Lead Pastor

PO Box 372462 Decatur, GA 30037 10:30 am Sundays, S. DeKalb Mall
678-705-8121



Scripture: I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; (1 Timothy 1:12-13)

I. Introduction

- A. (Image) Yet God Still Loves Us
- B. Take a look back at Where God has brought you from and Thank God
- C. Text: 1 Timothy 1:12-17
- D. Background: The Cross was not Enough! God's word was not Enough

1 Timothy 1:3-7

When you look out at the world it is not hard to find persecuted Christians.

Sometimes in the safety of America we see plenty of churches and the freedom to practice our faith. Nevertheless, there are people that are persecuted.

Habila Adamu was a Christian in Nigeria. Suddenly, Boko Haram came and said he must convert to Islam or die. This is not uncommon for Islamic Religion. Mohammad was known for having bloody crusades where he would say they must choose to convert to Islam or die. This man Habila Adamu was shot in the face and pronounced dead. They celebrated and said Alah is King.

In other stories Habila said they had gone down the street and shot or converted everyone on his street. In this case God decided to spare Habila so that we could hear this miraculous story of his resurrection.

Nevertheless, on that day there were other Christians that died and were executed as martyrs murdered by the vicious jihadist Boko haram.

This man Habil Adamu would have been taken away from his children, his wife, and the community. How could God love someone like that?

When watching this story I had to realize something, God still loves a terrorist that hates Jesus if he is willing to repent. WoW!

When you think about it this is who Paul was.

Paul was the one who was actually approving the stoning of Stephen.

When Christians were being put to death he cast his vote against them.

He forced Christians to blaspheme the name of Jesus or die.

Yet God saved Paul? Yet God forgave Paul?

Leader of the hells angels through a rope around a pastor and dragged the pastor out of a pulpit. He was in jail for manslaughter. But he gave his life to Christ. God loves even the murderer.

A lady in North Carolina killed her whole family but on death row she found Jesus.

She was justly executed for her heinous crime but she went to be with Jesus after her death.

John Ramirez was a Satanist priest but one day he found Jesus.

Chuck Colston was involved in Watergate for obstruction of justice. Found prison fellowship and brought bible study to prison inmates.

The most remarkable conversion of all was the conversion of Paul the Apostle.

God can save the world's worst sinner! That's what he calls himself. The chief of sinners. I am the least of all saints.

Paul in 1 Timothy chapter 1 looks back and says, Thank God I'm not what I use to be. Thank God that he saved me.

Thanksgiving should be the core of what a follower of Jesus is. Last week we looked at the 10 lepers and Jesus healed them. But one turns back and says Thank God for what you done for me.

Today, you gone see Paul look back at his life. Look back at who he once was. He says, Thank God I'm not what I use to be.

When I look back at my life and who I was before I met Christ. Look back at some of the terrible decisions that I made. Look back at where I should be but God spared my life. Thank God I'm not who I use to be.

I use to be driven by my flesh. I use to be so far from God. I use to try and find peace and joy in all the things of this world. I use to be retaliatory when people did things against me. I use to try to find peace in my sin. Try to find joy in my sin instead of leaning on Jesus.

Thank you Jesus for loving me! Thank you Jesus for saving me! Thank you Jesus I'm not what I use to be.

Paul's testimony was thank God I'm not what I use to be. Thank God you saved me even though I was the worst of sinners.

Today I want to invite you look back at your life and see where God has brought you from and Thank God!

This is what Paul does in 1 Timothy 1.

1 Timothy was written as a letter of encouragement to his son in ministry Timothy.

Paul told Timothy to stay in Ephesus and he wrote him a letter to give him the reasoning for his stay. Paul previously ministered at Ephesus and established the church there but apparently false teachers had come in teaching false doctrine (fairy tales and myths). So in verse 3 through 4 of chapter 1 of 1 Timothy, Paul told Timothy he needed to defend the faith against these false teachers because these false teachers were confusing people rather than giving Godly edification.

Satan loves to keep up confusion. Satan loves to keep up a bunch of mess. Satan does this by getting us to question the word of God. This is exactly what was happening in Ephesus. In verse 3 Paul says Timothy stay in Ephesus and charge the teachers to stop teaching false doctrine. This included endless birth records and myths because it just leads to controversy. The teachers need to stick with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is by faith. Society loves to teach the "higher power" Society loves to teach "what's right for you may not be right for me" Society loves to teach being touched by an angel Society loves to teach what it believes is morally right and wrong. But, we must get away from the world's standard of morally right and wrong and get to the absolute truth of the bible, which says place your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

