

# THE TESTIMONY OF A TRUE MINISTER

## 1 TIMOTHY 01:12–17

### *Introduction*

This passage is a contrast with the former passage (1 Tim 1:3-11), presenting a strong contrast between the true minister and false teachers. These verses cover the testimony of Paul, who was a true minister. The verses are a sharp contrast with those who are false teachers (see notes, 1 Tim 1:3-11). It is a passage that every minister and teacher of the church should heed.

- I. Christ Jesus appointed him to serve (v. 12-14).
- II. Christ saved him (v. 15-16).
- III. Christ is to be praised (v. 17).

### **I. *Timothy 01:12–14 Paul Appointed a Minister of the Gospel***

Christ Jesus appointed him to serve. Jesus Christ puts the true minister in the ministry. This is a critical fact. Paul says that he did not make himself a minister nor did other persons choose him to be a minister. He did not choose the ministry because he thought it would be a good profession nor because people thought he would make a good minister. He was in the ministry for one reason only: Christ Jesus had chosen him and put him into the ministry. Note four facts.

1. Christ Jesus *strengthened* Paul. The word “strength” (endunamoo) means to enable and give power to. The power of Paul’s ministry came from Christ. Christ gave him the strength to minister. Paul’s strength and power to minister did not come from his...
  - trying to stir up power within himself.
  - talking about the results and power in his ministry.
  - trying to programme strength and power into his ministry.
  - trying to shout power into his preaching.

Christ Himself put Paul into the ministry; therefore Christ Himself strengthened and empowered Paul for the ministry. No person has the power to do spiritual warfare; no person can penetrate the spirits of other people. If a person is to minister to people, he must be empowered by Christ, for only Christ can penetrate the spirits of people. Therefore, the minister must possess the power of Christ.

**Thought 1.** This is a critical fact. It means that a person cannot make himself a minister nor can other persons choose him to be a minister — not a true minister, not a minister who pleases Christ and can be blessed by Christ. Why? Because no person can carry on a successful ministry in his own strength, not a ministry that truly reaches people for Christ and delivers them from sin, death and the judgment

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to come. Only Christ can do this. This is the reason the minister must be enabled by Christ; he must minister in the strength and power of Christ.

A person who is in the ministry because he has chosen the ministry as a profession or because people thought he would make a good minister is only serving a humanistic religion. Of course, a humanistic minister — a minister who ministers only in his human strength — does some good through social and emotional development. But he does much harm in that he leads people into a false security. How? He is not able to spiritually save a person — not a single person — from sin, death and the judgment to come. Only Christ Jesus can do this. Therefore, the only way a minister can be what he should be...

- is to be put in the ministry by Christ Jesus.
- is to be strengthened and empowered by Christ Jesus.

**John 15:16-17** *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”*

**1 Cor 1:27-29** *But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things — that are, so that no one may boast before him.*

**2 Cor 3:6** *He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

**2 Cor 4:1** *Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.*

**2 Cor 5:18-21** *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**Eph 3:7** *I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power.*

**Eph 4:11-13** *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

**1 Tim 1:12** *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.*

**2 Tim 1:9-11** *Who has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time. But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.*

2. Christ Jesus considered him trustworthy. This is a most wonderful thought, that Christ would consider us trustworthy. He trusts us to be faithful, and in the final analysis, He knows that we will be faithful to Him. This is one of the reasons He chooses and puts us in the ministry.

**Thought 1.** No matter how far down a minister falls, he should always remember that Christ Jesus considers him faithful. Christ knows that the minister of Christ will arise and begin to serve with renewed fervour. This is the reason Christ called the minister: because in the final analysis the minister will be faithful. How do we know this? Because of the forgiveness and power and faithfulness of Christ. Therefore, any minister who has fallen must arise and seek the forgiveness of Christ and begin to walk anew in the strength and power of Christ.

**Thought 2.** William Barclay has an excellent message for us as we deal with our dear brothers and sisters who have fallen.

