

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Sermon: True Doctrine of Grace

Theme: We are saved by Grace as Paul's example shows

Intro:

I enjoy reading; I enjoy learning new things. One thing that I am incredibly interested in is people's lives. I enjoy learning the background of people; I enjoy learning how they got from point A to point B, from childhood to adulthood. This means that I really enjoy reading biographies. Several years ago, I read David McCullough's biography of John Adams; this was an interesting book. I loved it. A few years later I read Chernow's biography of Alexander Hamilton, another good book. More recently I read Eric Metaxas' biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, another enlightening book.

Now, what do all these biographies have to do with the Bible? I am glad you asked. As we read through the Bible, we find biographical information throughout. Here we are in 1 Timothy, do you suppose there is biographical information in this short letter? Yes, there certainly is. In today's text Paul calls himself the worst of sinners; how could he be saved? How could God accept Paul into salvation? Further, how could God use Paul to spread the Gospel around the known world and write much of the New Testament?

Let's read 1 Timothy 1:12-17 and find out.

1 Timothy 1:12-17:

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. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 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. 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. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

In verse 12 as well as verses 14-15 we see that God selected Paul. Though Paul was a man with a past, God selected him.

- a. Look at verse 12, Paul gives his usual thanks to God. He doesn't simply say "I thank God..." Paul says, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord."
 - i. Who is Christ Jesus to Paul? Lord.
 - ii. Who is Christ Jesus to you? Can you honestly say that He is Lord of your life?
- b. Now, why is Paul giving thanks to Christ Jesus? Paul is giving thanks because Christ Jesus appointed Paul to His service.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Sermon: True Doctrine of Grace

Theme: We are saved by Grace as Paul's example shows

- c. Paul was appointed as an apostle. In fact, if you look at the previous verse, in verse 11, we see that Paul talks about the glorious gospel which he was entrusted with. Paul is a steward of this Gospel.
 - d. Now, skip verse 13 and look at verse 14. Paul says that the grace of our Lord was poured out on Him *abundantly*, or *overflowed*. We could also translate this word *hyper-abundantly*.
 - e. Why, why did Paul need so much grace? That is my transition into verse 13
- II.** In verse 13 we see what Paul was up to when God selected him.
- a. Paul says, *though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief...*
 - b. Paul says he was a *blasphemer*, what does that mean? This means to speak irreverently about God or sacred things. How was Paul a blasphemer? Paul was irreverent to Christ and therefore was irreverent to God. I will show you an example in a second.
 - c. Paul says he was a *persecutor*, how? Paul was persecuting the church. This means hostility and ill treatment.
 - d. Paul says he was a *insolent opponent*; let me show you an example of Paul's blasphemy, persecution and violence. Let's look at Acts 8:3:
³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.
 - e. I have read over that passage so many times in my life without thinking about the horror that Paul must have caused people.
 - f. He went from house to house: I imagine Paul going into one's house and violently taking people away and putting them in prison. Paul might have even interrupted their evening, their dinner, their work, their time with family. The men and women might have had children watching as Paul violently took away their parents.
 - g. If you look at Acts 7 and 8:1 Paul gave the approval of the stoning of Stephen. Stephen was a deacon who preached the gospel, and he was killed for this with Paul's approval.
 - h. In *Jesus Freaks* written by DC Talk and Voice of the Martyrs Tom White, the Director of Voice of the Martyrs writes this: *I met a man who stood up for Jesus in a meeting and was sent to prison for fourteen years. I just attended his ninetieth birthday party. He has scars on his neck and back, tortured by those who have never encountered the love of God. His name is Richard Wurmbrand. He speaks 11 languages and was a leader*

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Sermon: True Doctrine of Grace

Theme: We are saved by Grace as Paul's example shows

in the underground church in Romania. I suppose he might be the oldest Jesus Freak who is still living mentioned in this book.

- i. *If a Jesus Freak is someone who stands up or stands out when God calls, regardless of the circumstances, then Richard is your man. In 1947, this pastor taught Christians to walk backwards in the snow carrying their Bibles into countries that forbid them. When border guards looked down from their towers in the morning, they ran with their police dogs in the wrong direction following the footsteps! When Russian soldiers invaded his homeland of Romania and there was great fear, Richard had his Christian group meet the Russians with Bibles in their language. God had brought a Russian "opportunity" to Romania. The Christians would give Bibles through the train windows to eager Russians before the KGB could stop them.*
- j. *In prison, Richard made music with the chains on his arms and sang joyful praises to Emmanuel--- the God with him.*

The persecution the Russians did to Richard, Paul did to early Christians. Paul persecuted and endorsed this type of persecution.

