

1st Timothy
Chapter 1:11-20
“Exposing His Glory”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
Matthew W. Thoms, Pastor/Teacher
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Hopefully you were with us last week for the introduction to **1st Timothy**, but if, for some reason, you weren't able to ... you can always go to our website and catch up with the rest of us.

But for this morning ... we're going to back up one verse from where we left off ... so jump in with me please at ...

Verses 11-13a: Paul says that Jesus strengthened him because He found him faithful enough to press into service.

Q. But how exactly was it that He strengthened Paul? Was it some divine empowerment? – No! He says, Christ strengthened him by entrusting him with the gospel message.

I remember the first time I allowed my son to mow the lawn. He'd been bugging me for two summers, but he was just too young. But then he turned 10! And that first time ... he missed some spots ... he didn't get it done exactly right, but it wasn't for a lack of trying. He went over it and over it and over it ...

Q. Why? – Because he wanted to please me. He was excited that I considered him capable of the task ... and he didn't want to come up short of my estimation.

Now ... it was pretty much all downhill from there. By the third time, he was already trying to pass the task back to me, but boy was he excited to be considered worthy that first time.

And that's all Paul's saying. He was strengthened, not by some divine endowment of power, but by a divine compliment. Christ's estimation of his competence and trustworthiness was a shot in Paul's arm ... and he didn't want to let the Lord down.

Paul took an estimate of himself and concluded that he was awful! He'd cursed God in the person of Christ and intentionally hurt the people God loved. He even tried to damage God's Kingdom.

But Jesus estimated Paul and said ... **“You're forgiven and I wanna make you part of My team.”** And, as part of that team, the Lord entrusted Paul with a very precious possession ... the gospel by which His creation can be eternally saved.

Verses 13b-14: We're told in ...

Luke 12: 47 "... that [the] slave who knew his master's will and did not ... act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, 48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

Because of Christ's abundant grace, Paul's ignorance was mercifully forgiven ... and it's the same for us. But there's a fine line between ignorance and excuses.

What you know to do ... you're expected to do, but the Lord demands only what we're capable of giving Him.

Verse 15:

Q. What's trustworthy? – The fact that Jesus came to save sinners. He didn't come to save the religious people nor those who excuse rather than confess. He came to save sinners!

As the old cliché reminds us, "*You can't clean a fish until you catch it.*" And yet some will say, "*I know I need God in my life, but right now I'm just too messed up.*"

The next time you hear someone say that ... tell them, "**Congratulations!**" Because being a messed up is exactly what qualifies them!

That's why Paul makes no attempt to hide his status ... he says, "**I'm the worst of the bunch ... foremost among sinners.**"

But that wasn't always Paul's attitude ...

Speaking of himself before he came to salvation ... probably around 32 A.D., Paul said in ...

Acts 22:3 "I am a Jew ... educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers ... zealous for God ...

And in ...

Acts 23:6 ... I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees ...

So, before He got saved, Paul took a lot of pride in his heritage and his abilities. He took a lot of pride in his education and his post.

But after salvation and his call to apostleship he said ...

1st Corinthians 15:9 ... I am the least of the apostles ...

That was around 55 A.D. So obviously there's been some spiritual growth over the years. The Holy Spirit had worked on his pride, but still ... all he was saying was that he was at the lower end of the upper crust ... that he was the least of the best.

Then in 61 A.D., after a few more years of walking with the Lord, Paul said to the Ephesian believers that he was ...

Ephesians 3:8 ... the very least of all saints ...

Not just the least among the apostles, but now least among all believers.

And then flash forward another four years and he says here in ...

1st Timothy 1:15 ... I am foremost of all [sinners]

Q. So what happened? Had Paul fallen into some terrible sin? – Not at all. Paul was just living out the truth of what Jesus said in ...

John 3:21 "... he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested ..."

But this truth doesn't only apply to Paul. Listen to what happened when Peter and some of the other Apostles went fishing and saw a demonstration of Christ's power and love in ...

Luke 5:8 ... when Simon Peter saw ... he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions ...

And it works that way for us.

Spiritual pride is always packaged and sold under the heading of spiritual maturity, but it's anything but. Genuine humility is what follows real spiritual growth just as we see in the apostles.

Now that might sound like a real bummer. **"You mean that the more I mature in the Lord and the longer I walk with Him, the worse I'm going to feel about myself?"** – Absolutely yes ... but ... definitely not.

Don't forget what preceded Paul's confession here in **1st Timothy** ... he said, **"Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners."**

That truth gave Paul the ability to say, **"I'm an absolute wretch ... and it's totally OK!"**

It gives me the ability to say “Lord ... I’m not a good person and I’m not even doing very well for a bad person, but thanks for making that Your problem instead of mine.”

