

Faithful Sayings

Part 1

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[00:00:00] I will read the verses in the first chapter of Paul's first epistle to Timothy.

Chapter 1, and I'm going to begin in verse 11.

Chapter 1, 1st of Timothy, chapter 1, verse 11, where the Apostle Paul speaks of the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust, and I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled me, for he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry who [00:01:10] was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, 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 show forth all non-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

[00:02:06] Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen.

Now just another verse in chapter 4, when I say another verse perhaps I should say three verses.

Chapter 4 verse 7, the Apostle further writes, Refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness, for bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.

[00:03:09] Now once more if you turn over two or three pages you come to Paul's epistle to Titus.

And here I think I only need read literally one verse. Chapter 3 verse 8, This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which had believed in God might be careful to maintain good works, these things are good and profitable unto me.

Now I have no doubt, it's quite obvious to you what my theme is tonight.

[00:04:06] Many times over the Apostle Paul in these letters speaks of a faithful saying.

You know we are very fond of sayings, I notice it again and again, not a day passes that you meet

somebody and they cut out some little crisp statement which has passed into a saying.

And often times we are not very critical of these sayings, we just accept them, and we don't question them, which sometimes is rather a wise thing to do.

I remember, I think it must have been about the time of the Welsh Revival, you see I'm an old fellow, and I remember going down to Wales in 1905, about February and March, and doing a lot of visitation work with very useful tracks. [00:05:03] I think it was about then, a fellow I knew very well, he's gone to his rest now, I laboured with him, he told me the incident.

I can't give it to you of course in his exact words, you must accept it in a general way from my lips. He said one of those days, I think it was, he knocked at the door, and a woman came out, rather talkative, but apparently not by any means a true Christian, though she was living where so much was being done in the way of conversions, and desiring, pretty clearly, to dismiss him.

She didn't want any more, she said, oh well thank you, something like this, thank you for offering me your little book, I don't know that I need it, I intend to be all right of course, some day, there's plenty of time for me yet to think about religious things. And then she said, you know, as the Bible says, it's never too late to mend. [00:06:03] I said, you smile, yes, quite so, my good friend restrained his amusement, because it was really rather tragic. He said indeed, you know madam, pulling his Bible out of his pocket, I have read the Bible for a good many years, I've never struck that saying in the Bible. In fact, he said, I think I am bound to tell you, you have made a mistake. The Bible never in any place says, it's never too late to mend. Indeed, she was quite taken aback at this statement. He said, I think I can tell you why it isn't in the Bible. Well, she said, so why isn't it in the Bible? He said, because it isn't true. What? Why? It sure is never too late to mend.

And I don't know whether he said this, I think I should have said this, why the other day I went along the road, and in the ditch, yonder, in a little water, wide over a couple [00:07:06] of old shoes, some tramp had kicked off.

Well, perhaps they were bought by some swine, and he wore them for a time, and then he gave them to his valley, and his valley gave them to a rather down and out kind of individual who one day called at the door, having worn them himself a good deal, and having had them mended a number of times.

And this fellow tramped about and tramped about until they burst here and they broke there.

And it was no good taking them to the cobbler any more, so he kicked them off. And there they lay in the ditch.

Too late to mend.

And then I know he did say to her, you know, madam, you're much too late to mend. Under the law of Moses, that was the idea the prophets were saying to the Israelitish people again and again, Israel, amend your ways, conform to the holy law of God, be not [00:08:04] drawn aside into the evils of the idolatrous world that surrounds you.

Mend your ways. Mend your ways. And so it went on, prophet after prophet, begged them to amend.

But when the supreme tragedy took place and the true promised Messiah, that was the Jewish term, the Christ, was presented to them and they crucified him.

From that moment, said he, it'd be too late to mend. No mending is going to patch up humanity.

The plight of fallen men and fallen women is proved to be such, but it's too late to mend. So don't quote that as being a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. [00:09:06] I dare say, if the apostle Paul were here tonight, if he could come up and tell us what he was thinking of, he would have said, oh yes, that's exactly what they did about Anadam in 155 to 60 or 65.

