

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Planting The Gospel

PART

1

TITLE

Remember Clearly

SCRIPTURE

1 Timothy 1:12-17



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It's great to see you, Providence, and it's always a joy to worship the king with you. I hope you've had a good week. If you're a guest with us, whether you're in this room or at home, you may be at the beach, you may be at a lake, I don't know where you're at, but we're thrilled that you're here. If you're in this room or some other room. But it is great to see you. I want to ask you, if you would, to turn with me to 1 Timothy 1, it's gonna be just a little bit before we read it, but if you want to go ahead and turn there in your Bible. If you don't have one with you, there should be one in the seat near you. And if you don't have it at home, please take that home with you. We would love for you to have your own copy of the Bible.

On a weekend when we celebrate the amazing freedoms that we enjoy in our own country because of grace, because of sacrifice, we also confess gladly that we are very dependent on the lord and his grace and his mercy. He has done an amazing thing in each of our life, and he's called us to talk about it. So over the next five weeks, this week and four more here in July, what we want to do is to walk through a series, it's called Planning the Gospel, and it's birthed out of a vision to see 1,000 of us who call Providence home, adult members who already claim to believe in Jesus Christ, for 1,000 of us to be sharing the gospel with enough frequency in our life that we have the privilege to lead one person to faith in Jesus Christ some time in the next three years, and to then walk with them and help them to grow so that they can make disciples and they can share the gospel and their faith with someone else as well.

You see, an amazing thing happens when a new believer enters into your life, and that is that you get renewed. It's like going down to a big theme park. Let's just say Disney World, right? It's like going there with a child as opposed to going there with a grown up. If it's just you and a grown up and you go to Disney, the most natural thing to do is to complain about the parking, is to complain about the pricing, is to complain about the waiting, is to talk about the different elements that you see that lack the necessary realism in true life. And then, you naturally just think, you know, things were a lot better around here when Walt was still alive. You know? This is what adults do when they go alone, and they just talk about the things, and just naturally we just kind of look at it through that different lens.

But if you go with a child, all of a sudden things are very, very different. Because a child, when they go to Disney World, they don't look at the pricing, and they don't look at the parking, and they don't look at the lack of realism, and they don't know who Walt is. What they do is, they see a place that's full of wonder. And here's the cool thing. If you go with a child, you inadvertently begin to look at things and see things and experience things through the lens of a child, because you're rooting for that child to be able to enjoy all that they possibly can. And so, you end up naturally seeing some of the wonder and the creativity of a park.

Now, I tell you all that in order to say this. The same thing happens when you spend time with a new believer. You see, they come into a place that you and I, we've seen. We've experienced the songs, the sounds, the sights, what it's like. And for you and I, it's very natural for us to just begin to take it for granted. We're accustomed to it. And all of a sudden, you have a new believer. And they come and they're sitting next to you, and all of a sudden you're listening to the songs and to the sermon, and you are walking through next steps and the lobbies and life groups and different events, and you're experiencing things, now, through their lens. And what it does is, it not only creates a sympathy and engagement in your heart, and my heart, what it also does is we start to see the simple, amazing things that we take for granted because we see them through their lens.

I just want you to think about this for a second. Just imagine how Providence will feel different if 1,000 new believers, in three years' time, if 1,000 new believers were sitting in these seats with us. What life groups would feel like. The stories. What worship would sound like, what it would feel like, to be engaged with that much new energy. And this is what god's plan is. You see, god's instructions, they're clear, aren't they? I mean, we all understand what we're supposed to be doing. After Jesus died and rose again, he says, guys, listen. To his followers. He says, all authority has been given to me. And then, he gives us a simple commission. He says, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

You see, our problem is not fuzzy directions, is it? The fact is though, is that any time ... this happens anywhere in America, anywhere in the world, really, is that anytime you begin a series on sharing your faith, it immediately causes a sense of angst among people who are listening. And I suppose that there's natural reasons for this, okay? Here this morning, I think there's two. Number one is, there may be some of you who don't know Christ. Not everyone has faith to share. And we just want you to know that if you are not a Christian, we are really, really glad that you came. And you know, probably, that we as a church, we as the people of god, we've not always been as winsome or gentle or respectful as we should be, and what we want to be.

