

LONGSUFFERING FAITH

1 Timothy 1:12-17

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Here we have, in this passage of Scripture, the Apostle Paul speaking to Timothy, who he referred to as a "true son in the faith". (1:2) In Paul's second letter to Timothy Paul makes mention of the fact that Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice were first of a genuine faith, before Timothy. So, Paul undoubtedly realizes and knows that Timothy was already grounded and settled in that same genuine faith that he was taught by his mother and grandmother. Nevertheless, Paul considered Timothy as he would a son and Paul had been hearing of and witnessing how the church was being attacked with false doctrine and people with evil intentions were striving to put an end to the faith that is in Christ Jesus. But really, true faith, which is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1), in Christ Jesus, it is as immovable as Christ Himself, for **Christ** is who we hope for, and **Christ** is the One of Whom we have not seen. He is our hope yet **He has become our faith** to those who put their trust in Him. In this short passage of Scripture we can mine from it some precious nuggets of wisdom that can help us in our living in faith in Christ. Just as God has been patient with us and given us a measure of faith and an understanding of His love for us, He is expecting us to reciprocate that same longsuffering or patience, toward others, as we go about our calling of the great commission, in sharing the love and gospel of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, it is also important for us to know that not everyone will receive the grace of God in Christ Jesus. The great news for us is in the assurance we have in Christ Jesus. By that I mean that Christ isn't a philosophy, Christ isn't just a form of energy that we can tap into from time to time or a genie in a bottle that satisfies our wishes when we command and Christ isn't just that universal energy that we meld back into when we die. He is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, and Jesus is a person of the Godhead, "there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy

Spirit; and these three are one." (1 John 5:7) Jesus is not just our faith that we hold onto in the thoughts of our mind but He is the Spirit of God the dwells within us and HE IS our faith. Our faith is IN HIM. Our faith is much more personal than a reasoning of our beliefs. Just as God told Moses who to say sent him, to say "I AM" sent you. JESUS IS our faith!

In the time that we spend on this earth, we are given the proposal from God, as He is giving to each of us. I intentionally used the word proposal as that word speaks of a marriage, an intimate union of man and wife. God's proposal is deeper than that. It is God Almighty asking His created child if you love Him? Do you want to be in His eternal kingdom? God lays it all out before us in His Word. His purpose in building His kingdom and in creating us to be part of His eternal kingdom, God let's us know in many ways that He loves us and wants each of us in His kingdom, otherwise we wouldn't be here, He created us for His purpose for us to be His child in His eternal kingdom and then He also reveals to us His character, of who He is, Perfect and Holy and Just and Merciful and Kind and Longsuffering and yes He too is also Wrath against those who reject His gracious gift of eternal life in His kingdom.

Paul mentions some of the ways of those who rebel against Him, in mentioning them as unholy, profane, murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, manslayers, fornicators (Greek word porno[i]s), sodomites (Greek word arsenokoites which means male-bed), kidnappers, liars, and perjurers. The arsenokoites word has been argued that it is not specifically meant to speak of homosexuals. I'm not a Greek scholar so I won't make a case for that but I can say that there are separate words for fornicators (pornois) and adulterers (moy-khos') and it can be said that those who would rather hold onto their sin and dance around the Scriptures to make it fit their lifestyle can be in a very real danger. It is said, "I can't help it I was born this way." The answer to that is, yes, we were all born into a sin nature. That is why we must be as Jesus said, be born-again. I'll elaborate on that shortly.

Paul was speaking of just a few of the notable things that he was encountering, but he did give a more detailed explanation of what was and is going on in the minds and hearts and ways of the people of the world in his letter to the Romans. He says in **Romans 1:24-32** of those who have rejected God and His ways, "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing

what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." And just as Jesus pointed out, "lawlessness will abound, [and] the love of many will grow cold." (**Matthew 24:12**) or as Paul put it, that there will be a falling away of the faith. (**2 Thessalonians 2:3**) Just look at the news headlines of what is going on in this country and this world, it's all there. Or just take a stroll around town. Praise God that He has His people shining His light in the darkness!

