

lifeLines reference  
Homes Built on GRACE & TRUTH  
Why Give Thanks? Witness

**WORD**

(You are welcome to gather in groups of 3 or 4 for all or part of this discussion.)

**Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17**

Who is Paul, and who is Timothy?

List the words that Paul uses to describe himself.

Why would this witness be so important to Timothy as he begins to read these letters (there is a second Timothy) from his mentor?

Write out your own witness. Do it IN *lifeGroup*, or outside of *lifeGroup*, but do it!  
(Writing out your witness will help you be better prepared to share your witness when the opportunity arises.)

**Barnes' Notes on the Bible**

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord - The mention of the gospel [1 Timothy 1:11](#), and of the fact that it was committed to him, leads the apostle to express his gratitude to him who had called him to the work of preaching it. The Lord Jesus had called him when he was a blasphemer and a persecutor. He had constrained him to leave his career of persecution and blasphemy, and to consecrate himself to the defense and the propagation of the gospel. For all this, though it had required him to give up his favorite projects in life, and all the flattering schemes of ambition, he now felt that praise was due to the Redeemer. If there is anything for which a good man will be thankful, and should be thankful, it is that he has been so directed by the Spirit and providence of God as to be put into the ministry. It is indeed a work of toil, and of self-denial, and demanding many sacrifices of personal ease and comfort. It requires a man to give up his splendid prospects of worldly distinction, and of wealth and ease. It is often identified with want, and poverty, and neglect, and persecution. But it is an office so honorable, so excellent, so noble, and ennobling; it is attended with so many precious comforts here, and is so useful to the world, and it has such promises of blessedness and happiness in the world to come, that no matter what a man is required to give up in order to become a minister of the gospel, he should be thankful to Christ for putting him into the office. A minister, when he comes to die, feels that the highest favor which Heaven has conferred on him has been in turning his feet

away from the paths of ambition, and the pursuits of ease or gain, and leading him to that holy work to which he has been enabled to consecrate his life.

Who hath enabled me - Who has given me ability or strength for this service. The apostle traced to the Lord Jesus the fact that he was in the ministry at all, and all the ability which he had to perform the duties of that holy office. It is not necessary here to suppose, as many have done, that he refers to miraculous power conferred on him, but he makes the acknowledgment which any faithful minister would do, that all the strength which he has to perform the duties of his office is derived from Christ; compare [John 15:5](#) note; [1 Corinthians 15:10](#) note.

For that he counted me faithful - This is equivalent to saying that he reposed confidence in me. It means that there was something in the character of Paul, and in his attachment to the Saviour, on which reliance could be placed, or that there was that which gave the assurance that he would be faithful. A sovereign, when he sends an ambassador to a foreign court, reposes confidence in him, and would not commission him unless he had reason to believe that he would be faithful. So it is in reference to all who are called by the Redeemer into the ministry. They are his ambassadors to a lost world. His putting them into the ministry is an act expressive of great confidence in them - for he commits to them great and important interests. Hence, learn:

(1) that no one ought to regard himself as called to the ministry who will not be "faithful" to his Master; and,

(2) that the office of the ministry is most honorable and responsible. Nowhere else are there so great interests entrusted to man.

#### Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

(13) **Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.**—In these words of bitter self-accusation, St. Paul sums up the characteristic features of his brilliant career as a young Pharisee leader, as a popular Jewish patriot. The *object* of his intense hatred and of his burning antagonism during these never-to-be-forgotten days was *that very Lord*, from whom later he had received such unspeakable gifts. He knew he had been "a blasphemer" of that dear Master in the truest sense of the terrible word, since, as it has been well said, that: "He who had seen Stephen die for Christ, and after this did not cease to pant like a wild beast for the blood of the Church, must have known that he had not been guilty of simply reviling men but of blaspheming God." And "a persecutor," for, to quote his own words at Jerusalem ([Acts 22:4](#)): "I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." (Comp., too, [Acts 25:11](#) : "I compelled them to blaspheme.") And "injurious" (or, more accurately rendered, *a doer of outrage*), as he must well have remembered the events referred to in the history of the Acts ([Acts 9:1](#)) in the words: "Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord."

**But I obtained mercy.**—The Apostle, his heart overflowing with love and gratitude, contrasts his Master's mercy with his own want of it; the "mercy" shown to him consisting in something very different to simple forgiveness of a great wrong. In St. Paul's case the pardon was crowned by many a noble gift bestowed by that pitiful King whom he had so cruelly wronged.

(14) **And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant.**—The thought of his Master's great love to one who once reviled Him so bitterly, and who had spent his strength in trying to undo His servants' work, seems to have pressed with overwhelming force on St. Paul, who struggled to find words which should express how deeply he felt the loving tenderness which had transformed the cruel persecutor into the favoured Apostle. The Greek word translated "was exceeding abundant" is very rare, and possesses a superlative force.

**With faith and love.**—He sums up the divine mercy showed to him in the three words: grace, faith, and love. Grace, the unspeakable gift of God to him; faith and love, the results of the exceeding abundant gift of grace.

Faith: not merely a childlike trust in Christ, but a belief which accepted Christ as the hope of an otherwise hopeless world; and love, which includes love to man as well as love to God, a strange contrast to his former cruelty and hatred; for, instead of blaspheming, *now* he believed on Him whom he once reviled, and instead of persecuting the followers of Jesus, *now*, in his great love for them, he spent himself. Then, overwhelmed with joy and thankfulness that he, the enemy of God, had obtained the mercy and love of God, and conscious, from his own sweet and bitter experiences, what that mercy of God bestowed on a sinner signified, he gave utterance to one of those bright watchwords of the faith, with which the Christians of the first days used to comfort and encourage one another, and which, perhaps, better than any other words, gave expression to the burning thoughts which rose up from his grateful heart.