And so, we're taking some really deliberate time this summer just to look at it in order to sharpen our skill and to help us to become more sensitive in that. But it's also true, though, that as believers, the idea of sharing our faith, it really creates some pretty strong emotions. Like, for most of us, we're like, yeah it'd be really, really great if 1,000 people actually did this, so long as I'm not one of them. Right? Because that just causes some strong emotions. What are those strong emotions? Well, most of the time, it's fear and guilt. It really is a sad thing that throughout the New Testament, any time the Bible talks about us sharing the gospel, it's always supported on the front and the back by a command or an instruction that says, don't be afraid. Fear god more than man.

God knows that it's natural for us to feel afraid. You see, we, I think, fear rejection. I think we fear the cultural intolerance to the exclusive claim to Jesus, and so we know that Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the father except through me. And the thought that we would go out into a culture that actually says the only sin is to be intolerant to everybody else, and we think, I'm afraid of that. I think we fear saying the wrong thing, or we fear messing up, or not knowing enough if they ask us questions. I think we also fear the unappealing associations with other believers who share the gospel in ways that we wouldn't feel comfortable.

Like, the big church of god. All the people who trust god, it's like a family. Just like in your family, every family has that uncle. Right? It's got just some little people that aren't quite like us, but we love them, and ... the fact is, is there's people who really love Jesus, and they try to share the gospel in ways that many of us would not feel comfortable. And so, the fact that when we go out into the culture and we share the gospel, we may fear an unappealing association with people that we don't really want to be associated with. And all this causes fear, and what this does is it causes guilt. You see, the fact is that 95% of all the believers in America have never led anyone to faith in Christ. I want you think about that for a second. What that means is that in our church we would be no different. 95% of the people who call Providence their home have never had the privilege to lead someone to faith in Christ, even though that is the last thing Jesus told us to do.

We're gonna be held accountable for that, and we know that, right? So, as we open up the Bible and we look at Matthew 10, and Jesus says, whoever acknowledges me before man, I will acknowledge before my father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before man, I will disown before my father in heaven. And all of a sudden we're like, oh, I'm terrible. I'm a terrible believer. Please, god, give me grace. I hate doing this. We don't even like to think about it, because it creates guilt. We have guilt because we have fear. We have guilt because of missed opportunities. This week, I had several opportunities to share the gospel with people that, just in life. And there were some of them that went well, and there were some of them that, either because of fear or because I just couldn't figure out the way to move from that conversation to talking about spiritual things because I was afraid of how they were gonna respond or what someone else in line was gonna be thinking, I just said, I'm not gonna do it. And I left and I'm like, man. I probably should have done that.

And so what I want you to know is, over the next five weeks, I'm not gonna come with the rod, we're not gonna come with the rod. We're gonna come with great sympathy and hope that god is gonna do something within us. You see, if you have the holy spirit in your heart as I have in my heart, then we have the power within in order to do supernatural things. And god literally can use us. He can use you, you. Think about that. He can use you to lead someone to faith in Jesus Christ. You see, there is one other really strong emotion that I pray will be the propellant, the fuel, to our endurance in sharing the gospel. And that strong feeling is joy.

You see, in all the opportunities that I had this week that I thought, ah, didn't quite go ... I had four opportunities where I got to share part or all of the gospel. And you know what was the coolest thing, is as we finished and I'm driving away, or ... in each case, I got a sense of John 16:8 when Jesus says, when the holy spirit comes he's gonna convict you of sin and righteousness and judgment. Now, all of us knows what it's like to feel conviction of sin, right? Feels bad. But we also know what it's like to feel his conviction of righteousness, and what that is, it's when the holy spirit within us confirms his pleasure in what we're doing. And you know what? There is an amazing joy that's associated with telling people about Jesus that the New Testament even attests to.

Philemon verse 6 says, "I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ." Do you see what that's saying? It's saying, without the sharing of our faith, we will not discern every good thing that's available to us in Christ. And so, joy really is possible. So, what I want to do right now, I want to pray and just ask the lord to overcome a lot of our fears and guilt, and help motivate us and enthuse us, even with this passage here. So if you would, let's pray together.

