

“Consider the Source”—1 Timothy 1:12-17

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Consider the Source”, is 1 Timothy 1:12-17 → *I thank Him Who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to His service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

“Patience is a virtue, possess it if you can; often found in . . .” I dare not finish that adage because either way it will be a stereotypical slam

on one group of people over another. Besides, if we're really honest with ourselves, patience with others as we serve them is certainly a challenge for all us sinners. One technique some people use in an effort to be patient is trying to "reinterpret" the situation, considering the source of other peoples' anger, abusive words or ungratefulness toward you. Instead of interpreting them as attacking you personally, you consider that maybe it's their pain or their terminal illness speaking at the moment. Maybe their having been abused at some time in their life, resentments and so forth are causing them to act in an abrasive manner.

Such contemplation may carry you through your service to an individual but what happens at the end of the day when you're frustrated, angry and feel emotionally "beat up?" What "source" do you consider to keep you on track as Christ's servant to others then?

In Paul's letter to Pastor Timothy he considered the Source of his *strength*—the Lord Jesus Christ—Who appointed him *to His service*. In fact, he was thankful for **getting** to serve Jesus, speaking of it as a privilege, not a chore. (verse 12) This is a very interesting perspective considering the amount of patience his service to others in the name of Jesus required. In 2 Corinthians 11:24-27 he described what he encountered in this service to others for which he is so thankful: Whipped five times by the Jews; beaten three times with rods; stoned; shipwrecked and even spending a night and a day in the open sea; in

constant danger on all sides; going without sleep; experiencing hunger and thirst and going without food; being cold and naked. On top of it all he described these as *light momentary affliction* (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17) as he served the Lord!

From a personal perspective, he could have had good reason for **not being thankful** for being appointed to Christ's service. How many of us could undergo this much and still be thankful that we are Christ's servant **to other people**? How many times do you lose your patience and perseverance for serving the LORD because of being treated not even one-fourth as bad as Paul was treated? His perspective had to come from considering a Source much greater than pain, illness, abuse and other sinful residual in peoples' lives.

Such strength for perseverant service as Christ's servant to others is grace—God's steadfast love and forgiveness in the Person & Work of Jesus. This grace is highlighted when you consider your true condition in the sight of Yahweh as a sinner. Paul says in verses 13-14 of our text that *even though formerly he was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent of Jesus, he received mercy . . . and the grace of our Lord overflowed for him with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.* In God's grace the Holy Spirit produces faith—trust in the atoning work of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins—as well as love for God and your neighbor. That's why Scripture describes patience and love as

characteristics of *the fruit of the Spirit* (cf. Galatians 5:22-23). Patient love as Christ's servant to others flows from the Source greater than all!

Notice Paul didn't try to excuse away his rebellious behavior when saying he *acted ignorantly in unbelief*. Instead of claiming "ignorance," he stated the fact that he was spiritually ignorant of God's grace in all his efforts **to be faithful to God**. About twenty years following his conversion, Paul described his work while on his "mission from God" as he stood before King Agrippa in Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 26:9-11 → *I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.*

While he thought it was Yahweh's will to get rid of Christians, **Jesus cleared up his ignorance** by appearing to him on one of these Christian hunts, blinding him, humbling him, breaking down all his defenses in a single moment **so that he could know he was loved!** (cf. Acts 26:12-18) Considering the source in your service to others in Christ's name happens as you consider the Source of grace and love—your Lord

Jesus Christ. Even though God should have lost His patience with Paul, who referred to himself as the *foremost of sinners* (cf. verse 15), God still poured out His grace on him and completely turned his life around **by Christ's love**. Even though God should lose His patience with you, *foremost of sinners* as you are, God still pours out His grace on you and completely turns your life around **by Christ's love**.

Thus, your perspective of others changes, recognizing in your new life that Jesus Christ came to save all people, all of whom are sinners just like yourself (verse 15). Considering the Source of your faith is the only way you can have patience with those who have really “gotten on your nerves” as you strive to be Christ's servant to them. It flows as a result of Christ's *perfect patience* toward you as He bestows on you His undeserved favor—His grace!

Whenever you lose your patience with someone else it is usually because you don't consider the Source of *perfect patience* . . . *Christ Jesus our Lord*. Think about it: When someone has really “gotten on your nerves” do you think of the times you've gotten on “God's nerves?” How did He treat you? When you are bothered by someone who keeps doing something wrong and claims to be a Christian do you think of the times you keep sinning against God? How does He treat you? In effect, Paul was saying in verse 16 of our text: “As I consider how Jesus has ‘put up’ with such a sinner as I, I can certainly share this grace and love

with other sinners, dealing with them in Christ's *perfect patience*." **We are forgiven sinners involved in a ministry to sinners on the basis of the One Who has dealt with all sin once and for all.** Forgiveness flows from being forgiven and service flows from being served the grace, love and mercy of God in Christ.

The great Source that you consider as you work with and deal with other people is Christ Jesus Who is filled with **unlimited perfect patience**. God's patience is at work **all** the time according to 2 Peter 3:9 → *The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise of coming back again on the Last Day. Rather, He is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* He wants **all** of people to repent, trust His atoning work for their salvation in the Person & Work of Jesus and serve Him as their King by serving their neighbor. Considering this true Source of unconditional love, grace, patience and forgiveness in **Jesus Christ**, we will find ourselves more patient, forgiving and perseverant in our ministry to others and confess together that it is totally His doing with the words of verse 17 of our text: *To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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