

The Future

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[0 : 00] Friends, I can tell you the future. Do you want to know what's going to happen in your future?

You will see Jesus face to face. You will come face to face with Almighty God. But what will you say when you see Jesus face to face? Let's keep this question in our minds tonight as we go through this passage. Our first point tonight is the sin of a Christian. We're going to be looking at 1 Timothy 1 from where we read verses 12 onwards. Here we have the account of a man who's called Paul. He says in verse 12, I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointed me to his service. Here we have the account of a man who believed in Jesus. He believed that Jesus was the Lord, that Jesus is God. And he says that this Jesus, that God has called him to take part in his ministry, to spread the news of the gospel to others, to make plain the truths of God. If Paul was alive today we'd call him maybe a traveling minister or an evangelist or a missionary.

Paul is probably the most famous missionary. He's so famous that the New Testament is filled with his letters. It's filled with letters to churches that he planted. He would constantly be writing to them. Thousands of people were told about the gospel through this man. The church that we are in today is a product of the work that he took part in, nearly 2,000 years ago. However, if you notice here, he doesn't stand up and say, look what I've done.

He doesn't stand up and say, wow, I've been really successful because I'm a great guy. He doesn't say I've kept all the rules, I've been a good chap and look how God has blessed me. Instead, all he says is I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord. He's saying thank you, God.

Thank you, Lord, for calling me to your service. Thank you for equipping me. Thank you for training me and teaching me to be what I am today. He recognizes that his success in the mission field is not because he is good, it's because God is good. There's a great verse in 2 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 3.5 says, not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. Paul knows he's been called by Jesus. Paul knows he's been trained by Jesus to spread the word of God and he knows this has happened because Jesus loves him. Here at this point, he's just kind of interrupting his writing and it's just a burst of praise. He just wants to praise God for it. He wants to praise God that he's been put into his ministry. Friends, where do we stand before God today? Are we like Paul? Are we thankful every day in our lives that we are in God's ministry? Are we thankful that Jesus has called us to his service? That doesn't just mean up the front work.

[3 : 36] Your service for Jesus and every day can mean the witnessing to friends. It can mean witnessing to those you're at work with, being a good example, helping with the teas and coffees.

There's many ways you can be in Jesus' service. Are you grateful to Jesus that he has called you into it? Friends, where do you stand before God today? Consider your life and ask yourself this question. What will you say when you see Jesus face to face? Maybe you're saying, well, you know what? That's fine. That's fine for Paul and that's fine for others and maybe you're looking around and you're seeing all these people in church and you're thinking, oh, they look like kind of churchy people and maybe you're telling yourself, but I don't really fit in here. Maybe you're saying to yourself, these people look like they're at home here, but deep down you maybe feel like you're an impostor. This isn't the place for me. I'm not a good person. Maybe you're saying, I'm nothing like Paul. He sounds like a great guy. I'm nothing like him. We are worlds apart. Oh, friends, let's take a look at who Paul was before he was called to Christ service. Let's ask ourselves a question. Who was Paul? Who was Paul before Jesus called him? I'll try and paint you a picture for any of you who don't know who Paul was. Paul is a zealous Jew. He was known for his advancement in Jewish study. In fact, he tells us in Galatians, he says, I, that's Paul, was advancing in Judaism beyond

many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. Now, a Jew is somebody who believes in the Old Testament, the same Old Testament we have. Now, the Old Testament has a key thing in it that the Messiah is coming, that someone was coming to save mankind from their sins, that the Savior who was coming and that Savior is Jesus Christ. He is the one who'd come to save us from our sins. Now, Paul, he'd heard of Jesus. He'd heard of his miracles. He'd heard of his teaching. Paul didn't believe Jesus was God. Paul didn't want anything to do with Jesus. He didn't believe Jesus is the one the Old Testament spoke of. Who was Paul? Paul was a man of unbelief. He thought Jesus was a nobody, an imposter. And he hated anyone who followed Jesus. Hating these people who began to persecute them. In the book of Acts, we're told that he began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and he put them in prison. He persecuted God's church. Imagine if that was today. Imagine you're sitting here today and Paul walks in the door and he says, all these people, you want to know about Jesus? You're going to prison. Persecution was considered one of the worst things you could do. And Paul was known as the most notorious persecutor of the law. Who was Paul? Paul was a man of persecution. He drove fear into people just like yourselves. In Acts again, we're told that he says, many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished.

And I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them. Paul was filled with violence. Who was Paul? He was a man of violence. He stood by and watched a young man called Stephen. Stephen stood up for Jesus. And he argued for Jesus. And what did Paul do? He stood by and condemned this man to death. He was happy. This man was stoned to death. And Paul, that's no bother. He was happy. He was Paul. He was a man of murder. Paul's a sinful man. We might have called him a traveling minister. We might have called him the most amazing, the most notorious missionary of all time. But look at who he was before Jesus called him. He sinned. He was a blasphemer. You know, to blaspheme is to attack God. Can you imagine if someone came up to you in the street and swore at your face? That's blaspheme. When you hear people taking the Lord's name in vain, that's what they're doing to God. They're attacking God. They're attacking him personally. They're attacking his name. They're attacking who he is. Paul's past was littered with sin, friends. Many of his acts were disgraceful.

