

Perhaps you have heard the story about a father who told his son every time he mistreated someone to go to the barn and drive a nail into the door and when you right that wrong, you can go and pull the nail out. Well the boy took to heart what his daddy had told him and sure enough he found himself mistreating some people and he nailed a nail into the barn door, and when he righted the wrong, he removed the nail from that door. This went on for months and then one day the boy seemed down and out and disgusted. The daddy noticed it and said, “*Son, what’s the matter?*” He said I did what you asked me to do; I drove the nails into the barn door and then when I made it right I pulled out the nails, but the holes are still there.

Sometimes we see people that want to concentrate on the holes that are still there. Sin cast long shadows. *Numbers 32:23 ... be sure your sin will find you out.* You will never be able to win a game of hide-n-seek with sin. *Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* Let us understand that the consequences of sin can remain long after we have been forgiven. Sin cast long shadows which constantly reminds us that there were times in the past when we have failed God and disappointed ourselves for not being all that we should be.

For the next few minutes we are going to consider how to live with the scars of the past. How can I forgive myself and rise above my past. Consider the word “*guilt*” because that’s what you deal with when you consider forgiving yourself. You deal with the sense of shame and guilt. As you think about the word guilt, consider the middle letter. It’s the letter “I” as in the three pronouns *me, myself and I*. While we intellectually know that we have been forgiven, emotionally we don’t feel forgiven and the reason is because we haven’t forgiven ourselves and are thinking too much about me, myself, and I and what I should have done or could have been. I hope to present a line of thinking that will help us come to grips with this matter of forgiving self by diverting our attention off of self and focusing it to another.

Turn to 1 Timothy 1:12-17. I want to read these verses and then we will explore them in more detail as we will notice three things that can help us with this matter of

forgiving self. *1 Timothy 1:12-17 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; (13) Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. (14) And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. (15) 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. (16) 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. (17) Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

SUGGESTION NO. 1. If you want to forgive yourself, you need to spend some time talking to Jesus. There has been and continues to be an ongoing debate whether it is appropriate to pray to Jesus or should our prayers be only to God the Father. I have defended the position that we pray to God the Father but we pray through Jesus the Son. In preparing this material and analyzing these verses, I am having some doubts about my position. So what about praying to Jesus?

Let me deviate briefly to discuss the thought of praying to Jesus. First go to the latter part of Acts 1. There we have the apostles contemplating a replacement for Judas. *Acts 1:23-24 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. (24) And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen.* Notice that the text says, they prayed and in so doing they addressed that prayer to the *Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men.* They were asking the Lord to help them make the right choice for the replacement of Judas.

The question then becomes to whom were they making reference when they said “Lord?” For the answer we need go back up to v6. *Acts 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore*

again the kingdom to Israel? Here the apostles were speaking to Jesus and addressed him as “Lord.” You can also go to v21 and see one of the qualifications required for a person to be an apostle. The verse reads, ***Acts 1:21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,***

In v6 they spoke to one and called him Lord; in v21 the Lord is identified and the Lord Jesus in context; in v24 they prayed and said, ***Thou, Lord knowest the hearts of all men.*** When they prayed, they prayed to Jesus.

Go now to Acts 7. In vs 59 - 60 we read about the stoning of Stephen. ***And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. (60) And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*** In taking his last breaths Steven prayed and spoke twice to the Lord Jesus.

Now go over one chapter to Acts 8 and you can read about Simon the sorcerer. We learn in v13 that Simon like many others was converted to Christianity and was baptized. After he was converted, the apostles came from Jerusalem and imparted spiritual gifts to the people and Simon wanted to buy this capability. He was reprimanded for his attitude by Peter and we read ***Acts 8:22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.*** Then two verses later we see Simon saying ***(24) Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.*** In v5 we learn that Jesus was preached and in v25 we are told that they preached the word of the Lord. The Lord had reference to Jesus. So Peter instructs Simon to pray to God and Simon follows by asking Peter to pray to the Lord on his behalf.

Turn now with me to 2 Cor 1 where we read about Paul and his thorn in the flesh. Whatever it was, Paul pleaded with the Lord three times that it might be removed. ***2 Corinthians 12:8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*** He besought the Lord.

Now back to our passage in 1 Timothy 1:12. That is exactly what Paul did as he learned to deal with his past. ***Timothy 1:12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord...***

Many times we have recorded that Paul prayed for either individuals or a group of people and he would say, “*I thank God for you.*” But not here; here he thanks Christ Jesus our Lord. ... ***who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;***

Paul thanks Jesus because Jesus had enabled him and counting him faithful and putting him in the ministry. Paul was expressing the warmest feeling of gratitude to Jesus Christ for what Jesus Christ had done for him. The word “*enable me*” is the word that means “*to empower*” to “*make strong.*” Paul was thankful that Jesus Christ had empowered him into the ministry. Paul is thankful that Jesus Christ had empowered him to be a faithful worker for God among mankind.