Father in heaven, thank you for your grace. Thank you for your kindness. Thank you for saving me. Thank you for saving us, for loving us. And I pray, father, that you would give us belief as we read that you would inspire us with a picture of what we see here in Paul's story, and what he, what you did in his life, god. Would you help us to see? And I pray, god, that you would do a miracle. Never in the history of Providence has been 1,000 people trust Christ. Never in the history of Providence did 1,000 different believers at Providence led someone to faith in Christ. And we're asking that you would do that in the next three years. We know that's a miracle. Unless you move, that's not gonna happen. I know that, we know that. And so we come to you and ask, would you help us to be bold? Would you help us to be faithful? Would you help us to be humble? And would you give us power to be able to see the supernatural take place? We pray in Christ's name, amen. Amen.

Well, I have never baked a cake from scratch, but I've been told that what you do is, you gather some ingredients. You gather flour, and you grab some sugar, some butter, some shortening, and some vanilla, and some eggs, and some baking powder, and things like this, and you stick it in a bowl. And the fact is that any one of those ingredients by itself is not tasty at all. But a miracle takes place in the bowl. When you mix all that together and you add heat, all of a sudden life turns really, really good for a little bit. It's an amazing thing, and it's very similar to sharing the gospel.

You see, the Bible talks about ingredients. Different things that are necessary to make our witness more effective, more potent, in our culture. And so over the next five weeks, we're gonna look at those five ingredients. Each one of these, by themselves they lack the power that's necessary, but you add them all together and all of a sudden god can do things to shape the world. And these five are this. First of all, we want to remember clearly. That's what we're gonna look at right now. Next we're gonna look at living authentically, praying faithfully, we want to care personally, and then share lovingly.

The one ingredient that we want to look at today is very similar to wind. Wind. You see, you can't grab the wind, but if it's there you can see its effect. And that is this ingredient of remembering god's grace in our own lives. If you were here last week when we looked at Jonah, he forgot about god's grace in his own life, and as a result of that, he became very apathetic to people who were lost. Very unforgiving and very stingy with what god had given to him. So, what we find here in this little book, this little passage we're gonna read right now, is you have Paul. He's about six years removed from having his head cut off as a martyr for Jesus. He's not in prison right now, but he hears that his buddy, his son in the faith, his name is Timothy. He's a pastor. He's a young pastor. He's really discouraged, he's beat down, he's tired, he wants to quit this whole sharing the gospel in places that are hard, he's like, enough.

And so what Paul does, is he comes to him, and what he does in chapter one is, he demonstrates how ministry, how sharing our faith, is to come from an overflow of remembering where Christ found us, how Christ saved us, and how Christ sent us. And so, let's look at it together. Starting in verse 12, he says, 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 it deserves 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, the honor and glory forever and ever, amen.

So, what is it that we need to remember clearly? The first thing is this, is that Jesus loves us in our brokenness. And this is one of those gifts. He doesn't just tolerate us, he loves us. I want you to notice how Paul starts. He says, I thank him. I thank him. Now, sometimes the Bible, not sometimes, every time. It's really good to read the Bible creatively. Now, I don't mean that you create and add words to it, right, so that it ... what I mean is this, is that as you read it, you start thinking in your mind, what must it have been like for Paul to actually sit down and write this down? What was happening in his life? What was he feeling? How did Timothy feel when he first received it? When he opened it up, when he tore into it and said, ah, this is from Paul, let me read it? What must they have been feeling?

You see, Paul was writing, and just like you've written, there's times when you know what you're about to write, like the next three or four sentences, and you're like, you know what ... and all of a sudden, that creates an emotion in you before you've even penned one of them down. That make sense? So what Paul is saying is this. I thank him. And his gratitude is coming from what he's about to write. He's about to be ... he is overwhelmed, because of what he's about to tell Timothy. And this is an amazing thing. He says, I thank him. Literally, if you actually look at the Greek, what it says is this. I am having thanksgiving for him. I am having thanksgiving to him. You see, there's a difference between being thankful and saying thank you, isn't there?