Lots of sayings were abroad, so trotted them out to one another and never questioned their validity.

But a great many of them are not worth the amount of breath that is spent over uttering them. No. Well, that's enough. I'm only saying that, that you may realize that the apostle Paul is putting his finger on certain things that had passed into sayings, probably among the early Christians. I can imagine if you and I could have gone into those early Christian communities, again and again you would have heard somebody say, oh well, what a wonderful thing it is that [00:10:04] Christ Jesus came into the world of faith sinners. An hour and a half ago in that room there I was sitting listening to a dear fellow who now is from Reading and he was telling us how much it had to do with a certain Mr. Potter, you may have heard about him, in Reading, the converted communist.

Yes, he would say, oh, thank God for this saying, it's a true one, Christ Jesus came into the world of faith sinners, men whose minds were blinded and blackened by sin and yet, wonderful to say, the saving grace of Christ can reach all such.

Now having said that, you see, the apostle gives us a little bit of a reason why he puts [00:11:05] so to speak the divine stamp of approval on this saying, this is a faithful saying, this is worthy of all acceptance.

I always feel inclined to interpret that in two ways, first, it is worthy of the most wholehearted and absolute acceptance, all acceptance, not a 99% acceptance, a 100% acceptance, all acceptance, but that is equally true if you take it in this sense, it's worthy of everybody's acceptance, all acceptance, though wherever you will in those early days, Paul speaks in his writings of the barbarians, they were the untutored, semi-savage folk living on the outskirts of the Roman Empire and the civilization of those [00:12:08] days, and then there were the Greeks, the cultivated, intellectual men, yes, they had no real knowledge of God, we should have to call them pagans, they were anonymous of varying degrees, but they were intellectual, they were thinkers, they were polished mentally, and then there were the Jews, who had been for centuries under divine instruction by the world, and each needs what this saying indicates, it is worthy of acceptance in every quarter by everybody, by you, if as yet you haven't received it, in England with all its privileges, in Central Africa, amongst the pygmies, that I believe, thank God, one [00:13:07] or two earnest men are getting into touch with them, and there are few pygmies now being converted, there are these poor little folk who have lived for centuries, apparently, in the great dense forest, who never remain long in any place, most difficult to contact them, if a white man did contact them, a waiter, I will come tomorrow, why, they are not there, they pulled up the stakes of their humble little dwelling, they are ten miles away, somebody else, and you can't find them, they are kind of frightened, very difficult people to evangelize, but when the grace of God comes to them, it is worthy of their acceptance, and of my acceptance, and your acceptance, and the saying is, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now that has no application to

you, I have to tell you, if you are not a sinner, if you are one of those self-righteous people, you are excluding yourself [00:14:07] from the saving grace of Christ. Now who said this? Well, the Apostle Paul. And who was the Apostle Paul? Well, I didn't read what he said about himself in the early part of the third chapter of his epistle to the Philippian Christians. There he tells us that he was, I'm going to borrow a modern phrase, he was fortified by all the rites, not of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, but of Judaism. He was the Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was a true bloody Jew, descended without admixture from Abraham. Touching the law, he was a Pharisee, scrupulous, careful, religious, to the last degree. But when you read what he says of himself [00:15:07] about here, you might say, well, but is it possible? Is this the same individual? This individual who is so highly qualified religiously amongst the Jews, can it be possible that a man of that stamp has to speak of himself as he does? I read you the words. He says, Christ Jesus has enabled me, he's put me into the ministry, but before I was, look, three things, a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. Now, blasphemy clearly is a sin against God.

We don't blaspheme one another, we may abuse one another, but we don't blaspheme one another. Blasphemy is a word we use in relation to God. And I can imagine, I said it to myself once, [00:16:03] I read that a good many times without this thought coming to me. I said, blasphemy, blasphemy, Paul, I asked you, when were you a blasphemer? Do you mean to say that with all your religion and your phariseeism that you blasphemed Jehovah, the God of Israel? You said, friend, not in your life. I've never dreamt of such a thing. I said, when did you do it, Paul? He said, when I blasphemed Jesus of Nazareth, I didn't realize he was God.