*“It was to Paul an amazing thing, that he, the arch-persecutor, had been chosen as the missionary and the pioneer of Christ. It was not only that Jesus Christ had forgiven him; it was that Christ had trusted him. Sometimes in human affairs we forgive a man who has committed some mistake or who has been guilty of some sin, but we make it very clear that his past makes it impossible for us to trust him again with any responsibility. But Christ had not only forgiven Paul, He had entrusted him with His work to do. The man who had been the persecutor of Christ had been made the ambassador of Christ” (The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, p. 48).*

**1 Cor 4:2** *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*

**1 Cor 9:17** *If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.*

**Col 1:25** *I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness.*

**1 Th 2:4-5** *On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness.*

**1 Tim 1:11-12** *That conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.*

**Titus 1:2-3** *A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.*

3. Christ Jesus forgave his terrible sins. Paul mentions three terrible sins of which he had been guilty.

⇒ Blasphemy: he had insulted, reviled, cursed and railed the name of Christ.

⇒ Persecutor: he had been so angry at Christ that he had set out to wipe the Lord's name off the face of the earth. Therefore, he had been set against all believers — set upon destroying them all. (See note, *Persecution of Church*, Acts 8:3.)

⇒ A violent man (hubristes): insolent; to treat and use others spitefully; to be brutal and violent and to enjoy it; to be in a fiery rage and to inflict it upon others. William Barclay says that the word “indicates a kind of arrogant sadism; it describes the man who is out to inflict pain and injury for the sheer joy of inflicting it....that is what Paul was once like in regard to the Christian Church. Not content with words of insult, he went to the limit of legal persecution. Not content with legal persecution, he went to the limit of sadistic brutality in his attempt to stamp out the Christian faith” (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p. 52).

However despite all this evil, God had mercy upon Paul. Paul had not known that Christ was really the true Messiah. He thought that he knew God and that his religion was the true religion. He felt that any religion that stood against his religion was to be stamped out. Therefore, when Paul attacked Christ and His followers, he did it ignorantly in unbelief. He just did not believe that Jesus Christ could possibly be the Messiah.

The point is this: God had mercy upon Paul. He took pity upon Paul despite his terrible sins (see *Mercy*, 1 Tim 1:2).

**Rom 9:16** *It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.*

**Titus 3:4-7** *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

**Lam 3:22** *Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.*

**Micah 7:18-19** *Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.*

4. Christ Jesus poured out His grace upon Paul. Remember: grace means the undeserved favour and blessings of God.

=> Christ favoured Paul even when he did not deserve it.

=> Christ blessed Paul even when he did not deserve it.

And note: Christ favoured and blessed him abundantly, that is, super-abundantly and beyond measure. Christ did two things for Paul.

=> Christ stirred faith in Paul: the faith to believe and trust and to serve and to keep on serving no matter the trial, problem or fatigue.

=> Christ stirred love in Paul: the love to still reach out and do all he could for people even when they rejected, ridiculed, abused and persecuted him. (See note 1 Tim. 1:5-6.)

**Rom 2:4** *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?*

**Rom 3:24** *And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

**Eph 1:7-8** *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

**1 Tim 1:14** *The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

**Titus 2:11-14** *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

## II. **Timothy 01:15–16** *Salvation of the Minister*

Jesus Christ saves the true minister. Three significant points are made in these two verses.

1. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is a trustworthy saying or statement. It is a true message that can be trusted, and the glorious message is worthy of everyone accepting it. Not a single person should reject or ignore the message.

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Christ actually left the spiritual world or dimension to come into the physical world in order to save the human race. He saves us from sin, death and the judgment to come. No matter how sinful a person is — no matter how great a sin or sins he has committed — Christ Jesus came to save him. And the person can be saved.

The point is this: every true minister has been saved by Christ or else he is not a true minister. It is just as necessary for a minister to be saved as it is for anyone else. Every person needs to be saved, and once he has been saved — no matter how terrible his sin — Christ can put him into the ministry.