Then Paul goes back to where he was. ***1 Timothy 1:13 Who was before a blasphemer, (a vocal enemy of Jesus) and a persecutor (a vicious enemy of Jesus), and injurious (a violate enemy of Jesus).*** He begins this list by saying he was a blasphemer. Take a look at what Paul said of himself. ***Acts 26:9-11 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (10) Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. (11) And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; (I was a blasphemer and did my best to make other Christians to blaspheme as well) and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.***

Secondly he said that he was a persecutor. He was one to chase after Christians and administer harm to them. ***Acts 9:1-2 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, (2) And desired of him letters...*** He breathed out threats and slaughter against the disciples which are called saints (v13) and brethren (v30). We are reading about members of the Lord’s church and Paul was breathing threats and murders against them. Paul was a dangerous man, a violate man that was out to destroy the church.

Can you imagine how Paul continually wrestled with his past yet he was forgiven

and he felt forgiven even though he still had to live with the memory of his past. Paul was thankful to Jesus Christ because of what he became - a faithful minister.

If you want to live with your past, then talk to Jesus and tell him thank-you what he did for your past.

SECOND observation is not only talk to Jesus but also think more about Jesus. *1 Timothy 1:14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.* The Lord in v12 was the same Lord in v14 who blessed Paul with grace, i.e. forgiveness. This was not simply grace, not simply abundant grace; but EXCEEDING ABUNDANT GRACE. It's the idea of grace beyond grace. The grace that Jesus Christ showed Paul was exceeding abundant in faith and love.

So he could say in v15. *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.* Here we see the purpose of Jesus coming. He came to save sinners; those that missed the mark that God had set before them in Holy Scriptures.

Then Paul would say regarding sinners, *"of whom I am chief."* The word for *"chief"* means first and foremost. Paul was saying *"Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners of whom I am first."* In 1 Cor 15 in speaking about the apostles, Paul said that he was the least of the apostles (v9). If you want to line up the apostles then I'd be in the back of that line but if you line up sinners; then I'm at the very front of that line. I was the worst of the worst yet I received the grace of our Lord. Paul could not think of Jesus enough.

I did a word search on the words *"Jesus Christ"* and found that the two words are found 550 times in the KJV of the NT. 391 of those times were penned by the apostle Paul. Paul could not write about redemption, forgiveness, salvation without constantly thinking about Jesus Christ. Jesus was important to Paul and had a prominent place in his conversation. Paul was a Christ infatuated individual. *Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.* Or he would write to the church in Philippi *Philippians 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Jesus Christ was what Paul was all about. Jesus was his life as he should be ours as well. ***Colossians 3:4*** ***When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*** Jesus isn't first in our life; Jesus is our life. Like the song we sing, *He is my everything, He is my all.* That's how Paul felt about Jesus. He was his everything.

THIRD and last observation. To redirect my thoughts from me, myself and I and the past guilt and shame, I need testify more for Jesus. The formula for forgiving self is wrapped up in the three T's - talk, think, and testify. To get past the past talk to others about Jesus. Let them know what he has done for your life.

We have examples of others testifying what Jesus had done in their life. In John 4 we have the woman of Samaria after she had visited with Jesus and recognized that He was the messiah, she went and told the people of the city. ***John 4:39*** ***And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.*** In Acts 8 we have the Peter and John going down to Samaria to impart spiritual gifts to new converts. ***Act 8:25*** ***And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, ...*** While in the city of Corinth ***Acts 18:5*** ***... Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.*** Even Jesus recognized that Paul had testified about him and commissioned Paul to testify of him in Rome. ***Acts 23:11*** ***And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.***

I am suggesting that we share what Jesus has meant to our lives with other people. You have a story to tell. This is what Paul was doing in 1 Timothy 1. ***1 Timothy 1:16-17*** ***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.*** I the chief of sinners received mercy, (called abundant grace in v14) from Jesus Christ. I am a pattern, example of the longsuffering of Jesus. If you want to see what the longsuffering of Jesus can do; if you

want to see how a person can be changed, just look at me; one that was at the front of the line of sinners, *but now I am at the front of the line of what the Lord can do for sinners.*” Paul was a pattern of what Jesus can do for you.

With that in mind, Paul once more give phrase and honor to the one that made it all possible – the King eternal and wise God. ***(17) Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*** King-royalty, immortal – incorruptible, invisible-not seen by mortal man, only wise God-incomparable. To such we are to give honor, but honor is not enough. Give honor and glory; but that’s not enough. Give honor, glory forever; but that’s not long enough. Give honor, glory forever and forever ending with and explanation point AMEN.

To help you to put the past behind you, talk, think and testify about what Jesus had done for you and then worship him and praise him as the Lord of Lords and king of Kings. If worship is getting stale to you, then maybe it’s because you are focuses too much on me, myself, and I instead of thinking about what God through Jesus Christ has done for you.

You can get past the past but you must redirect you thinking off of self and think as we sing in the song, “more, more about Jesus.”

Invitation