That was where the blasphemy took place. It's a tribute to the deity of Christ. He was a blasphemer. He would never blaspheme the great Jehovah of Israel, the giver of the law, the Elohim, as the word is in the Hebrew of God. Oh, no. But he blasphemed Jesus. I was only reading today, in Jerusalem today, there is the extreme party, the Zenith [00:17:08] among the Jews. The good man who wrote described how one of these modern Jews, like many here, they are, well, they're desecrating the Jewish heaven. They're on their motor cars running about on the Saturday, the seventh day. And that some of these Zeniths, they were out and had to be distrayed, screaming, they're almost cursing the people for breaking this holy law of the Sabbath. Oh, they were extreme fanatical Jews. And any such, they said, if they heard the name of Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth mentioned, they will do what the Zeniths have always done, what that spit. Well, Paul was like that. And he woke up to the fact that he was a blasphemer in his attitude to Christ. He was a persecutor in his attitude to the people who acknowledge Jesus as their Lord and [00:18:02] Master, the Christians, the saints, as we should say. He was a persecutor. He had to be persecuted this way under the day. And then he was injurious. That's more general. Another translation puts it this way, a violent, overbearing man. I think he was that. He was a man of great mental powers, tremendous persistence, the sort of individual there was no resisting. He'd ride roughshod over almost everybody. Oh, the Lord does lay hold of some extraordinary people, doesn't he? This was the man who was rampaging after the early Christians. And he recognized that his eyes were opened. And he discovered what he had been doing. He said later, why I'm the very least of the apostles. Here was I persecuting the Church of God. And yet he was [00:19:04] religious, highly religious. In another passage, he says he profited in the Jews' religion about his equals, that is, his contemporaries in his own nation. He was at the tip-top of the Jewish religious tree. And yet he was famous. And what happened? Well, as he says, the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant. I should think it was. I should think it was. Why, here's the very chief of sinners. You see, that's his argument here. It's a faithful saying. He said, my dear Timothy, this isn't one of those trap-trap observations that people take up and throw about and plot out without any real thought and examination. You can investigate this saying. It stands absolutely true. And there's

nobody who was a greater proof of it than Paul himself, [00:20:02] Saul of Tarsus, as he was. He says, why, he's the very chief of sinners. And if Christ Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners, and save me, well, there isn't a sinner on earth that he can't save. He has saved the very chief of sinners. I remember hearing, yes, I think it was somebody who came from India in the old days. I don't suppose they do now in this mechanical age. I have a daughter in India, but I haven't asked. I don't know whether they plot about sometimes with these great elephants. They used to 50 or 60 years ago. And I heard somebody say, you know, it's an extraordinary thing, how sagacious these great beasts are. He said, I've seen one taken to what looks like a rather flimsy kind of wooden bridge. Well, if that gave way, there'd be a crash of 10 or 20 feet. The poor elephant, he kind of jibs, he comes up to this. He said, I've [00:21:04] seen them. And sometimes the man on his back trying to drive him, he'll come and the great beast will bring one of its feet down, bump on the wooden bridge. All right. And then foot number two comes down, and then very gingerly foot number three comes on it, and foot number four. And then in a few minutes, it quietly walks across the bridge. And perhaps some of the other elephants, not quite so heavy and large, follow in its wake. He said, what would you think of a man? He may be 15 or 16 stone. He'd be the great monster of a fellow standing there. I wonder if that bridge will die. Hold me up. Do you think I should be rash if I attempted to walk across? He said, my dear fellow, a great elephant, five tons of weight, has just walked across. You needn't bother yet. Go across. The bridge will hold. That was the illustration I heard used when I was a youngster. [00:22:02] The old days when they had these elephants doing these things in India. Paul is really saying that. It's a faithful saying. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He'll save me. Even such as I am the very chief of sinners. And mind you, it was all a question of mercy.

