

Finding Strength to Serve

Key Verse: *"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry."
—I Timothy 1:12*

Selected Scripture:
I Timothy 1:12-20

WE BEGIN ANOTHER NEW

year with a series of five weekly Bible lessons that will be taken from the Apostle Paul's first epistle to Timothy. This first lesson begins in chapter one, and the Key Verse focuses on the subject "Finding Strength to Serve."

How grandly providential it is that our loving Heavenly Father sought out the Apostle Paul as an outstanding and most prominent servant. His writings

contain the most powerful teachings found anywhere in the New Testament, and his profound spiritual insight has been used for the strengthening and uplifting of God's people throughout the present Gospel Age.

We quote the Key Verse from one of the modern translations, which provides an interesting perspective concerning Paul's appreciation for his privilege of being selected for service in the Truth. "I am deeply grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord (to whom I owe all that I have accomplished) for trusting me enough to appoint me his minister, despite the fact that I had previously blasphemed his name, persecuted his Church and insulted him." (vss. 12,13, *J. B. Phillips Translation*) Because Paul had been a persecutor of the early Christians, he

did not consider himself worthy to be called an apostle, and freely acknowledged that he had been called to this service only by the undeserved kindness of the Lord. This deep sense of unworthiness was what made him so acceptable for God's service.

Paul identifies himself as the author of this epistle in the opening verse, and then reveals his most affectionate love and devotion to his younger brother Timothy as if he were his own dearly beloved son. "Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord."—vs. 2

We catch a further glimpse of the great apostle's sense of humility and appreciation to God as he expresses it to his beloved Timothy. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."—vss. 15-17

Paul's encouragement to his beloved Timothy was one in which he devoted his attention to the younger brother, that he would be faithful to his consecration and fight a good warfare in the faith to which he had been called. To do otherwise, the apostle observes, would result in a shipwreck of Timothy's faith, as some others who had put away these blessed promises.

The admonitions given to Timothy attest to the capacity for service in the Truth which Paul so willingly gave. His wise counsel and encouraging ministry are a great blessing to all of the Lord's people living during these closing years of the Gospel Age. May we also renew our own consecrations in the blessed hope of our High Calling in Christ Jesus, and serve him faithfully even unto death. ■