- k. If you look at Acts 9:1 we see that Paul was breathing *murderous* threats against the Lord's people.
- l. Paul obviously did some pretty bad things.
- m. This is a good time for me to bring up the doctrine of grace as opposed to *false doctrine* of works
- n. Recall that in the first part of this chapter Paul warned Timothy to command certain men not to teach *false doctrine*. A type of *false doctrine* is salvation by works. This means a teaching that we must earn our salvation would be *false doctrine*.
- o. So, Paul was saved by God's grace. Paul didn't earn his salvation; God chose him for salvation. Verse 15 says that Jesus came into the world to save sinners and guess what else it says? Paul says, "I am the worst."
- p. Paul considers himself the worst of sinners.
- q. Paul says that Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
- r. We are all sinners; I know that no one here is without sin. I am a sinner. Now, once we are saved, God begins a work to make us better, but we were sinners when we became Christ follower, and we are likely sinners when we die.
- s. Paul says that he acted in ignorance and unbelief. This means he didn't know Jesus; he was not a Christ follower when he did those things. Christ

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Sermon: True Doctrine of Grace

Theme: We are saved by Grace as Paul's example shows

changes us and when we become Christ followers Christ begins a new work in us.

- t. The best example that I can think of is a car that is totaled in a car accident. A few years ago, I knew someone who owned an 87 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme. This car was in pretty good shape, well until it was T-boned in a car accident. As was expected the insurance company totaled the car. My friend wanted to keep the car, but in order to do that he had to get the car, fix it, and get a salvage title. That is exactly what he did. He had the car towed home, took a few months and fixed the car up. You know, I saw the car before the accident, after the accident, during the repairs, and after; you couldn't tell it was in an accident.
 - u. That is exactly what God does to us and he does this by grace.
 - v. Paul didn't earn his salvation, but God did have a purpose for Paul.
- III.** In verses 16 we see why God selected Paul to display the Gospel and to be saved. I am going to summarize this from verse 16. God saved Paul so that God could show people that salvation is about God and not about the individual being saved. Paul had done some horrible things and if God brought Paul to salvation, He is not limited to bring others to salvation as well.
- IV.** Now, what are you to do with this message?
- a. Remember, we see the outside, God sees the inside. This means we must see people's potential in Christ not in sin. None of those early Christians would have known what God would do through Paul. After Paul was saved the early church was afraid of him; they thought this might be a trick.
 - b. Remember to forgive people. God gives us a free gift of forgiveness, as I said, this is called grace. If God forgives, we must forgive as well.
 - c. Remember the true doctrine. The true doctrine is that we can't earn our salvation. Any religion, denomination or church that teaches you must earn your salvation is in error. That would be *false doctrine*.
 - d. Share the gospel. You know, I bet there are a lot of people just like Paul out there and God is going to lead them to salvation. Guess what? You are God's instrument to introduce these people to Christ.
 - e. Where would you be without Christ?
 - f. Without Christ: what would my life be like without Christ? Would I be tossed to and fro like a ship across the sea? Would I value marriage and be committed to family? Would I be in drugs? Alcohol? Addictions? Would I use work to find fulfillment? Education for fulfillment? Where would I find purpose? Would I have a void? Would there be something

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Sermon: *True Doctrine of Grace*

Theme: We are saved by Grace as Paul's example shows

missing? Some emptiness? What is it like to not know? What is it like to not know about death and the wisdom from the Bible?

- g.** I do understand that many times there are Christians battling addictions and many other things, but knowing Christ should help.
- h.** Verse 17: Worship the Lord because you need not be afraid of death or life. Let's say verse 17 together: *To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Close:

You know when I read biographies, they are long biographies: 500, 700 and even 800 pages. I notice that these people all had faults. They did wrong things just as everyone else has. We all do wrong things, but God offers us salvation as a free gift.

How could Paul be saved? God's grace. The Bible teaches that God can take someone who we might think is far from God and unusable and God uses them for His Kingdom. In the Old Testament book of Joshua there is the example of God using a prostitute, her name was Rahab. Rahab is listed in Matthew chapter 1 as one of the ancestors of Jesus our Lord. Towards the back of our Old Testament there is a man named Jonah. Jonah resisted God's calling, but what happened to Jonah? Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, spat out, and he eventually gave in and served God. God uses us by His grace. God saves us by His grace.

Choir Anthem: *Wonderful, Merciful Savior*

*Wonderful, merciful Savior
Precious Redeemer and Friend
Who would have thought that a Lamb
Could rescue the souls of men
Oh you rescue the souls of men*

*Counselor, Comforter, Keeper
Spirit we long to embrace
You offer hope when our hearts have
Hopelessly lost the way
Oh, we hopelessly lost the way*

*You are the One that we praise
You are the One we adore
You give the healing and grace
Our hearts always hunger for*

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Sermon: True Doctrine of Grace

Theme: We are saved by Grace as Paul's example shows

Oh, our hearts always hunger for

Almighty, infinite Father

Faithfully loving Your own

Here in our weakness You find us

Falling before Your throne

Oh, we're falling before Your throne