I'm going to call your attention to that before I pass on. Howbeit, for this reason, I obtained mercy. I was talking to boys and girls. I think I'm afraid I haven't done very much for a long time. Oh, I did this spring. And I had a blackboard. It's the kind of thing one used to do. I should put in great letters N-E-R. I say, now how are we going to finish this word? We might put I-T. N-E-R-I. Merit. Merit. Have you passed the exam with merit?

[00:23:08] Oh, very nice thing to do if you're at school. Very nice thing to do. Merit. Merit. You deserve it. You get the prize. But no, there was no merit with Paul. He only meditated damnation. But he got mercy. M-E-R-C-Y. Mercy. We say, yes, Paul, we can see it must have been mercy that reached you. Well, my dear friends, it was mercy that reached me. And I haven't found any Christian who doesn't, true Christian who doesn't say, well, what mercy? That reached me, that turned my thoughts away from myself and my evil ways and brought me to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did it for Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners. He's done [00:24:01] it for me and for millions more besides. Mercy is the only ground on which salvation reaches any.

At this time or any other time. But now, having received this, there's another faithful saying, which has to do with godliness. Let's look at this for a few minutes. I think there's just time to do so before I go very briefly to my third. Here's another. The apostle Paul, having stated it, having stated it, makes the same remark. He said, now, Timothy, I want you to exercise yourself unto godliness. Some people translate it piety. That looked upon as rather an old-fashioned word to tell a young fellow that he's pious. It's almost to insult him, isn't it? Would be thought so in any school, I believe. But after all, it's a very good thing, this godliness, [00:25:01] a life according to God. Bodily exercise. You see, if Timothy is going to exercise himself unto godliness, it's a kind of inward exercise that goes on in heart and mind and conscience, not muscular exercise. That's why the apostle turns from this inward, mental, spiritual exercise to this ordinary, muscular exercise that we know. You boys at school, you have, I hope, plenty of it because it's good. Bodily exercise, the exercise of your legs and arms and lungs

and all the rest of it, it profiteth little or for a little. Of course, you grow up. You get big. Presently, you can't do it quite as much as you did and scamper about as when you were a boy and when you get an old fellow like myself, well, what can I do? I shamble along in a way you know [00:26:07] and try and keep up my walking powers. That's all right. It's quite good. Bodily exercise is profitable little or for a little. But he says, look, godliness. Now, here's another form of exercise which affects the heart and the conscience and the mind. Why it's profitable unto all things, not only to a little thing, but to all things because he says it has promise of the life that now is and it has promise of the life that is to come. Now, I take it that was a saying current amongst early Christian people. If we had moved in the early circles of Christian assemblies, whether in Antioch or Jerusalem or any of these other places where the gospel was brought by the [00:27:03] labors of the apostle Paul, we should have had people now and again saying, oh well, they say, you know, godliness, this life of godliness into which we've been introduced, it's profitable. It's profitable for now and it's profitable for the life to come. It is profitable for now. It is. I haven't seen my good friend from Parkgate near Rotherham for some time. Some years ago, dear me, it must be four or five years now, I suppose, I was coming back from a place in Scotland and talking to him and he says, you know, we've had a remarkable conversion. Rejoicing and, oh dear fellow, we know he had a very, very sad wife and mother getting on all was bloody. And I was a boy, I don't know, 19, 20, 21, working in the pit and for walking in his mother's footsteps. [00:28:01] And he said he'd been remarkably converted. He was earning 14 pounds a week and regularly spending five pounds in cigarettes and drink. How will that do? One week. How long do you think he'd like to live? He's 20 or 21. I bet he'll have lung cancer by the time he's 40, won't he? If he hasn't broken his back or his neck or something in the pit by being dead drunk. Oh, so that's an extreme case. Yes, well, it's just as well sometimes to look at the extreme cases. He's been converted. I wish I'd had some more late news about him, but I haven't been that way. I haven't heard anything. He's been converted. He's entered upon a life which is profitable. It's profitable for the life that is. You know, I've been struck myself by the number of people that I know who have lived on to a [00:29:05] fairly good, healthy old age. I remember servants of God who were preachers. I remember one who said, oh, well, we so-and-so, we'll never live very long. Most of us, 50 or 60, we are gone. We all used to say, oh, well, I hope we'll go on preaching. God used him to conversion with a good many souls and so on. Oh, yes, he only lived to be about 90. Well, you see, he lived a godly life. He avoided, he wasn't mixing himself and indulging in 101 things that are harmful, even physically. He lived a godly life. It's quite profitable, my friend, to live a godly life for the life that is, and it's 10 times more profitable for the life that is to come. And it's what, don't you see, the gospel introduces us to? A new character of life. A new character of life. Now, here I think I may use the word character. The godly, [00:30:04] the converted person who accepts this faithful saying, this is a faithful saying worthy of all acceptance. Go about my early Christians and say to others, look, godliness is profitable for all things. Yes, have your bodily exercise, have your games, have your recreation, especially when you're young, you will grow more stalwart and so on if you exercise yourself and not always lounging about and doing nothing. Certainly, young man or young woman, it's profitable. But remember, godliness is not only profitable for the life that is, but for the life that is to come. Look at the apostle Paul again, the chief of sinners, who got converted. What a day is coming for Paul, when in the presence of the Lord Jesus, he meets the thousands who were converted through his instrumentality. What a day it will be.