I know that as a minister of the Gospel that I can't keep ya'll in church all day with just teaching and preaching. I don't know if somebody could preach and teach at me all day. So in church we've added some things, We got dance ministry, we got drama ministry, we got puppet show, we got choir ministry doing extra songs, extended devotion etc... etc... And all of these things are fine but what generally suffers is the word of God from the pulpit. The preacher's sermon has to get shorter and shorter to accommodate the rest of the activities. Here Paul is saying to Timothy that these false teachers are getting away from Jesus Christ being preached. Satan wants to get you to question the word of God because he knows that if he gets you to question the bible you are questioning the integrity of God. Satan wants to get you to question is the bible enough. Do you need more? But instead of continuing with exegeting the Scripture. He doesn't go and try to prove that all we need is God's word and all we need is the gospel with more scripture. He tells his personal testimony of what Christ has done for me. Let me tell you something, you know the most powerful and convincing thing you can do to get people to come to Jesus. It ain't gone be about arguing with scripture. Its going to be what Christ has done for me. Here is what the gospel has done for me. Paul doesn't talk about mysticism and myths. He says Here is what Jesus did for me.

12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, 13 even though I was formerly a

blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; 14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. 15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. 16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those [l]who would believe in Him for eternal life. 17 Now to the King [m]eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory [n]forever and ever. Amen.

Paul was saying, you don't know my story. You don't know what God has done for me. But if you knew you would understand what I'm saying, thank God I'm not what I used to be.

Paul's testimony is about Jesus. Why didn't he talk about his experience. Being blinded for days. Getting a prophetic word from God. Seeing Jesus. The miracles. Because it wasn't about that, it was about Jesus.

15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

Paul looks back with a thankful heart. Thank God I'm not what I used to be. Does anyone need to look back and thank God? I know I do. Some things Paul remembered was thankful for.

II. I was Weak but, the Lord Strengthened Me (1 Timothy 1:12)

Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:16-17

Verse 12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He

considered me faithful, putting me into service.

Paul said I thank God that he strengthened me. This is not the first time Paul has mentioned strengthening by the Lord.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Ephesians 6:10 be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Paul understood something that my strength only comes from the source of Jesus Christ. Last week I had a busy week. Friday take kids to a college trip in Alabama. Come to men's group Saturday morning. Get ready to preach. Then meetings after church. Then when I got home Gala reminded me, the battery in my car died. I got it baby. I connected my battery up with her car. At first nothing happened. I said, baby, you got all this technology in your car that the charge has got to stay on. So that it will transfer power to your care through these cables. After about an hour the car turned over and the motor turned on. All of a sudden this dead car can move. Was it because it had power on its on. Know because it got connected to a source of power.

There was a moment where Paul said I was a coward and I was weak. But Jesus Christ our Lord strengthened me. I got strength when I got connected to the source Jesus Christ.

Paul said here is how you know I was strengthened, because he put me into service.

This word for service is the same word that was used in Acts 6:1 for the deacons that were assigned to wait tables for the orphans and widows you needed food.

Paul was appointed to serve in ministry as an Apostle.

Jesus strengthened me and to prove it he placed me into service.

Yall this is how I know God strengthened me. When Jesus decided to put me into service of others. There are times in this position when everything is pulling on you. Members are sick and your heart grieves so you go to go visit and pray. You got to work and still feed your family. On top of that you may have issues in the household with your wife. Then there are issues at church finance issues. Doctrinal issues. Some people don't like this or that you doing. This year alone there have been almost a 3% jump in pastors that commit suicide.

52% say they can't meet their church's expectations. 79% say they don't have real true friends. 1/3 battle discouragement. 1/3 battle inadequacy.

All recent stats from the Gospel coalition and Lifeway.

The only way you can make it through this thing we call ministry is if you plugged into the source. Thank Christ Jesus my Lord who strengthened me and considered me faithful appointing me to service. I was weak but the Lord Strengthened me.

III. I was Far from God but, I was Shown Mercy (1 Timothy 1:13)

He strengthened me, considered me faithful, and put me into service.

13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

I was far from God but I was shown Mercy.

Paul is taking a look back and he recognizes I was so not equipped to be an Apostle I needed the strength of the Lord. But then on top of that if you knew who I was and what I had done, I did not deserve the position. I did not deserve forgiveness. I deserved death.

He said I was a blasphemer (he cursed God), He persecuted and was violent.

In Acts 26:10 it says when Christian were being put to death he cast his vote against them. On the Sanhedrin he had a vote for or against Christians.

Before Saul met Jesus he was Anti-Christ. There was nothing in him that was Godly. Paul himself said I was a blasphemer, violent, and an ignorant unbeliever in 1 Timothy 1:3. Paul is an unlikely candidate to be saved. He is an unlikely candidate to be an Apostle.

Acts 8:3 3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

Saul was passionate about something that was totally off. His passion was to persecute Chrsitians. Kill Christians. Force them to convert. Notice this verse said, he was a part of dragging men and women out of the house.

Paul is saying you can't get any worst than what I was.

Paul is looking back and he says I was weak but the Lord strengthened me and gave me the hardest job that someone could have. Lead in ministry.

Not only that I was far from God and the most unlikely person for God to ever use. Yet God showed mercy because I acted ignorantly.