We all know this. If you have a kid, or if you've ever been to a kid's birthday party, kid opens up the first gift and he's like wow, look at this, I got, okay oh cool. He sets it aside and he grabs the next gift and a parent goes um, Junior, what should you say to little Billy over there who gave you that? Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Now, we're not trying to create moralists out of our kids, but isn't it true that often times, we're training people to say thank you even though they're not thankful? Now, as parents, we're not trying to do that. What we're trying to do is to instill in them patterns of behavior that when someone does something kind to you, the natural thing you do next is you say thank you. But what Paul is saying here is this. Not only am I saying I thank him, I am thankful. I am having thanksgiving to god, and this is why.

Because once, I was a blasphemer. I denied Christ, and I opposed Christ's claims, and not only that, once I was a persecutor. In other words, I tried to get other people to deny Christ and to oppose Christ's claims. And I was an insolent opponent, literally a violent man who opposed Christ. We see this as Paul continues to write, even in his letters and then there's an account from Luke, and he writes in the book of Acts, Acts 22:4, where Paul says, "I persecuted the Way to the death." Now, what's the Way? Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the father except through me. And so, in the early days of Christianity, to be a Christian was to be a part of the Way. So, what Paul was saying is, look, there was a time that I persecuted the Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women. This is who I was.

And then he tells us why. He says, all this took place because I was acting ignorantly in unbelief. Ignorantly in unbelief. Just imagine that you're at a art gallery, and there's these priceless paintings on the wall, they're all within frames. And somebody accidentally leaves a little red crayon on the ground, and there's a little boy who walks over and he picks it up, and he goes, you know what, I want to draw too. And it looks like from everything that I see, that the best place to draw is inside the frame. No one's drawing on the walls. Everyone's drawing inside the frame. And so I'm just gonna go over and I'm gonna go draw inside the frame. We go oh, you acted ignorantly. You didn't know. And this is what Paul's saying. This is what he's saying.

He goes, the reason that I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man, is because I did not see the incomparable value, the priceless treasure, of Jesus. I looked at him and I couldn't see treasure. I just saw trash. I couldn't see. I acted ignorantly in unbelief. And now more than 20 years have passed since all that took place, and now Paul is writing 1 Timothy, in 20 years he's still vividly remembering who he was before Christ, and how Christ loved him and even spared him when he was still in that condition. There's something that remembering where we were is good for where we're going. And so, Providence, let's remember our life before Christ. This is the application for this first point. Let's remember our life before Christ. I would encourage you, not, maybe even right now, but some time today, think about what life was like. What were you thinking? How were you feeling? What were you missing in the days before Jesus saved you and forgave you of your sin?

You see, I can tell you my testimony. My testimony was, my dad was a pastor and so where I was before I came to faith when I was 16 years old was, for 16 years or at least many of those years, I saw that Jesus, just like Paul, I was painting on it and I looked at Jesus and I said, I just don't see the big deal. I thought he was inconsequential. Yeah, he saves me, he died, he lived. All right, whatever. That's where I was. And then, Jesus, in Luke 15, he tells a little parable about two different sons to describe the whole human race. He says, basically, we all fit into one of two categories. We're either religious and we stay close to home, but we're really far from god, or we're irreligious and we run away from home, and we're really far from god. In both cases, we're very far from god.

And I was the son that stayed close to home. You see, my dad was a pastor. And so, it just ... it was rewarding, when you're in the church, to be good. Because everyone thinks highly of you. And the fact is, is there was tremendous amount of anxiety, hopelessness and emptiness in my heart, and the only thrill were in people, thought much of me. And so I lived my whole life trying to make people think much of me. And in the circle that I was in, what that meant was I needed to be good. People like good around here, so I'll be good, and then I'll be praised for being good. And so I tried to be good morally. And I tried to be good in sports, and I tried to be good in school. And you know what? I kind of was. And I was so empty.

I think back on those days like I was cotton candy, that it looks all big and yet it's just full of hot air and just a little bit, a drop of water, and all of a sudden it can reduce the whole existence down to just a few grains of sugar. That's where I was. People look and go wow, but I was so judgmental, and I was critical. It was not pleasant. And I was not pleasing to others. That's where I was, that he saved me out of that. And you see, remembering where we were, it makes us thankful, and isn't it true that thankfulness is pleasant to be around? Have you ever been near somebody that just, it doesn't matter what happened in their life, they just couldn't say thank you because they just assumed it was all deserved? It's really hard to be around somebody like that.