[00:31:05] Paul, you wrote a very sound and we accept it. This is the life, the godly life, is the life that is profitable for all things. Well, that's character, isn't it?

The godly man or woman is a man or woman of character, sterling Christian character. I commend it to you, my friends. If you say, yes, by the grace of God, I know the saving power of the Lord Jesus

Christ. Well, now it introduces you to a new kind of life and it's the profitable life. Go in for it. But there's another thing because life has to express itself in action, hasn't it? That's why there's this third remark that Paul makes to Titus. Now, and a few moments left, I'm going to just remind you that Titus, he's not in Cyprus, [00:32:06] where we hear so much about just now, but he was in Crete. Remember, that was the island that the Germans landed on. We used to hear about such a tremendous lot roughly about 15 years ago. He was in Crete. And if you look for a moment at verse 12 of the first chapter, you find that they, the Christians had, although they were heathen kind of people, they had a kind of prophet of their own. And one day this prophet evidently got stirred up about something and he got frankly candid and told the Christian people a thing or two about themselves. What did he say? Oh, he says, the Christians, they're always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. And the word for beastly, I may tell you, is not the domestic animals, the wild animals. Another translation [00:33:03] has the Christians are always liars, evil, wild beasts, lazy druggles. That's how another translation puts it. Slow, lazy. Well, there's a good deal in the world, you know, my friends, today that rather reminds one of the Christians. Not a very complimentary thing, was it? But one of themselves said it. It wasn't an enemy. It wasn't the British saying it of the Germans or the Russians or the Russians of the Germans saying it of the British and the Americans. You get some unkind and hot things said under those circumstances. It was one of themselves. He got stirred up evidently, this prophet, by having a taste of all these evil things. He said, what's the kind of thing that's going on? They can't stick to the truth. They rampage about and injure one another. They are like wild beasts, gangsters, and they're lazy druggles. They don't want to work, but they want a lot to eat. [00:34:06] Which is the kind of thing, you know, friends, that I've heard a thing or two about today. I have a little publishing place in London. It's in the funny little street that's known as Little Britain. I once had a letter addressed to me in Great Britain, which is rather large. Fortunately, some genius of the GPO thought it must be Little Britain because Great Britain is too large. And I happen to be quite close to the GPO. But it's Little Britain. Well, my dear good helper, many, many years, she came along. There was a fellow supposed to be doing some work, don't know whether it was British Railways or what, or road services. Anyhow, he was lounging about and smoking a cigarette. And one of his mates suddenly called out, look here Bill, what are you doing? Come and go away. Where are you smoking the cigarettes for? And he said, if I hadn't switched him, I thought, oh well, he said, it's only fools and horses that [00:35:05] work today. Well, I think he must be enjoying the Lazy Gutton Club.