Paul received the mercy that Jesus prayed for on the cross. Father forgive them for they know not what they do. They were killing the Savior sent from God unknowingly. So Jesus asked for mercy. Paul received this mercy.

In fact when Paul was out persecuting Christians, notice what happens after Jesus knocks some sense into Him. Acts 9: 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,

Paul was actually persecuting Jesus.

This is why Paul says I was the chief of sinners. I actually was part of persecuting Jesus. Paul is saying Thank God I'm not what I used to be. I was weak but He strengthened me. I was far from God but God showed me mercy.

What are some things that pushes me away from God. Write a few things down.

When I think back at who I have been in the past. How could God accept someone like me. I've lusted. I've cheated. I've lied. I have had outburst of anger. I have cut corners financially. I have not given you my all. Yet despite your list Jesus says mercy. He says I love you. He says I accept you. I'm ready to restore. He doesn't take note of your list. He rips up your list and says even though you may be the chief of sinners. I can still wipe away any charge that may come against you. I can still show mercy.

IV. I Didn't Deserve Mercy but, Grace was Abundant and Jesus Blood was Powerful (1 Timothy 1:14-16)

14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love

which are found in Christ Jesus. 15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full

acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. 16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those [I]who would believe in Him for eternal life.

Paul looks back and says I was weak but the Lord Strengthened me

I was far from god but I was shown Mercy

I didn't deserve mercy but Grace was Abundant Jesus blood was powerful.

That will preach.

Its like grace was abundant. NO matter how much sin Paul could come up with

Jesus grace was more abundant.

Paul said I am the foremost of sinners. You can't get any worst than persecuting

Jesus. Killing Christians. I was foremost. Yet somehow Jesus loved me.

Romans 5:8 While we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly.

When I look back at some of my evil in the past. My choices that were ungodly. My

life decisions that hurt others. That hurt my family.

Yet God showed me mercy and Jesus blood was powerful.

Preaching Jesus gives results!!!

Yall have heard me say this before, how are we going to lower prison rates in our

community. Fatherless rates. STD rates. Dropout rates. Divorce rates.

We gone preach Jesus!

You can turn on TV at 10pm tonight and someone is going to be advertising water from the Jordan to give you a miracle.

Someone is going to be saying you need a new anointing to get healed.

You need to see the prophet so that He can cast out that demon.

Be careful because all of a sudden you will look to stuff instead of looking to Jesus.

Ohhh let me speak to the person that's depressed and sick right now. Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I one was lost but now I'm found was blind but now I see.

Ohhh let me speak to the person that is struggling with demonic possession and oppression.

All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give; I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live. I surrender all, I surrender all. All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.

Ohh let me speak a word to people that are in financial hardship.

What can wash away my sin nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again nothing but the blood of Jesus.

There's no other name higher than yours Lord. Theres no other name higher than yours Lord. So we call on Jesus! Jesus! My healer! My Savior! My Savior.

I know it was the blood I know it was the blood. One day when I was lost He died up on the cross!. I know it was the blood for mee

Paul didn't go to any sort of cheap trick. It was the blood of Jesus that forgave me. It was his grace that was abundant. The more mess I came up with the more abundance that God's grace was. It's the same message that brought life change the message of the Gospel.

V. Conclusion: Overwhelmed with Gratefulness (1 Timothy 1:17)

Paul thinks back to the life change and transformation that happened as the result of the Gospel of Jesus. He ends with this beautiful doxology.

17 Now to the King [m]eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory [n]forever and ever. Amen.

When Paul looks back at how Jesus transformed me he ends in a beautiful doxology. Its so powerful you can't really even preach it. You can't exegete it. Its just a beautiful song of praise. Now unto the king.

Jesus super rules over everything.

Eternal! He dwells outside of time he is not bound by a clock.

Immortal. He exist alone as God almighty. Does not depend on anyone but himself and He is incapable of dying.

Invisible we pray 1 Timothy 6:15 to the kings of kings and Lord of Lord who alone has immortality dwells in unapproachable light whom no man has seen or can see. To you be glory majesty dominion and power forever.

Be all glory and honor forever.

When you look back at What God has done for you, you need to get lost in thanksgiving worship and praise.

God has changed me.

Where are you at? Let me tell you something, as a believer I can get lost in praise because I think back God loves me.

Paul said I am living proof that God can save anyone. Paul openly blasphemed God and killed Christians and put Christians in jail. I agree Paul was probably the worst of sinners. You can't get worst than that. Yet God loves Him.

The response to this grace was Now unto the king eternal immortal invisible. The only wise God be honor glory forever and forever forever.

Amen! Let it be so! Say it and rejoice.

If you are a Christian you should be thankful. Remember what you use to be. You have nothing to be thankful for. Cause you never accepted Christ. Now is the time! God can save you by God's grace. If you have not accepted God's grace nothing to praise God for. Don't foolish. Accept this free gift. Believe in Jesus! Christ came to save sinners even sinners as bad as you.
