

PAUL—AN EXAMPLE OF GOD'S GRACE

TEXT: (I Timothy 1:12-17, NIV)

¹²I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. ¹³Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. ¹⁴The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. ¹⁷Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.

INTRODUCTION

A. Conversion Is About Radical Change.

1. "You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Ephesians 2:19, NIV).
2. "But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children" (Galatians 4:4-5, NLT).
3. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (II Corinthians 5:17, NIV).

I. DAMASCUS ROAD EXPERIENCE

A. Saul the Persecutor

1. "Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:1-2, NIV).
2. "A team of itinerant Jews who were traveling from town to town casting out demons planned to experiment by using the name of the Lord Jesus. The incantation they decided on was this: 'I adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!' Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest, were doing this. But when they tried it on a man possessed by a demon, the demon replied, 'I know Jesus and I know Paul, but who are you?' And he leaped on two of them and beat them up, so that they fled out of his house naked and badly injured" (Acts 19:13-16, TLB).
3. "When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ¹⁹ and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:18-19, NIV).
4. "Then Simon answered, 'Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me'" (Acts 8:24, NIV).

B. Intervention from Heaven

1. "As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him" (Acts 9:3, NIV).
2. "He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'" (Acts 9:4, NIV).
3. "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5, NIV).

4. "What shall I do, Lord?" I asked" (Acts 22:10, NIV).
5. "Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?'
Peter replied, 'Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God'" (Acts 2:37-39, NLT).

C. He Looks Beyond Your Faults and Sees Your Need

1. "I used to say terrible and insulting things about him, and I was cruel. But he had mercy on me because I didn't know what I was doing, and I had not yet put my faith in him" (I Timothy 1:13, CEV).
2. "As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' He fell to his knees, shouting, 'Lord, don't charge them with this sin!' And with that, he died.
Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen" (Acts 7:59-8:1, NLT).
3. "Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:1-2, NIV).
4. "I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison" (Acts 22:4, NIV).
5. "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Romans 1:14-15, KJV).

II. THE ROLE OF ANANIAS

A. Hearing from God

1. "In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!'
'Yes, Lord,' he answered.
The Lord told him, 'Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying'" (Acts 9:10-11).

B. Straight Street

1. "Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do" (James 2:18, NIV).

C. Abundant Grace

1. "The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 1:14, NIV).
2. "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive" (Ephesians 2:4-5, NIV).

III. PAUL'S CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

A. A Changed Desire

1. "At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, 'Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?'" (Acts 9:20-21, NIV).
2. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. 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" (I Timothy 1:15-16, NIV).

B. A Commission to Missions

1. "But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name'" (Acts 9:15-16, NIV).

C. Grace Is Longsuffering

1. "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" (II Peter 3:9, NIV).

QUESTIONS

1. What radical changes in your life occurred at conversion?
2. Read II Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (II Corinthians 5:17, NIV). Discuss what that means.
3. Read Acts 2:37, "Peter's words pierced their hearts." Discuss what that means. Share a time God pierced your heart.
4. Discuss how the Lord looked beyond your faults and saw your need.
5. Grace is longsuffering. What does that mean?