Now getting to what Paul tells Timothy, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has **enabled me**, because He counted me faithful, **putting me** into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man [boldly rude, disrespectful]; but I **obtained mercy** because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Paul took the words right out of my mouth. God enabled Him, put Him in ministry, showed His mercy to Him. Paul was saying, "I was one of those people, but by God's great mercy He has revealed the truth that is in Christ Jesus. He calls us, He enables us as we are being "called out of the darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." (**1 Peter 2:9-10**) He was a sinner saved by grace. I am a sinner saved by grace! "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through **faith**, to demonstrate **His righteousness**, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time **His righteousness**, that He might be just & the **justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**" (**Romans 3:23-26**)

What Paul is saying, in that God counted him faithful, is this: Paul says in **Romans 1:16-17**, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, **"The just shall live by faith."** That living by faith is first and foremost the understanding that Jesus IS our righteousness that justifies us before God and reconciles us with God to which it opens the door for us to have fellowship with God and to be a child of God. It is in Christ alone where we can be righteous in the eyes

of God. "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:12) Yet Christ is much more than that for us though. After all, we're not just intended to stand around looking up to the sky, waiting for Jesus to return. You might end up with a very sore neck. Meanwhile, Paul says that of God "you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:30-31) The Apostle understood that it was by God's great mercy that He was "called out of the darkness and into His marvelous light." Listen again to what Paul says, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has **enabled me**, because He counted me faithful, **putting me into the ministry**, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I **obtained mercy** because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." That was all God's doing. Then He continues, "And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with **faith** and **love** which are in Christ Jesus." What Paul was saying to God is "not my will but Your will be done Heavenly Father." Paul says in this letter to Timothy that, by the exceedingly abundant grace of God, he was given faith and love. God enabled him, God equipped him for ministry, God bestowed upon him mercy and by God's grace he was instilled a faith and love in Christ. God did that by His great mercy and grace. That's what God did for Paul and He will do and does do for us.

What that says to me and I hope it says to you, is that God meets us where we are at. He also shows us where we are at so that we can recognize that where we are is not where God intends for us to be, as King David put it, "He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps." (Psalm 40:2) David recognized where he was, where he wanted to be and where he ended up—all because of God's amazing grace.

You know the proverb that says, "A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps?" A long standing joke with God's people is that it should say something like, "tell God your plans and He'll laugh and then He'll determine your steps." The Proverb that better speaks of how we walk by faith or live by faith is in what **Proverbs 3:5-6** says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." The Apostle Paul knew as well as anyone that His living by faith was in wholly trusting in Christ, each and every step of the way. Paul says, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Paul knew that in all of his education, his zeal as a Pharisee, and his perfect adherence to the law only led him to what? Persecuting the church and basically fighting against Christ. It was in God instilling in Paul His love and faith, by His great mercy, that Paul was set on the right course, not by Paul's great knowledge, not by Paul's great zeal, not by

Paul's following every letter of the law, but in Paul's trusting in God's amazing grace. Standing on the Rock that cannot move-on Christ!

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Faith in what? Not what, but faith in whom? Jesus, who is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" as the Apostle Peter confessed. **(Matthew 16:16)** "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" **(1 John 3:1)**

Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." **(John 3:16-17)**

Just as we all should know, and be careful of, any Scripture can be taken out of context to say what we want it to say in order to have it agree with our own agenda. An example could be that we could point out that King Solomon had 1000 wives and concubines so I guess that means I can too. That example I know is a little over the top but the point is that in studying the Word to know the will of God we have to look at the context of what is being said. After Jesus said what was in **John 3:16-17** He explained further, "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." **(John 3:18-21)** What Jesus is saying there is that as God calls us to Himself, reveals to us that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the World, and reveals to us, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" which means that we have all sinned against God, but then Paul continues, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." **(Romans 3:23-24)** In relating that to what Jesus said, those who want to hang on to their sin will avoid the light that is Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." **(John 8:12)** When we go to Jesus, He will expose the darkness that is in us. Although that can reveal some hideous things lurking in our hearts, that is not God condemning you, that is God showing you what He wants you to let go of so that He can remove it.