Who was Paul? Paul was a man full of sin. He didn't believe in Jesus. He didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah. He didn't believe Jesus was the Son of God. And in verse 13 of this chapter in 1 Timothy 1, he acknowledges this. And he tells us that he's lived his life in ignorance and unbelief. He's been ignorant of the truth. Unbelief in the truth.

[8 : 43] Paul, you know, he thought he was on the right road for many years. He looked at his life and he thought, I'm doing just fine. I'm doing great. I don't need Jesus. I don't believe in him. Paul thought he was a good religious man who stood up for God. Friends, he was wrong. He's got it all wrong. Many years of his life were wasted in an obsession against God's people. This is who Paul was before he was converted. Now let us consider our own lives for a minute. You know, Paul's reflected upon his past in the word of God and he tells us about it. What about ourselves? You consider your own life. Are you someone full of sin?

Really what we need for this is a mirror. Maybe some of you ladies have got a mirror in your handbag. Maybe some of you guys, we don't admit to having a mirror in your handbag, but it's another issue. But we need a mirror which we can look into and we can see, are we righteous or are we sinful? And that's the word of God, His Bible. If you don't have a Bible, then let us know. Everyone needs a Bible because the Bible is a mirror of righteousness.

And if you look into your Bible, ask yourself this question. Am I a sinner? Am I a sinner like Paul? Then if you're being honest with yourself, I think we'll all be saying yes.

But just in case, if you're telling yourself, no, no, I'm not a sinner. I'm nothing like Paul. Look at Romans 3, 23, for all have sinned, not just some, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And what is worse, friends, is that sin deserves a punishment. To sin one sin against an infinite and eternal God, that deserves an infinite and eternal punishment.

Friends, if we're honest, we'll realize we have a lot in common with who Paul was. Where do you stand before God today? Have you been living your life like Paul was? Thinking you're okay, thinking you're doing okay, thinking that you're a good person who doesn't need Jesus and that one day you'll get to the gates of heaven and you'll be able to say to God, yeah, well, look what I did for you. Consider your life, friends, and ask yourself this question.

[11 : 22] What will you say when you see Jesus face to face? Let's go on our second point. We've looked at the sin of a Christian. Let's look at the grace of a Christian. Let's pick up in verse 14. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Paul tells us here, even after all of this, after all his history, he says the love of Christ towards me, a vile sinner, was poured out on me. Jesus did not give up on me. That's what he's telling us.

Jesus didn't give up on me. He says that grace is exceedingly abundant. He's trying to put this in a picture, this image going on here, that this grace is just abundant, it's abounding. It's plentiful. It's overflowing. It's a copious amount. So much grace, he's basically saying that all my sin was covered, that God was dealing with all my past, all my murder, my hatred, my vengeance, my attacking God's people. He was dealing with all. Verse 13 to 14, this is Paul's account, this is his transition from sinner to saved. This is his great change.

And he says it's because of grace. It's because the grace of our Lord. Friends, grace is the beginning of conversion and it's given by Christ. Paul says he's thankful in verse 12 because he's been given grace. What's grace? Grace is getting what you don't deserve and not getting what you do. Let's unpack that. We don't deserve to be in a relationship with God. We don't deserve to be able to call out to Him, to talk to Him. But God says, when I give you grace, I bring you into communion with me. I let you have access to me. I let you have my fullness dwell within you. Because you know for our sin, we deserve to be punished.

But God says when you get grace, I take that punishment from you. You don't get that punishment. That's grace. God made us to be pure. God made us to worship Him. But we sin. We don't deserve to be in that relationship. But grace, grace brings us back to God. Christ allowed Paul to see the truth. Christ allowed Paul to get it. Christ allowed Paul to realize that Jesus is the Messiah. He is the one the Jews were waiting for and are still waiting for. Christ allowed Paul to know that he is the saviour of mankind. Are you a sinner, are you an unbeliever? Then grace is the beginning. It is a gift for you and I. A great verse, Ephesians 2.8 tells us, for it is by grace you have been saved. Through faith and this not from yourselves. It is the gift of God. If you're a sinner, friends, and you know you're not standing well with God, you need to know that you need grace. Where do you stand with God today? Do you have business to do with the Almighty? Jesus is calling you this very moment to go to Him. Now is the time. Not tomorrow, not the next day, but now. If you put off, Jesus is calling your life and you walk out that door and something happens to you. A car crash, a heart attack, a stroke, whatever it may be and you die and you have not accepted Christ's call in your life. Ask yourself this question. When you see where the nails went in His hands, when He died on the cross for you, when you see where the spear went in His side when He died on the cross for you, what will you say to

[15 : 33] Jesus when you see Him face to face and you know you didn't ask Him for grace. You didn't accept His call in your life. That you went your own way. You tried to do it by your own merit. What will you say when you see Jesus face to face? Our last point this evening is the salvation of a Christian. We've looked at the sin of a Christian, the grace of a Christian and now the salvation. Maybe you're saying to yourself, okay, okay, I get it.

