

# Christ Jesus Came to Save Sinners

## Week 3: The Gospel According to Paul

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 1:12-17

**Sermon Series:** *Timothy's Charge*

**Topic:** Gospel, Salvation

### I. Introduction

Today is our third week in our walk through the apostle Paul's first letter to Timothy. The portion of Scripture before us this morning focuses our attention on one sentence, "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*"



### Review the Past

In the previous paragraph we learned that Paul had sent Timothy to the church in Ephesus so that he could correct the false teaching of "certain persons" in that church. They were teaching "different doctrine" and the gospel was being confused. They were teaching that by keeping the law one could be righteous in God's sight. Paul clarifies that the law is only good for exposing sin. It was never intended as a means of righteousness. The gospel is the only means of righteousness and the gospel focuses on the goodness of God and perfect work of Christ Jesus and this is what is being twisted and must be corrected and guarded.

### Overview the Present

As Paul thought about the greatness of the gospel, the glory of God, and this soul-saving message which had been entrusted to him, he was overwhelmed with worship and simply broke out in praise of Jesus.

### Exegetical Outline of Sermon

- II. The Urgent charge to Timothy (1:3-20)
  - A. Warn Certain Persons (1:3-11)
  - B. Christ Jesus Came to Save Sinners (1:12-17)
    - 1. Paul's Praise (on earth v.12)
      - a) Paul's past (v.13)
      - b) Christ's power (v.14)
      - c) Christ's purpose (v.15)

- d) Paul's purpose (v.16)
- 2. Perpetual Praise of Heaven (v.17)
- C. Wage War by Faith (1:18-20) next Sunday

## Pray

Father, we praise you for sending Jesus into this world to save sinners. Save those listening who are in need of salvation. Lead all who are already saved into the same place of wonder-filled worship as Paul was. Give us ears to hear and hearts to praise you. Be glorified among us, we pray. Through Christ, amen.

## II. Christ Jesus Came to Save Sinners

This is the main point of this paragraph (v.12-17). This is *the* fact that forever changed Paul's life. This is *the* truth that never ceased to amaze him. The personal impact of this is what caused him to break out into doxological devotion.

### 1. Paul's Praise (v.12)

In verse 12 we see *Paul's praise*. To feel the full weight of this, we first need to see what leads him to this praise. In the previous paragraph (vs.8-11), Paul had been explaining the goodness of the law when it is used lawfully. The "*certain persons*" (1:3, 6) about which he was charging Timothy to correct, had been misusing the law. They were apparently teaching that it was a means of righteousness (v.9). Paul clarified that the law was given in order to expose sin (vs.9-10). Paul gave a short summary of the 10 Commandments as a means of highlighting that fact that we all break these commands and "*No human being is made righteous by keeping the law*" (Rom 3:20). Then he went on to say that we could keep adding to these laws,

<sup>10</sup> ...whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, <sup>11</sup> in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

1 Timothy 1:10-11 (ESV)

As he wrote this sentence (ie. v.11), he contemplated the goodness of the gospel and the glory of the blessed (ie. 'happy') God, and then he suddenly became overwhelmed by the fact that *he* was the one to whom this great gospel had been *entrusted*. The gospel is great and God is glorious and Jesus had personally<sup>1</sup> *entrusted* him with the primary responsibility of explaining and teaching this gospel to the world.

The word '*entrusted*' is the linking thought that leads Paul into the next paragraph, which is a paragraph of praise. The root word is *pisteuō* (πιστεύω), which means "to entrust something to the care of someone."<sup>2</sup> Paul is amazed as he considers that which has been entrusted to him.

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<sup>1</sup> See 1 Timothy 1:1, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 463.

He can't help but break out in praise. He is a person who is least worthy—as we shall soon see—to receive that which has been entrusted to him. Paul uses a cognate word in the next sentence, which helps us understand what is happening within his heart as he is writing these words.

<sup>12</sup> I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful (πιστός *pistos*), appointing me to his service,

1 Timothy 1:12 (ESV)

'*Entrusted*' (*pisteuō*) in v.11 connects Paul's thinking with '*faithful*' (*pistos*) in v.12. Jesus '*entrusted*' Paul with the gospel and "*judged him faithful*" to carry out that calling. As Paul ponders his "*appointment to his service*," by which he means his calling and commissioning as an apostle, his heart wells up with praise and thanksgiving. The resurrected Jesus had personally chosen him for a most awesome and wonderful task! But who is he to be entrusted with such an awesome responsibility?

Paul offers thanks to Jesus, "*who has given me strength*." Paul could not do what Jesus had called and sent him to do without Jesus first giving him the strength to do it. On his own, Paul had no strength to see the glory of God, nor to understand the person of Jesus. Yet Jesus had "*given him the strength*" he needed and then had "*appointed him to his service*." For these things, Paul gives thanks to Jesus.