(15) **This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance.**—This striking formula in the New Testament, found only in the Pastoral Epistles, here and in [1Timothy 3:1](#); [1Timothy 4:9](#); [2Timothy 2:11](#); [Titus 3:8](#); and the somewhat similar expression, "these sayings [*words*]" are faithful and true," [Revelation 21:5](#); [Revelation 22:6](#), were formulas expressing weighty and memorable truths, well known and often repeated by the brotherhood of Christians in the first ages of the faith. They were, no doubt, rehearsed constantly in the assemblies, till they became well-known watchwords in the various churches scattered over the Mediterranean-washed provinces of the Roman empire; and in these "sayings" we see, perhaps, the germs of the great creeds of Christianity. [[1Timothy 3:1](#), perhaps, as usually understood, hardly falls under this category of "watchwords of the faith," unless St. Chrysostom's interpretation of the text be followed, which refers "the faithful saying" to the solemn truths which immediately preceded it in 1 Timothy 2]

**That Christ Jesus came into the world.**—This is an unmistakable allusion to the pre-existence of Christ. He came into the world, leaving the glory which he had with the Father

before the world was (see [John 16:28](#); [John 17:5](#); [Ephesians 1:3-4](#)). And the purpose for which he came into the world is stated distinctly in the next sentence.

**To save sinners.**—There are no details given respecting this salvation. The “sinners” here mentioned is a broad, inclusive term. It includes, besides Jews, the outcasts of the Gentiles without hope and without God—*all the lost*, irrespective of race or time. In the Lord’s own blessed words: “The Son of Man was come to seek and to save that which was lost” ([Luke 19:10](#)).

**Of whom I am chief.**—The intense humility of the strange, beautiful character of the Gentile Apostle prompted this bitter expression. St. Paul, it has been well said, knew his own sins by experience, and every other man’s *per speculationem*. In another place a similar feeling leads him to style himself as “less than the least of all saints” ([Ephesians 3:8](#)). He had been in time past so bitter an enemy of the Lord that no preaching of the disciples was effectual to work his conversion. In his case, to overcome his intense hatred of the Name, it needed a special appearance of the Risen One.

(16) **Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy.**—In spite of this deep consciousness of his guilt, faith and confidence in his own salvation seem never to have wavered. He speaks of *this* with all certainty, and proceeds to tell us with great clearness why Christ saved him, the chief of sinners.

**That in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering.**—If Christ could show mercy to him, surely in after times the greatest of sinners need never doubt the Redeemer’s power and will to save. St. Paul’s conversion foretold many a patient waiting on the part of the Lord, much long-suffering, which would never hurry to punish His enemies, but which would tarry long, in the hope of the sinner repenting while it was yet time.

**For a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him.**—Men were to learn that such conversions as his were to be looked forward to as no uncommon occurrences—conversion of blasphemers, of persecutors, whom the Lord would tarry long for, till they, too, coming to the knowledge of the truth, should acknowledge Him. Thus to *all* sinners was St. Paul a pattern—an example of the Lord’s long-suffering, of His patient waiting. His gracious Master had dealt with him like a king, who, when judging the case of a rebel city, pardons the chief rebel. If God would redeem Saul the persecutor, none need despair of finding mercy.

**To life everlasting.**—And the goal—which lay before these poor redeemed sinners, who, like St. Paul, in faith and loving trust in Jesus had found peace and acceptance—was eternal life.

(17) **Now unto the King.**—The wonderful chain of thoughts ([1 Timothy 1:12-16](#)) which so well illustrate the great assertion of [1 Timothy 1:15](#)—“that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”—St. Paul closes with a noble ascription of praise and thankfulness to the great God.

This doxology is addressed to no one Person of the ever blessed Trinity, but is—as has been said with great truth—“a grand testimony to the monotheism of St. Paul: the Godhead, the Trinity of his worship, is a sublime unity. To this Eternal, Incorruptible One be glory and honour unto the ages of the ages. Amen.”

**Eternal.**—More accurately rendered, (*to the King*) *of the ages*. The King of the Ages is the sovereign dispenser and disposer of the ages of the world. There is no reference at all here to the Gnostic æons.

**Immortal** (or *incorruptible*).—This epithet and the following one—“invisible”—are connected with “God,” not, with the preceding clause, “to the King of the Ages.” God is immortal, in contrast with the beings of earth, and—

**Invisible**, in contrast with the visible creation.

**The only wise God.**—*The only God*, the most ancient authorities omitting “wise.” “Only,” as in [1 Timothy 6:15](#): “the blessed and only potentate.” “The only God,” a contrast to the multitude of created spirits, angels, principalities, powers, &c. (See [1 Corinthians 8:5-6](#).)

**For ever and ever.**—Literally, *to the ages of the ages*, to all eternity—a Hebraistic expression for a duration of time superlatively (infinitely) long.

## Pastor Jeff's Thoughts

The Gospel in a nutshell right here! Here is our witness in all of its simplicity in verse 15.

***Christ Jesus came/ into the world/ to save sinners***

Each of these phrases, broken down piece by piece can be unpacked at length.

### PRAY

Thank God for calling you into His service as His witness today!

### LOVE

Is there someone who would receive and benefit from you sharing your witness? Take what you wrote from the assignment above and ask them if you could share it with them.

