

Daily Prayer

THURSDAY, JULY 9

Today's prayer is based on I Timothy 1.12-17, ESV.

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord,
Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the strength you gave Paul,
the strength you have given your people through the ages,
and the strength you have given me.
Guard me in my weakness.
I continue to look to you for your strength in me.

because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,
Thank you for Paul's faithfulness, and your strengthening.
Build a similar faithfulness in me, by your strength in me.
Thank you as well for the clear sense of call, of *appointment*, you gave Paul.
Give me a sense of purpose too.

though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent.
Thank you, too, for the complete *change* of Paul's life -
thank you, that with you, real change is possible.
I confess, Lord, it is easy to lose faith on this,
because it seems we see significant change so rarely.
Help me remember that a blasphemer can become a worshipper,
that someone who makes your followers suffer
can become someone who suffers gladly themselves for you,
that the completely disrespectful scoffer
can come to revere you with every fiber of their being.
Please grant that we may see much more of this sort of change.

But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,
Thank you that you changed Paul from ignorant doubt
into one of the most brilliant champions of faith the world has seen.
Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.

and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
Thank you for showering Paul with abundant grace.
Thank you for freely giving him your faith and love.
Thank you for making sure Timothy had such a coach.
Thank you for preserving this coaching to this day,
that I, too, may benefit from it.

*The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,*

Thank you for the assurance that Jesus came to save us sinners.

I know I continue to qualify.

of whom I am the foremost.

This is amazing, that Paul would say this.

I know he wrote the Corinthians that he was *the least of the apostles*.

And he wrote the Ephesians that he was *less than the least of all God's saints*,
a somewhat larger sample group.

Now here he is, saying he is *the foremost sinner on the planet!!*

That is *everyone!*

After the career he had, after the things he accomplished, this is stunning.

What did he know about his heart that led him to say such a thing?

It does not appear that he ever doubted he did indeed belong to you.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, that he testifies to this.

Thank you for the hope and confidence it gives me

that this *gospel of grace* is true.

Thank you that real maturity in the faith is *not* feeling better about myself -

as if I could *ever* qualify by being "good enough";

but it is in realizing that it really is not my behavior

that is going to get me into heaven.

It has ever been, is now, and will never cease to be

BY YOUR GRACE ALONE.

*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.*

Praise be to you, King Jesus!

Praise be to you for your mercy to sinners!

Praise be to you for your patience!

Praise be to you for the example and testimony of Paul.

Praise be to you for the many to whom you have shown the way.

Praise be to you that the way to heaven is by believing, *not performing*.

Praise be to you that, as we believe, we already walk in eternity with you.

To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

For Jesus and His kingdom's sake. Amen and amen.

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Whenever our sins press hard against us, whenever Satan would drive us to despair, we must hold up this shield, that God does not want us to be overwhelmed in everlasting destruction, for He has ordained His Son to be the salvation of the world.

John Calvin