But isn't it amazing how appealing it is to be around somebody that just, every good thing in their life, they say thank you? Thank you so much for giving me a seat. Well, there's a bunch of them. Okay, thank you though, that you made one available to me. It's just so pleasant. Listen, it's very effectual to the people in the world when they see believers as being thankful. Amazed at god's kindness. And the reason that we can be thankful is because we can look back and go, this is what he's done in my life. And the fact is though, is not everyone here can recall those days.

So, what I would encourage you to do is this, if you cannot remember with vividness what your life was like before Christ, then open up your Bible and read what god remembers about your life before Christ. He remembers perfectly. He knows what that relationship was like perfectly, and he wrote down some verses so that you would be reminded of what he knew we were like before coming to faith in Christ. Let me just show you two of them. There's a bunch of them, let me just show you two. Ephesians 2:1 says that "You and I, we were dead in our trespasses and sins in which we once walked." What that means is this, that god came up to us and he goes, you know, before my son saved you, I would poke you spiritually and I'd prod you, and you wouldn't even move. I'd send people to do good to you, to speak to you, to encourage you, and you would just rebuff all of it. You were dead.

You weren't in a doghouse, you were in the morgue. You weren't in the doghouse where you can whimper and moan and make goals and apologize and look up real sad like. You did none of that. The reason is because you didn't even care about me. God says, this is how I remember my relationship with you before my son forgave you. This is what we were like. Titus 3:3 is another one. This one gets really descriptive. It gives us categories. He says, "We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to passions and pleasure, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another." Now, you look at that and you go wow, that's a bad list. It is. And god says, you know what? This is what I remember. This is what I remember seeing, and I still loved you anyway. I still cared for you deeply.

You see, our lives, they all look a little different, but these are the categories. He says that we were once foolish. A fool is someone who gives their feelings final authority. Anytime you give your feelings final authority, you make decisions that you regret. Our decisions were all different, but we all have ones that we regret, right? We were all foolish. He says that we were all disobedient. We did things that we weren't supposed to do, and we knew it. We were led astray, that means we were gullible. Sin or temptation or people who were also foolish that said hey, let's come do this, and you're like well okay, maybe that'll make me happy. We were led astray.

He says that we were slaves to passions and pleasures. Literally, we were chained to our appetites. Our body says feed me more, we'd eat more. Let me sleep more, we'd let it sleep more. Give me more sex, and we'd give it more sex. We were slaves, he says. This next phrase is interesting, he says, passing our days in malice and envy. When I see the word passing our days, I think of like, two old guys sitting in front of a lake in rockers, they're like well, we can't really do much today, but we do need to pass this day away, so what should we do? You know? And god says, this is how I remember your days.

You were mean to people, and when you saw blessing in their life, you wanted that blessing for yourself. You were envious. You passed your days looking at what everyone else had, and not what I've already given you.

And he says that as a result of that, our relationships were broken, and there were hatred toward each other. Now, you think gosh, that's really, really terrible. It is, and god says that if you forget about where I found you, god says, I didn't forget. And if this is really where we were at and where god saw that we were at, you can look at that and you go, but now look what he's done. And that should, should stir a measure of gratitude within our hearts and so, be encouraged, friends. Jesus loves us in our brokenness. Not only back at that day, but even sometimes now when we still act broken.

The second thing we need to clearly remember is that Jesus saves us from our sinfulness. Look at the phrases that Paul uses. He uses mercy and grace. I have received mercy, he says that twice. And the words I received mercy, what it means is this. Mercy is to not get what you do deserve. I deserve to be nailed to a cross, but I'm not nailed to a cross. He was nailed to the cross for me. That's mercy. I deserve judgment, but I'm not gonna get that judgment. I deserve wrath, but I'm not gonna get that wrath. And Paul looks and he goes, I can't believe this. I deserved all of that, and I'm not gonna get any of it. I thank god for mercy. But then, look at verse 14. I think it's stunning the words that he uses.