Yes. Well, that was the Cretans. Now look here, we are Christians. Supposing things run in the Cretan way in this land of ours. They have a rather plenty of allies. The only question is not what the gangsters have done, Monday morning's paper, who's safe they've blown up or who they've coshed in the street. That's kind of, that's every day. We take that for granted nowadays. The evil wild beasts are about. The liars, the Lazy Guttons. What about Christians?

You know, you should put us on our medal. What does he say? He says, now look here, Titus, you're living in this extraordinary island where the people have these bad features. [00:36:03] So it's a faithful saying. He doesn't say worthy of all acceptance because, in the kind of way he's now thinking of people in the midst of folk who couldn't possibly accept it. But he says, these things I will that thou affirm constantly. You say to people, have you believed in God? There's only one way of believing in him, and that is through our Lord Jesus Christ. Very well. Have you believed in God? Then, Titus, keep on at it. It's faithful and constantly affirm it. If you have truly believed in God, if you're the believer, be careful to maintain good works. Let your godliness, your proper Christian character, come into display in your actions. Be careful to maintain good works. You see, here are the works of which the apostle [00:37:01] James speaks in his epistle. The works of faith. Some people think there's

contradiction between Paul in the epistles of the Romans and James in his epistle, but it is not so. If you read the 3rd and 4th of Romans, you will find that what the apostle Paul is speaking of, and he says it's not of works, he's speaking of the works or deeds, I think the word more commonly is in Romans, it's the same, there's only another word for the same thing, the deeds or works of the law. Paul says, in effect, you must exclude all thought of works done in order to establish yourself on a righteous basis in the presence of God. The works of the law. They are put up. But James is not talking of the works of the law, you read it and see he's talking of the works of faith. He said, yes, quite so, but you have faith. But obviously your faith must come [00:38:02] into expression and display. You mustn't say, oh, I believe, I believe. But there's no resultant effect in your life. If there be genuine faith, it must, it will express itself in works of another order to the things that are popular in the world through which you pass. Be careful to maintain good works. Now that's a faithful saying. Let us all remember it. These are my three faithful sayings that the Apostle Paul enjoined in the first century. And I'm perfectly sure I'm on safe ground when I tell you they are as important in the 20th century, as important in our land as they were in the day when the Apostle Paul lived. There is no salvation except in our Lord [00:39:05] Jesus Christ and that which he has brought, not on the ground of merit, but mercy, the grace of our Lord exceedingly abundant, bringing salvation to us. And if it indeed is brought and we receive it, it works a transformation in character so that we pursue godliness. It comes into expression in works that are good according to God. My friends, these are faithful sayings and they're worthy of all acceptance. I hope we should all be stirred up by having looked at them a little bit tonight to seek to make those faithful sayings operated in our own hearts and in our actual lives. If that were worked out as a result of our little talk tonight, [00:40:03] well we shall each be blessed and God will be glorified. Now I think we will sing that little hymn which is number four in our book. Number four, we've got two of the verses of the little hymn in our book.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh what a foretaste of glory divine, air of salvation, perfect of God, full of his spirit, washed in the blood. Number four.

[00:41:31] Raising my faith up, oh what a hope, perfect foundation, all is at rest, I in my care, I'm happy and blessed, walking and waiting, looking above, everything good is locked in his love.

[00:42:26] This is my story, this is my song, raising my faith up, oh what a day to call.

We have sung this very happy, even jubilant little hymn in thy holy presence and we trust that every one of us possesses in heart and conscience that blessed assurance which comes [00:43:07] from the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and the value of his atoning sacrifice and the power of his resurrection. If any others have not yet really got that assurance, grant that our talk tonight might help to warn their possessors and then we pray that we may be living consequently lives of godliness. We know the world doesn't care for that kind of thing, but I'll call it out of the world. We desire to live the godly life which is so profitable even while we live in this world, taking us out of 101 things that have gathered in in this life and is indeed full of profit in the life that is to come. Help us too that our works may be [00:44:06] such as thou dost call good works that we glorify thee. Now we ask a blessing of the Lord.