

Judged in Jesus
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"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." 1 Timothy 1:12-13a

One of the things that we sinful human beings like to do is we are always tempted to want to make our salvation be about our action, our worth, our decision. This can come up in some very subtle ways - things we can even just slide on into our reading of the bible. Consider this set up.

The whole point of this passage is that Paul deserved nothing from God but death and punishment. He was a blasphemer, and he later on in the text confesses that he is (note: is - present tense, right now) the chief of sinners. Indeed, we all ought to have this attitude towards ourselves - we ought to know and be aware of our very real sins that we deal with now.

And yet, there's a word that almost seems to stand out in that first verse - the idea that Jesus "judged me faithful." We hear that word "judge" and we can think, "Well, if Paul was a blasphemer, he wasn't very faithful - what sort of decision is that?" That's a strange way of evaluating, isn't it?

The key thing here is that the idea of "judging" in the Scripture isn't really a matter of making an evaluation - especially the word here. That "judged" could be translated as "led" or "commanded" because the focus is on what Jesus has declared. This isn't a value judgment, it's a legal declaration. The picture isn't that of Jesus sitting in heaven tapping his lip considering Paul's value - rather Paul is drafted. Jesus strengthens and equips Paul, drafts him unto faithfulness, and appoints him to a post.

The image is more akin to those old WW2 movies where someone gets drafted and says, "I'm a farmer," and the officer says, "Well, Uncle Sam says you're infantry, here's your rifle."

Your life, your standing before God, does not rest on the sum total of your actions or how you or I might evaluate them. If we look at ourselves honestly, that's a great thing. Rather, our standing before God rests on this - Jesus says that we are with Him and that we are good. That's what your Baptism is - you are declared, judged to be of the family of God. That's what forgiveness is - your sin is gone, because Jesus said so, and He should know as He took it up upon the Cross. That's what the Supper is - This is My Body, This is My Blood, and it's for you and the remission of your sins... because Jesus says so.

And Jesus who calls you, declares you faithful in Himself, also strengthens you and He appoints you to His service. Not as an apostle, but to whatever vocations you have - parent, child, neighbor, worker, boss, congregational member, etc.

Congratulations - you have been saved.