

As we mentioned last night, Mariah is wonderfully blessed. She is cared for, prayed for and loved
by you and God.

GOODNEWS LETTER

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REFLECTING ON THEN AND NOW

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle,
because I persecuted the church of God," 1st Corinthians 15:9.

"And I thank Christ Jesus our LORD...for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the
ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained
mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief," 1st Timothy 1:12-13.

Paul had a definite change in his life. He went from persecuting the church, to becoming the most focused missionary in the New Testament; writing at least 13 books of the Bible; 14, if we credit Paul as authoring the book of Hebrews.

As a mortal man, Paul's Biblical notoriety, within the New Testament, is unsurpassed. And, when we think about our own lives - from **then** until **now**, we have much of, if not, the same feelings about the change as Paul did.

Maybe, our past isn't comparable to Paul's list of past sins. But, we have a list, nevertheless. While, we may not have persecuted the church, we certainly ignored it and scoffed at it and felt we were better than most within the church. Come to think of it, may be **we did persecute the church**.

All of us have sinned (Rom. 3:10) and come short (missed the mark-Rom. 3:23). And, just like Paul, we have a regretted past - all of it. Before we came to know Jesus in the free pardon of sin, we had all kinds of incorrect feelings about His salvation that was secured for us.

From **then** till **now**, errant feelings have not changed, either. In the past, some of us thought that we were just as good as the next guy or, so bad that God wouldn't save us, at all.

Some of us had the same feeling that is prevalent today; which is, '**All things will work out in the end.**' **Now**, we know that's not the case. **Judgment is sure and Hell is real.**

So, men go on their stupid ways; afraid of God's judgment, but looking at the sure coming day only through fleshly eyes, thinking with carnal mentality.

Yet, when our '**then**' becomes our '**now**,' through God's grace that is within Jesus, a supernatural change comes; one that is everlasting.

Sadly, although the change does come, removing men from death and placing them into life eternal, the new position may not always continue. Many, who experience the glorious transformation become like Israel, desiring what the flesh wants. They return, at least in their minds and hearts, back to Egypt.

When one does grab hold of the life that is in Jesus, understanding by Holy Spirit power, we turn into little Pauls and think as he did, before and after the change came.

While, sorrow is felt for a godless past, back **then**, the new born sinner is **now** thankful for the position that God has given to him.

What we say about Paul can also be said about everyone that experiences God's salvation of a changed life; a changed life-style must follow.

Paul was a persecutor who became an apostle. I was a class clown **then**, but **now**, and still with a sense of humor, I have been called to preach God's word, serving as a missionary-pastor.

And, think about what you **now** do since the change has come in your life. You may serve in the office of a pastor, a deacon or a missionary. May be your calling of service is being a faithful member of the Lord's body.

Whatever it is doesn't really matter; for every one of us has to understand that Christ counted us faithful by putting us into the ministry. And that, my brother, is a change.

What you were or, what you did in the past, is probably insignificant. It might be, on the other hand, that your past life was a soap opera; even, one that makes an X rated movie look tame. But, just fagitaboutit!

Whatever any of us did - without Christ, we were men most miserable. Amen? Indeed! So, allow me to go on record and say this about you: "**I am so thankful that Christ counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.**" May I say that about myself, as well? Thank you and, thank the LORD.

Our **NOW** calling is clear. We have to do exactly what Paul did when he reflected on his '**then**' and '**now**' positions in life, "**...but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,**" Philippians 3:13 & 14.

When our change is viewed correctly; that is, with Scriptural minds and hearts, we begin to see just how wonderful God's grace is. But, our change -from what we were to who we are, demands that we quote Paul over and over, again.

Only **now**, each time we utter the quotation, our thankfulness becomes **Paul-like**. We didn't back **THEN**, but **NOW**, we gladly join with Paul, readily placing our names right alongside of his - right next to his.

"I (we) thank Christ Jesus our LORD...for that He counted me (us) faithful, putting me (us) into the ministry;" (1st Tim. 1:12).