Paul also gave thanks that Jesus "*judged him faithful*." This does not mean that Jesus was looking for a faithful apostle and then chose Paul. Paul was the exact opposite of faithful when Jesus appointed him. Recall that Paul was on his way to imprison and kill Christians in Damascus when Jesus sovereignly interrupted his journey and knocked him off his horse.<sup>3</sup> At the point in time in which Jesus personally met Paul, he was anything but faithful. So what does Paul mean?

The word '*judged*' (ἡγέομαι *hēgeomai*) means, "to regard; consider; to deem or reckon to be."<sup>4</sup> This means that Jesus, at the time he appointed Paul to be his apostle, overlooked who he was at that moment and looked forward to whom he knew he would make him to be! Jesus *reckoned* him, or *considered* him, or *deemed* him to be, faithful, for at that time he was not presently faithful. As Augustine said, "God does not choose anyone who is worthy, but in choosing him renders him worthy."<sup>5</sup> Jesus knew how he planned to work in Paul's life, and so he "*appointed him to the service*" of this great gospel of a glorious God. And Paul praises Jesus for all that he has done in his life.

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<sup>3</sup> Acts 9:1-9.

<sup>4</sup> Rick Brannan, ed., *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Lexham Research Lexicons (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 51.

## a) Paul's Past (v.13)

Paul's praise flows out of the facts of *Paul's past*. What had he done? How had Jesus worked in Paul's life? Consider his past.

13 though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,  
1 Timothy 1:13 (ESV)

Paul describes his life before believing in Jesus. He was a "*blasphemer, persecuted, and insolent opponent*."

*Blasphemy* has to do with a spoken sin.<sup>6</sup> Paul sinned with his mouth. A blasphemer is one who is a slanderer and abusive in speech against the name of God or of Jesus. Paul confessed that he formerly had spoken blasphemous things against the name of Jesus (see Acts 26:9-11). And yet, Jesus had forgave him of the sinful and wicked things that Paul said against his name. Yes, speaking blasphemous things against the name of Jesus can be forgiven (Mt 12:31-32).

Paul was also a *persecutor*. Paul sinned with his hands. He interrogated Christians and tried to make them blaspheme the name of Jesus (Acts 26:11). He sought to physically harm Christians and he did. He beat them, arrested them, and went from house to house, violently throwing them into prison.

Finally, he was an *insolent opponent*, which is "the strongest of these three terms."<sup>7</sup> Paul sinned with his heart. The word can also be translated as a "violent man."<sup>8</sup> Paul was a hostile, violent, aggressive opponent of God and his work in the world through the Lord Jesus Christ. In Paul's defiance against Christ and his people he was proud, arrogant, and filled with hubris. These three words for a kind of triad of condemnation. This triad makes clear that Paul was a public enemy of God, worthy only of his just judgment and righteous condemnation.

*I received mercy*. And yet Jesus was *merciful* to him. Paul confesses his own *ignorance* and *unbelief*. Paul neither truly knew Jesus nor believed in him. These facts did not excuse his sinful behavior, but rather exposed his desperate need. There was ample evidence to demonstrate who Jesus truly is, but Paul ignored that evidence. The Pharisee Nicodemus said, "*Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him*" (Jn 3:2). There were plenty of divine signs pointing to Jesus' true identity. Paul's ignorance was culpable ignorance. His pride blinded his eyes. He was guilty before God. Paul is not saying that he deserved *mercy*, but rather that he received mercy!

He deserved only punishment from God, but instead he received *mercy*! God's justice could have demanded Paul's punishment, but his mercy moved him to withhold it and instead

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 6:11; 2 Timothy 3:2-3; 2 Peter 2:11.

<sup>7</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 52.

<sup>8</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 122.

to bring relief! Mercy is God’s “sovereign benevolence.”<sup>9</sup> Mercy is the kindness of God entering into the miserable, guilty condition of man and bringing relief. That God is merciful is the most glorious quality about him. When Moses asked God to show him his glory, the first thing he said in response was that he is merciful (Ex 33:18; 34:6).

**b) Christ’s Power (v.14)**

The memory of God’s mercy moves Paul to magnify *Christ’s power*. Christ’s power is seen through overflowing grace that gives faith and love.

<sup>14</sup> and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 1:14 (ESV)

*The Grace of our Lord overflowed.* Not only did Paul receive mercy, but he also received *grace*. Grace and mercy sometimes overlap. They are similar, but not the same. Mercy is more like judgment withheld while grace is more like a gift given. Mercy is not receiving what you do deserve (ie. judgment), while grace is receiving what you do not deserve (ie. blessing, salvation).