I'm with you. I'm a sinner and I need grace. But how do I get grace? How can I transition from sinner to save like Paul did? Well verse 15 is the answer. Verse 15 Paul says, here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. No, it says there, this is a trustworthy saying. This is the proposition of the gospel friends. This is a saying of the faith. It's like a motto of the Christian faith. It echoes John 3.16. This kind of saying has stood the test of time. People have died on this. They've died holding on to this, that this is my faith. And it's not only true for Paul. It's not only true for those who heard it back then. It's true for all of us here right now. This is a trustworthy saying. You can rely on this. Friends, maybe you've been drifting off a bit tonight. It's warm. It's a summer's evening. Put a nice full meal.

It's sleepy. Come back for a second and take this home. If you could write one thing about the service, take this home. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Are you a sinner? I'm a sinner. When I looked into the word of God, it told me I'm a sinner. Do you need grace? I need grace. Then Christ is the answer. Friends, the church is not a place of good people. Church is not a place of good issues. The church is not a place for those who are born into it. It's not an elite club of only those who are born in are allowed. The church is a place of sinners.

It's a hospital for sinners. We are in a place where we affirm we're sinners and we need Christ. We are in a place where we affirm I can't do it on my own. I can't please God by my own merits. I need Christ. We are united in this banner. Our efforts don't cut it.

It's on the cross that Jesus has come and made it possible for us to go and say, give me grace. Give me communion with you. Forgive me. Romans 4.25 is a great verse. It says in Romans 4.25 that he was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. He was delivered over to death for who sins? For our sins. He was raised to life for our justification that you and I can go to him and that because of what Jesus has done, we are made right before God. He came into the world to die on a cross, to take the punishment for Paul's sin, for my sin and for your sin. And he does it one time when Timothy 1.15 says to save sinners. That's why. If you want to be saved, you need to go to Jesus. You need to ask him for his grace. You need to call upon his name. And when he gives you this grace, you know that you are called into his service. You're called into his ministry, into his family. But maybe, maybe you've been sceptical. Maybe you're saying, no, sounds okay, but you can't forgive me. Maybe you're saying deep down, I'm a lost cause. You don't know what I've done. Maybe you're looking around and you're seeing these people in church and you're thinking, if they knew what I've done in my life, they would tell me to get out. Maybe you're saying, Jesus, can't forgive me. I've done it the wrong thing too many times. Maybe you've been a Christian for years and you're telling yourself every single day I make the same mistakes. God doesn't want anything to do with me. I'm beyond it.

[20 : 43] Maybe you're saying I'm not a good person. This is great for Paul. It's great for some of you. But to be honest with you, maybe you're just saying to yourself, I'm the worst sinner who's ever lived. Just wait a minute, friends. Look at what the Word of God says in verse 15. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and I am the worst of them all. Now if the Word of God says that Paul is the worst, then you can't be the worst. At best you can be the second. Tell me this, if Paul says, I've been the worst of all sinners, can be saved, then you have no excuse and no right to say, Jesus can't save me. There is nothing you have done in your life that Jesus cannot save you from. And if you go to him and say, Jesus, that sounds great, but you can't save me. You got it wrong. That's the devil who wants you to think that. That's the devil who wants you to think it's too late. There's nothing that you've done that Jesus won't forgive you for. Nothing. Do you remember when we read in the first part of this chapter, what it says the gospel is for? For murderers, for adulterers, for slave traders. These are some of the things we think are horrendous.

This is the verse for perverse. And Jesus says, I came to save you. Verse 16 of 1 Timothy, Paul says, I'm an example for you. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus, might display as unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. Friends, if Paul can be forgiven, then so can you. But you must go to him. You must ask him for his forgiveness, for his grace. Romans 10, 13 says, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Your salvation is found in Jesus, not in your own works, not in your own merit, in Jesus.

Friends, I can tell you the future. Do you want to know the future? When you die, you'll be asked if you accepted Jesus's call on your life. You'll be asked, did you accept my Son as your Savior and rely on what He did on the cross for you? You will see Jesus face to face. You will come face to face with God Almighty. What will you say when you see Jesus face to face? Let's pray together. Our Heavenly Father, we do acknowledge, Lord, that you are a sovereign and great God and that you love us so much that you have come into this world and that you have died on the cross for our sins and that you have said to us, Lord, that if we come to you and we ask to be saved and to have your grace poured in our lives, you have said that you will give it to us and you will give it freely. Lord, we know one day we will meet with you face to face and we will be asked if we have accepted you and we just pray, Lord, that every one of us here tonight will know what it is to accept you into their lives, that you would apply your word to us, Lord, and Lord, we just want to glorify you for what you've done. For what you have done, you are a great God, Lord, that you have loved us. You are the only God and we do love you and we thank you so much for dying on the cross for us. In Jesus' name, we pray these things.

[24 : 36] Amen.