He says, and the grace of our lord overflowed for me. You see the word for? For me? I actually underlined the word for in my Bible, and this is why. Because if I was writing it, I would naturally write, the grace of our lord overflowed to me. The word for means that there was something that stood against us, in between his grace and us, and god did something to overflow that thing, that problem that we had, so that I could draw near to him. He did something for us, and this is the problem. Standing between us and god, there was not only a law that was the unbiased, unemotional witness about our sinfulness, but there was also a guilty verdict, and it was accurate. The verdict said, this person has sinned, and it's true. And there's nothing that we could do to atone for that. There's nothing that we could do to actually bridge that gap.

And so, what he says here is this, is that before I did anything, I wasn't looking up to god like a sad puppy saying, please save me. I wasn't praying to him, I wasn't doing anything except opposing him and blaspheming him. Putting people who loved him in prison. And he goes, in that moment, the grace of god overflowed for me, and Jesus Christ came to this earth and he lived a righteous life, and then he went to the cross to pay for our sin. He died there, was buried, he rose from the dead, and when he rose from the dead, he said, now anyone who would believe in me, I will forgive them of all of their sin. I will give them my righteousness, and I'll change the verdict. The grace overflowed for us so that what stood in between us was no longer there.

Do you see this is good news, Providence? This is ... it's stunning that he would save us from our sin. You see, none of this is trivial. You see the seriousness of an insult rises in proportion to the dignity of the one that we insult. And god is perfect in every way. He's also just and loving, and it's a good thing, for if god were not just, there would be no demand for Christ to die. But he did, because he is just. And if god were not loving, there would be no willingness for Christ to die. But he is loving, and so he did die. And this is why Paul, he culminates and he goes look, this is the saying that's trustworthy and it deserves full acceptance. Christ came into this world to save sinners. And then he looks at himself and he goes, and I'm the foremost. And if this is the case, then Providence, let's remember how Jesus saved us.

I want to encourage you to take a moment, we've already done this in the service, just to remember when god saved us. But it's helpful, how did god do it? Who was in your life, who shared the gospel with you? You see, it's important to remember those days, because if you can remember those days, it creates gratitude in our heart and enthusiasm that god can do it in someone else's life through us. This is why Paul, the same Paul, writes in Ephesians 2:12, he says, "Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ."

Now, I want you to think about this sort of crazy story. Let's just say that we're in a car. You're in a car by yourself, and you don't know it, but there's a bomb in your trunk. It's set to go off, and you don't even know it's there. You are in peril, and the police, they're made aware that there's a bomb there. And because they love you, they say, you know what, we need to chase him down or her down, and we need to protect them. We need to rescue them. And so, all of a sudden, they turn their lights on and they start driving after us.

Well, because we have a guilty conscience, we all do because we're all fallen, that's why when you first see police lights, you don't think, oh good. Public servants ready to help me, right? You think, oh no, what did I do wrong? And so you look back into your mirror and you see the lights and you go, oh man, what did I do wrong? And for whatever reason this day, you get ... ah, I'm not stopping. And all of a sudden you just hit the gas, and you're flying down the road, right? Because maybe you'll lose them. Well, the police, they care so much about you, they say you know what, we just have to do it anyway. And so they chase you down.

All of a sudden, you have to stop, and they run to the car and they grab you, and they take you over to a field, and just when you get over there, when you're in safety, your car blows up. And now all of a sudden, several years back, you're like you know, I remember the chase. And this is what Paul is saying. He's saying, believers, it is good to remember the chase. When Christ changed your life, when he broke through all of the unbelief, when he broke through all of the opposition, when he broke through all of the arguments that you had, when he broke through all your love for sin, it's good to remember that chase. For unless we feel a great need for a savior, we will not feel he is a great savior.

You see, Providence, in Christianity, whatever fails to spring from overflow will not spring for long. This is why Jesus says, abide in me. The most natural thing for a branch to do when it's abiding to the vine is to bear fruit, and the most unnatural thing for a vine to do, a branch to do, if it's not connected to the vine, is to bear fruit. So he says, abide. Everything in Christianity, every instruction, is based on the idea of overflow. That something happens within, and it spills out of our heart, and so carve out some time every day to strengthen your witness by remembering his salvation in your life. Are you happy that you're saved? I mean, like really. Providence, are we delighted that we have been delivered? You see, I can guilt you into giving your waitress a track this afternoon, but unless there is an overflow of the heart where Jesus is living and reigning, we will not be a people who love to talk about our faith. And so we must remember clearly.

