

## **GOD CONSIDERED HIM FAITHFUL**

**“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service” (1 Tim 1:12)**

God is Sovereign! He can appoint anyone to His service. In this instance, however, Paul said that he was appointed because God considered him faithful. Since God appointed him at the time of his conversion, this faithfulness must have referred to Paul’s life as an unconverted Jew.

But wait! In the next verse Paul admits that he was a “blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man”. Of all the sinners on earth, Paul considered himself to be the worst. For this reason, however, Paul explains that God used him as an example. The point is, if the worst of sinners can be saved, anyone can be saved. How is it possible, however, for God to consider a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man as faithful?

Paul was different from many sinners. Many sin in acts of direct rebellion against God. Paul didn’t! Paul’s sinned because he thought he was serving God. Yes, he acted in “ignorance and unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:13), but he still did everything with a “good conscience” (Acts 23:1). Yes! He was wrong! Yes! He was the chief of sinners! Yes! He even went to foreign cities to persecute the followers of Jesus! In spite of all this, however, God still considered him faithful.

Jeremiah promised: **“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13)** On the road to Damascus Jesus appeared and spoke to Paul in the Hebrew language (Acts 26:14). Even though Paul’s companions were Hebrews, they heard the sound but didn’t understand the voice (Acts 22:9). Paul, however, understood every word (Acts 9:4 - 7). Apparently Paul was the only one in the group seeking God with all his heart. Remember! The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth looking for people like Paul (2 Chron. 16:9).

We must not forget that Paul was set apart from birth to be an apostle to the gentiles (Gal. 1:15). Obviously, God, Who knows the end from the beginning (Is. 46:10), knew in advance what kind of a person Paul would be. He knew Paul would sit at the feet of the revered Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He knew that Paul would advance in Judaism beyond many of his own age (Gal. 1:14). He knew that Paul believed the Bible and would act in good conscience based upon that belief. Consequently, all God had to do to reverse Paul’s course was to remove the wrong information from his mind and replace it with truth. When this happened, because Paul was faithful, **“at once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20).**

I have a friend who built two projects of wood in his back yard. One was a fence, and the other was a porch. With one project he used expensive wood that was treated to withstand moisture. With the other project he used untreated wood that soon rotted. He considered that he wasted his time on the cheap wood. Using unreliable wood is like teaching unreliable people.

Paul therefore recommended to Timothy that he teach “faithful” men (2 Tim. 2:2). FYI the word for “men” in this text is “anthropois” which refers to both men and women. There is a sense in which teaching unfaithful people is a waste of time. It is like building a house on the sand.

Grasping this principle helps us to understand that **“everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23)**. There is nothing wrong with eating meat, but the man who believes it is wrong condemns himself by what he approves. God has given each of us a conscience. The word “con” means “with” and the word “science” means “to know”. If we sear our conscience with a hot iron we damage something that is essential to our service to God (1 Tim. 4:1 - 5).

While Paul was wrong, he never damaged his conscience. Because of this God considered him “faithful” and appointed him to His service. Thank God! Paul had a “clear conscience” both before and after his conversion to Christ (2 Tim. 1:3). Do you?