

# EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

## Starting Strong—Doing What’s Right in the Work of Ministry

### Undeserved Mercy for an Unbelieving Rabbi

1 Timothy 1:12–17



#### LET’S BEGIN HERE

One of the benefits of studying a New Testament letter is the opportunity to become better acquainted with the writer himself—in this case, Paul the apostle. In this brief vignette (a mere six verses), we don’t read of Paul’s role and ministry as an apostle—strong in faith and unswerving in dedication. Rather, we read of Paul—called Saul—before his conversion to Christ. Saul was “a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor” who, by his own admission, “acted ignorantly in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13). Ironically, Saul was a religious zealot, an intense rabbi, sincere to the core . . . but sincerely wrong. And so? Mercy came to the rescue!



#### LET’S DIG DEEPER

##### 1. The Gospel That Is Glorious (1 Timothy 1:11)

Before he became the great apostle Paul, he was the great blasphemer Saul. He was the Chuck Colson of his day—the hatchet man for the Jewish rulers. But that all changed when he encountered the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

##### 2. The Apostle Who Was Thankful (1 Timothy 1:12–17)

We tend to think of the apostles as wearing halos and serene countenances, endlessly gazing up into the celestial realm. Wrong! The apostles were earthy, ordinary men who had little patience for pious posturing. In fact, they were so average and sinful, they were more surprised than anyone that God would entrust the gospel to them. And this was especially true of the apostle Paul.



#### Quotable

*God’s glorious  
gospel can  
change lives,  
and He’s deposited  
the good news  
in our hands.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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**LET’S LIVE IT**

When’s the last time you gave God sheer, unadulterated praise—honor and glory—for the mercy He’s shown in your life? Just as no one can ignore or deny the power of a changed life, so no one whose life has been changed by the mercy of God can remain unmoved or ungrateful.

Write your own doxology or hymn of praise to God for the mercy and grace He’s shown you.



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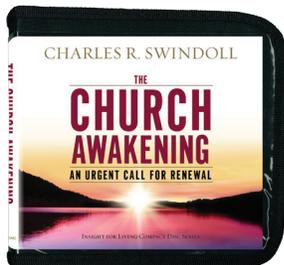
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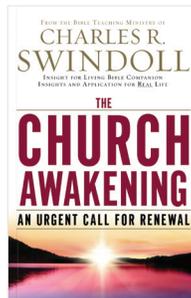
#### *1 Timothy 1:12–17*



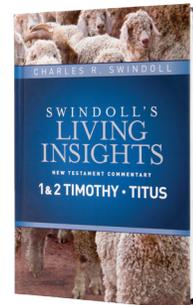
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