Mercy	Grace
Not receiving punishment you deserve	Receiving favor you do not deserve
Withholding deserved judgment	Receiving undeserved blessing
Removal of negative consequences	Receiving positive benefit
Compassion, forgiveness	Kindness, generosity
God withholding eternal condemnation	God granting eternal life
“I will not give you what you deserve”	“I will give you what you don’t deserve”

How was the power of Christ’s grace manifested to Paul?

*With faith and love that in Christ Jesus.* Like a powerful tsunami, the grace of Christ washed over Paul and giving him both *faith* and *love*. Both of these things are “*in Christ*,” meaning they came to Paul *from* Christ. There was in Paul neither faith nor love, but Christ Jesus was filled with both. Paul had neither faith nor love in his heart, but Christ came to Paul in power on the road to Damascus and gave them both to him.

*Love for Jesus is a gift from Jesus.*<sup>10</sup> Paul hated Jesus, but Jesus loved Paul. Paul was persecuting Christians, but Jesus lovingly said to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” The love of Jesus for a most unlovable Saul transformed his heart. The love that Jesus showed toward Paul was a great grace that he did not deserve, but a gift he did receive.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:19.

*Faith in Jesus is a gift from Jesus.* Thus, Paul wrote,

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...

Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)

*Both the grace and the faith are a gift from God.* Neither come as a result of works. Grace is not earned and faith is not earned. Both are given as a gift from God. We are his workmanship. Saved people, redeemed people are created by Jesus. We do not save ourselves. Neither do cause ourselves to be saved.

Christ's power makes him worthy to be praised. Christ comes to Paul in power by overflowing grace that washes over his past and gives him both faith and love. If Christ had not come to Paul in power, he would not have had faith in Jesus and neither would he have known the love of Jesus. However, overflowing grace washed over the apostle Paul and graciously gave him the gift of both faith and love!

### c) Christ's Purpose (v.15)

Now Paul comes to the point that he never wants Timothy to forget, the fact that Christ Jesus came to save sinners.

<sup>15</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

1 Timothy 1:15 (ESV)

*The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.* This phrase is used by Paul four other times in the Pastoral Epistles (3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Tit 3:8). The primary point is to emphasize the truth of the statement. It is very similar to phrase Jesus used when he said, "Truly, truly, I say to you..." This is not only true, but also important. It demands our attention as well as, our "full acceptance." This phrase also points to this being a foundational doctrine of the accepted apostolic teaching.<sup>11</sup>

*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* We first note that Jesus "*came into the world.*" He existed before the world existed and then later "came into the world" from outside of it. Jesus is more than mere man. He is the Son of God who entered this world, not by accident, but to execute an intentional plan, namely, that of saving sinners.

This is the purpose of Jesus. He came *to save!* Save from what? From sin and God's wrath against sin, which we considered week before last (see Jn 3:36). Recall what Jesus said to the Pharisees and Jewish people, "...*unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins*" (Jn 8:24). Jesus came *to save!* He came to save *sinners!* Jesus came to give salvation to all

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<sup>11</sup> *ESV Expository Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, electronic edition).

*sinner*s who would look to him in faith and trust. If you have no sin, then there is no need of a savior. But if you are a sinner, then Jesus came to save you. This is the purpose of Christ Jesus.

*Of whom I am the foremost.* This truth is very personal for Paul. Jesus came to save *sinner*s, of whom Paul is foremost. Paul viewed himself as the “*foremost of sinners*,” or “the chiefest of sinners” (KJV). Meaning that he saw himself as among the most guilty of sinners or the most sinful of sinners. Paul knew he was among the most sinful of men because of all the wicked and evil things he had done in the past. And yet, Jesus had been merciful and save him. Why?

#### d) Paul's Purpose (v.16)

Now Paul comes to the *purpose of Paul's salvation*. Why did Jesus wait so long to save Paul? Why did he not intervene sooner? Could he not have knocked Paul off his high horse earlier and prevented a lot of persecution of his own people? Could Jesus not been merciful to Paul more quickly? Why was Jesus merciful to Paul when he was? What was Jesus doing all those years that Paul was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent?

<sup>16</sup> 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.

1 Timothy 1:16 (ESV)

*Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience.* Jesus waited to be merciful to Paul because he was demonstrating his *perfect patience*. Jesus desires for his patience to be on *display*, that is, to be seen. He showed mercy to Paul to put on display his breathtaking patience with wicked people. Jesus knocked Paul off his horse when he did so that Paul would be “*an example to those who were to believe in him*.” Jesus waited to be merciful to wicked Saul so that he would be a living illustration of his patient love. Jesus permitted Paul to grow so wicked so that wicked people would see Paul's salvation and then realize that if Jesus could be merciful with he who was “*the foremost of sinners*,” then surely Jesus could be merciful with me. If Jesus was patient with a sinner like Saul, then surely he would be patient with a person like me. Jesus came into the world to save sinners, all sinners—even the worst of sinners. If Jesus can be merciful and gracious and give faith and love to Paul the persecutor, then he can do the same to anyone! You, me, and any sinner on earth. Jesus has the perfect patience to save anyone who will run to him in.

