

March 26, First Timothy 1:12–20

Read 1 Timothy 1:12–20 in any translation. I will print the NET 2 translation.

1:12 I am grateful to the one who has strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he considered me faithful in putting me into ministry, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I was treated with mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14 and our Lord's grace was abundant, bringing faith and love in Christ Jesus. 15 This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them! 16 But here is why I was treated with mercy: so that in me as the worst, Christ Jesus could demonstrate his utmost patience, as an example for those who are going to believe in him for eternal life. 17 Now to the eternal king, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever! Amen.

18 I put this charge before you, Timothy my child, in keeping with the prophecies once spoken about you, in order that with such encouragement you may fight the good fight. 19 To do this you must hold firmly to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck in regard to the faith. 20 Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

Comments:

D. T. Niles of Ceylon was fond of describing evangelism as "one beggar telling another beggar where he had found bread." No sooner has Paul finished wrestling again with the essence of "the glorious gospel" than he literally explodes into a joyous celebration of his own personal relationship with Christ.

Though many years had passed, Paul's conversion was always in the center of his memory. It never lost its motivating power throughout his ministry. The message that comes through his story is the assurance that if Christ could indeed change him, He can change anyone.

Paul calls his life before conversion as a time of unbelief (v. 14). Too often we look at people who do not believe in Jesus, but have a religious life, as slightly misguided people. Paul doesn't sugar coat his life before Jesus. He would loudly say, for all to hear, that he was dead in his trespasses and sin.

I fear one of the greatest weaknesses of modern Christianity is that we think people who have another god, not the blessed Holy Trinity, are close to salvation. Ultimately, any God other than the God who has revealed himself in the Bible, is simply an idol. To worship an idol is to be lost eternally.

In v. 15 Paul calls himself the worst of sinners, not simply because he didn't believe Jesus was the promised one from God, but because he attacked and tried to destroy the church, the body of Christ. Paul taught the devil an important lesson: let people be religious, but not connected to Jesus.

The most religious person in the world who doesn't know his Savior and Redeemer is lost in his sin. Do you think Paul who was a Pharisee of Pharisees, would tell you not to disturb the Children of Israel because they have their own way of salvation?

If he thought that was true, why did he always begin his mission work by going first to the Lost Sheep of Israel. Nor would Jesus ever say this either. Read John 5:19–24 (esp. v. 23). Why then do we think it wrong to try to convert people of other religions into Christians?

V. 17 hammers this home. "Now to the eternal king, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever! Amen. There is one **eternal king and only one God.**

Vs. 18–20 seem to support the idea many commentators have that Timothy may be getting tired of his battles with those teach falsely or quarrel over useless ideas and genealogies. First Paul reminds him of the words spoken by those who prophesied his role in the church.

Then he reminds Timothy there are things for which we must fight. He can do this by firmly clinging to the faith and keeping a clean conscience. Then he refers to several people that both Paul and Timothy knew. They have shipwrecked their faith. Paul certainly doesn't want Timothy to do that.

Reflection Point: Do you understand now the spiritual condition of those who worship the gods of their imagination or own creation? They are lost in sin just as Paul (then Saul) was when he was zealously religious for Jews, but not a follower of Jesus, the promised Messiah. Remember who needs your witness!