Last thing is that Jesus sends us as his witnesses. We need to remember this. Paul says this. I receive mercy for this reason, so that in me, the foremost sinner, Jesus might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe. What he's saying is this, he's saying guys, if god can save me, a persecutor and a blasphemer, then he can save anyone. And if he can save anyone, then I need to tell everyone. You see, if you know Christ as your savior, you have a story that's powerful in two different directions. One is, your story is powerful to remember to stir up your heart. It's like a kid's volcano project for his science fair. Everything is put together, it needs one ingredient. And you add that one ingredient, all of a sudden things explode. It's the same thing with our heart. You have a story that when you think about that story, it's one more ingredient that allows joy and thanksgiving to well within the heart and spill out the mouth.

And this is exactly what happens in Paul, right? He says, look, I'm so thankful, and then he writes where god found him, how god saved him, how god sent him, and then what does he do in verse 17? It spills out of his mouth, and all of a sudden he starts praising god. He says, to the only god, the god of all ages, the one who's immortal and invisible, the only true god. He's giving an example of exactly what happens when we get excited about our story. But there's another thing that our story can do, and that, it can provide a bridge. You see, our story is not the destination. It's simply the bridge to his story. If we go out sharing the gospel, you're gonna find people that want to debate the facts, the truths, that you claim. But you will not find people that want to debate your story.

And I would simply encourage you this, don't embellish your story to make it compelling. You know, we all hear these amazing testimonies, like wow, my testimony is boring compared to them. I need to add some detail. I need to add a few significant problems in my life that weren't there, so that people will really be impressed with Jesus. No, listen to me. Somebody who is lost today has a similar story to yours, and they need to hear how the savior can save them. So, don't embellish it. Just tell them your story, so that you can tell his story. And so, two implications, then we're gonna sing. The first is this, this is to believers, is let's write out our story that leads to his story.

Our team, led by Dave Owen, actually put together a five day devotional, five days, for this week. We want to ask you, they're out back, next steps, and you just pick one of these up. You go through it, five, and then on day six and seven ... actually it's just day six, but you have two days for it. In the very end, it's just a little thing you can fill out, a few questions, that help you write your story. Now, it doesn't have to be long, and the reason I know that is because Paul got it done in six verses. Okay? We read his entire testimony, you can read it in about 35 seconds. Okay? So, we're not really looking for a novel or anything like that, right? Just write your story so that you get familiar with it, and then this is what I want to ask.

Those of you who are life group leaders, I want to ask you to devote some time, some time this month in your life group, to provide people in your life group, in a safe environment, the opportunity to share their story with everyone else, or with just a few people, maybe in smaller groups, whoever would be willing to do so. And practice telling your story. Practice. The last application is for those that don't know Christ, and we would simply commend you, let's trust Christ the savior. If you have never had your sins forgiven, that can take place today. You trust him, and he will forgive you, and he will save you, and he will rescue you. We as a church family, I'm the one who has a microphone attached to my head, but every single one of us who have had our sins forgiven by Jesus Christ would say to you today an affirmation. Look to Jesus Christ and you too can be forgiven of your sin. So, let's pray together.

Father in heaven, thank you for your kindness to us. Thank you for your mercy that you pour out to us, and thank you God that we have the opportunity, we have the opportunity to hear the gospel. We know there's some 2 billion people in the world who are waiting for us to go tell them. And we pray, father, that you would help us to be grateful. Grateful to remember back in where you found us, and how you saved us, and how you've sent us. I pray, father, that you would use this, you would use your word, just to spark an enthusiasm in our heart this week to think about what you've done in our life, and to be inclined to want to tell other people about what you've done in our life. As we sing to you, and as we give out of what you have given to us now, we do so as worship. You're worthy of it. And I pray that you would take these resources and you would maximize them and mobilize them, Lord, to help the gospel go forth to the ends of the earth. We love you, we need you, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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