What Paul is pointing out to Timothy is that in longsuffering we WILL have to endure with those people who hate the light, who want to hold

on to their beloved sin. Paul was also making a distinction between who is and then who is not a child of God just as Jesus did. The Apostle John said the same, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." (2 John 1:9-10) That sounds similar to what Jesus said in Luke 14 about how we are to hate our mother and father, brothers and sisters. But what we saw in the same account of that story in Matthew, Jesus said, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." (Matthew 10:37) Jesus also had said, "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?" (Matthew 5:44-46)

Therein lies a perceived conundrum. Do we love the people who are in rebellion against God or do we ignore them. What I believe is at issue is the need of the Wisdom that comes from God. There are times where it is best to just ignore someone who is trying to entangle you in their web of lies and rebellion and it will be that the Holy Spirit will lead you away from them. There are other times where someone is just bound in sin and the Holy Spirit is having you continue to love them and be patient with them. But as the Apostle Paul said, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life."

This is only possible for those who are, as Jesus said in John 15, abiding in Christ. We first are led to believe on Christ as our savior and then to receive Him, that is, receive the Holy Spirit, to which we then become, as Jesus said, born-again or born of the Spirit. (John 3:3, 5) "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12) Then, as we are obedient and have received the Holy Spirit, we are then led by the Holy Spirit, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14) and "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." (Romans 8:16-17) "If indeed we suffer with Him." This is only possible if we let Christ reign in us. Then we will bear the fruit of the Spirit of "love, joy, peace, longsuffering,

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." (**Galatians 5:22-23**) Then we can overcome, we can keep from falling into the increasing lawlessness and lovelessness of the world. But we are to understand that longsuffering means just that. Long suffering. We have to suffer just as the Apostle Paul did and just as Jesus did. Hopefully none of us have to suffer to the same extent as they did, but it is guaranteed as Paul told Timothy in his second letter, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (**2 Timothy 3:12**) Likewise, King Solomon said in **Ecclesiastes 1:18**, "For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow."

But our suffering in this present life is really just for a moment. Although it seems at times that this present life will never cease, we have a compassionate Lord God and Savior who loves us more than we can possibly imagine and God has given us His great Comforter. God is still building His kingdom and He still is calling His lost ones into His kingdom. In **Acts 9:31**, after Paul is rescued from being killed in Jerusalem it says this, "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied." The Holy Spirit will comfort us individually and collectively as God is continuing to build His kingdom. We can declare as Paul did, "to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever." We have been called out of the darkness into His marvelous light, we've been given the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, to comfort us, to work in us His Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption, and He works in us the fruit of the Spirit as He continues to bring us together in the oneness in Christ. And then we have the great promise that we will be joint-heirs with Jesus and as Paul said to Timothy, "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him." (**2 Timothy 2:12**) All of the Patriarchs in the Old Testament had to endure trials and suffering, all of the Apostles and saints in the New Testament had to endure trials and suffering, and then even our Lord and Savior Jesus had to endure trials and suffering even to the death on a cross. Jesus is our Rock of faith who cannot be moved. We are told to put our trust in Him. We are not meant to go this alone. We are told to "cast(ing) all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (**1 Peter 5:7**) But in the end we are also promised by Jesus, "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (**Matthew 13:43**)

Heavenly Father, I confess that I have sinned against You.
I ask that You forgive me of my sins.
I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins,
I confess with my mouth that Jesus is my Lord,
and I believe in my heart that You raised Jesus from the dead,
so that I can have forgiveness of sins,
and be reconciled to You, God, My Father.
I now commit to You, that I will repent of my sins,
and live in the newness of life,
being led by Your Holy Spirit,
all this I pray, in Christ Jesus, my Savior and Lord. Thank You Lord!