**Luke 19:10** *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

**John 3:16-18** *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

**John 12:47-48** *“As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.”*

**Acts 5:31** *God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*

**1 Tim 1:15** *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.*

**Heb 7:25** *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

2. Christ Jesus has now saved the worst sinner. The worst sins in the world are the sins of...
- blasphemy: being filled with anger and malice against Christ; cursing and blaspheming His name with a bitter hostility.
  - persecuting believers and trying to annihilate them off the face of the earth.
  - injuring believers; being brutal and violent against believers and enjoying it.

This had been Paul, but note the wonderful truth: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” And Paul was the worst sinner; therefore, Christ Jesus had come to save him.

**Thought 1.** Christ will save anyone who confesses that he is a sinner and that he needs to be saved — any sinner who truly confesses and repents of his sin. No matter how terrible the sin, if the person will confess and turn from his sin, Christ will save him. Why? Because Christ Jesus came to save sinners. This was His very purpose for coming into the world. The point is this: every true minister is to know how terrible a sinner he is. He is as much a sinner as Paul was. The minister is to be as conscious of being a sinner as anyone else. He is to be aware that he is “the worst” of sinners or else he lacks a true sense of God’s holiness and of man’s depravity.

**Mat 9:12-13** *On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

**Luke 7:39** *When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is — that she is a sinner."*

**Luke 19:7** *All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'"*

**John 8:10-11** *Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."*

**Rom 5:8** *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

**Acts 2:38** *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

**Acts 3:19** *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

**1 Tim 1:15** *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.*

**Prov 28:13** *He who conceals his sins does not prosper; but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

3. Christ Jesus saved Paul as an example of His great mercy. (See *Example of Paul*, 1 Tim.1:16.) Very simply, Paul is the prime example...

- that any sinner, no matter how terrible his sin, can be saved — if he will only receive Christ and begin to follow Him day by day.
- that any believer can be delivered from sin and from the power of sin, no matter how strong the enslavement is — if he will only receive the power of Christ and follow Him with a renewed commitment. The point is this: the true minister is an example of the Lord's great patience. The Lord has saved the minister from sin, truly saved him; therefore, the true minister stands as a dynamic example of God's eternal mercy and eternal grace.

**John 3:15-16** *That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

**John 5:24-29** *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

**John 11:25** *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."*

**John 12:46** *"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."*

**John 20:31** *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

**Rom 10:9-10** *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

**2 Pet 3:9** *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

### 1 TIMOTHY 01:16 PAUL'S EXAMPLE

*But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.*

**1 Timothy 01:16**

Paul was chosen to be the example for all other men. The example of what? Of unlimited patience — that God's mercy can save anyone. Paul had been the arch-persecutor of the church, storming into the homes and arresting and murdering the followers of Christ (see notes, Acts 8:1-4; 9:1-2). But God, who is patient and not willing that any should perish, reached down and had mercy upon Paul. God forgave Paul and saved him.

Paul declared a marvellous truth: if God could save him, God could save anyone. No matter how great the sinner, the patience and mercy of God are greater. Paul is proof; he is the example of God's mercy. □

### III. *Timothy 01:17 Jesus Christ, the Eternal King is to be Praised*

Christ is to be praised. Thinking of the glorious salvation that Christ had given him led Paul to break forth into praise. This is a great doxology:

- ⇒ God is "the King eternal": the word eternal is literally ages. God is the King, the sovereign majesty of the ages, both this age and the age to come. God is immortal: that is, incorruptible. He has no seed of corruption, no seed of aging, deterioration or decay within His being. God cannot die. He alone has immortality (1 Tim.6:16).
- ⇒ God is invisible: that is, He cannot be seen by people, not with physical eyes in the physical dimension or world.
- ⇒ God is the only God: that is, he is the only living and true God, the only God who actually possesses intelligence and wisdom, who can truthfully interact with the world and save men.

**Rom 15:6** *So that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**1 Cor 6:20** *You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

**Heb 13:15** *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise the fruit of lips that confess his name.*

**1 Pet 2:9** *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ■*