*Eternal life* is found only in Jesus. Jesus is the only one who can give eternal life. No one else has this power. No one else has been resurrected from the dead like Jesus was resurrected. He was raised up from the dead—on the third day—to show that death has no power over him. He has died to death therefore death has no hold on him. Therefore, because he lives eternally he can therefore give eternal life to all who look to him in faith. Thus, he is worthy of all praise!

## 2. Perpetual Praise (v.17)

Knowing what Jesus has done now leads to Paul to purpose of the whole universe, which is to *perpetually praise* the Lord who has given such sweet salvation to such sinful sinners.

<sup>17</sup> To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:17 (ESV)

This is the purpose and aim of all of eternity, to praise and glorify the King of ages. He is immortal and incorruptible. He will never die. This is invisible and enduring. He inhabits the spiritual realm. He is the only God. He alone is Creator of all things. He alone spoke all things into existence and He alone sent his only Son Jesus into the world to save sinners. To Him alone belong glory and honor and praise from today and forever and ever! Amen.

## Conclusion

What is the point? What is Paul saying?

### A. Paul's Charge to Timothy

Paul is telling Timothy not to allow false teachers to twist the gospel. The gospel of Christ Jesus and the glory of the blessed God is one message that cannot be corrupted. If it is, then sinners will be kept out of God's kingdom. No one is righteous before God by keeping the law. One can only be righteous before God by receiving the mercy and grace and love that is found only through faith in Jesus. This message cannot be lost or twisted. Before being a believer, thought Paul he was an impeccable keeper of the law, because he misunderstood the law, but truly he was on his way to hell because he missed Jesus.<sup>12</sup> But Jesus came in merciful power and overflowed with grace and giving Paul the faith and love he needed to have his life transformed. Timothy cannot allow this gospel truth to be compromised.

### B. Paul's Charge to the Church (ie. To us!)

1. **Know the gospel.** Like Paul, every one of us is a sinner. Because of the power of sin, none of us has the strength to save ourselves. Such strength only comes from Jesus. He alone knows his wonderful plans for our lives. Though, because of our sin, each one of us are wicked in the sight of God, yet in Jesus his merciful power is manifested by granting us faith and repentance. Grace the comes in overflowing measure to us. If we will confess our sins and cry out to Jesus for forgiveness of our sins, for faith to believe, and grace to receive his Holy Spirit, then Jesus will pour out His merciful love into our hearts and change us. This truth must be believed. Jesus

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<sup>12</sup> Philippians 3:6.

came to save sinners and I'm a sinner. Jesus will save all sinners who will repent by turning away from their sin and to him for the gracious gift of eternal life.

2. **Christ Jesus came to save sinners.** Are you a sinner in need of salvation? Then come to Him today? Ask him to save you right now? Pray to Him in all sincerity and He will save you. Ask him to forgive you of your sins and He will do that. Forsake pride and go to him in humility. Confess your sinful love of self and he will pour into you His own Holy Spirit. Ask him to give you eternal life and he will. Ask him to transform your heart and you will never be the same. If Jesus saved and transformed the worst of all sinners, then he can save and transform you.

3. **Praise Jesus as a personal savior.** Paul met Jesus in person. He went away a different person. Salvation is not an abstract fact that, but rather personal transformation. Salvation is not a religious system, but rather a relational reality. Jesus is not merely a symbol of spiritual change, he is the Sovereign Giver of the Holy Spirit. If you claim you're a Christian, and yet nothing about you changed, then you have not fully known and embraced him yet.

4. **Give glory to God.** Humanity was created to rejoice in Jesus. We were made to know and enjoy him for all eternity. Knowing the Lord Jesus truly brings the sweetest satisfaction the soul will ever know. Giving glory to Him fulfills the purpose for which we were made. And how Jesus saved Paul is how he saved us all. He gives us the strength. His mercy initiates. His grace overflows to us giving us faith and showing us his amazing love.

## Discussion Questions

1. What purpose does this paragraph (v.12-17) serve in the literary flow of this letter? How does it relate to the previous paragraph?
2. From where did Paul's strength come? Who gave it to him? Why was it given to him?
3. How was Paul "judged faithful?"
4. What is a "blasphemer?" What is blasphemy? Is this not an unforgivable sin?
5. What is mercy? In what way did Paul receive mercy?
6. Why did Paul receive mercy? (v.16)
7. What does the overflow of grace bring into Paul's life? (v.14)
8. What is the creedal component of this portion of Scripture? What is the significance of the inclusion of this "creed?" What is a creed?
9. What is Paul's opinion of himself?
10. Why did Jesus save Paul?
11. What is the ultimate aim of salvation?