It gives you the ability to say “Jesus, I’m not going to try and hide how rotten I am anymore, because it’s sin that You forgive ... so I’m going to call it exactly what it is ... sin.” And then ... having that burden removed from my shoulders ... I’m gonna step out with a bounce in my step and a glow on my face.

Verse 16: “For this reason I found mercy”

Q. For what reason Paul? – Two reasons really:

- 1.** He found mercy because he was willing to confess honestly.
- 2.** He found mercy so that Jesus could use Paul as a demonstration of His perfect patience. Paul would serve as a shining example.

Because the truth is:

- 1.** Jesus demonstrates His perfect patience in those who most try His patience.
- 2.** He demonstrates His abundant mercy in those who need it in the greatest abundance.
- 3.** And He demonstrates His boundless and unconditional love in those who are most difficult to love.

Q. But was Paul really the biggest sinner on the planet? Was he the most trying or most difficult to love? – Not from our perspective. But what really matters is that from his own perspective ... he was.

Paul saw his own sin more glaringly than the sins of anyone else. He saw his own sin in bright red and to him they seemed to be written in the boldest print on the page.

So, if you boil it all down ... Paul is basically being used as a showcase. His task was to proudly display ... to show off, the mercies of God.

Q. Now that raises a challenging truth and interesting question for us ... are you willing to be such a showcase for God?

Paul was a good showcase because he was mega-sinner, but honestly ... by that standard, most of us are qualified, but that by itself isn’t enough ... Paul also had to be willing ... and so do we.

There are some here this morning who have incredible testimonies of God’s grace. One that might cause people to look at you and think “Man, if God can save the likes of them”

... maybe He can save me too?"

Maybe you've done a lot of things you're not proud of. Things you'd really rather people not know about. And I'm not suggesting that you rent a billboard to advertise your sins, but I am suggesting ... recommending, that you make up your mind right now that you're willing to drop your pride and whatever front you hide behind and allow others to see just how compassionate God really is.

In certain situations ... God's abundant goodness in overcoming your enormous blunders can be just what another person needs to see.

Now some might be thinking "No problem ... I'm willing to tell people about what I used to be like." But before you let yourself off that easily ... glance back with me to **verse 15** ... and notice ... that Paul DOESN'T say "I WAS foremost of all sinners" ... he says, "**I am foremost of all [sinners].**"

Don't give people the false impression that sinning is something you used to do. If you're going to be a showcase of His mercy, then your vileness has to be honestly exposed.

Q. How do jewelers display their best diamonds? – Against a plush, black background.

Because it's against the darkest of backgrounds that their brilliance is best seen. So, if you're going to be a showcase of His power and light ... then it must be cast against the background of your darkness and failures.

Verse 17: You can do an interesting study of **verses like this** in Paul's writings; verses that read like a benediction, but aren't.

What's interesting is that they always seem to follow a discussion of God's merciful choice of Paul. It's like he just gets so excited and carried away in the spirit of joy that he has these little outbursts of praise. And I think that's all these really are ... just heart-felt praise.

But watch what he does next ... very instructive ...

Verses 18-20: When someone accepts God's call into ministry ... whatever the place or function, it requires that man concur with what God has done.

Ordination for instance ... ordination is not of man ... God ordains, and man is left only to recognize that ... to affirm the evidence of God's work in that person's life.

But if man can see it ... so can Satan. So, on that day when the call to ministry is accepted ... we can rightly say, "Welcome to the war!"

Not just for pastors and elders and deacons, but for everyone who says "Yes" to God's

call. If man can see evidence of God's work in a person's life ... so can Satan ... so ... Paul says, to Timothy, "Load your weapon soldier!"

Q. But what does that have to do with displaying God's mercies? – Everything!

In **Revelation 12:10**, Satan's given the, very appropriate name "The Accuser of the Brethren".

Here Paul's reminding young Timothy that Indeed God did call him ... prophecies were given ... God spoke His plan through human voices, and he wants Timothy to be reminded of that in times of difficulty. Times when Satan whispers ... as he always does ... "Sure Timmy ... you were called, but think about what you've done since then. You haven't exactly behaved like a saint ... you've really blown it over and over. I'm afraid you're gonna have to throw in the towel. Give it up. God can't use men who behave like you Timmy."

Paul wanted to arm Timothy with this letter ... signed in his own hand so that when Satan sought to discourage him, he could pull out this letter and say, "Oh ya Satan ... then explain to me why God's still using the chief of all sinners as an apostle!"

That's what Paul's pointing to here when he commands Timothy, to fight the good fight, to keep the faith and ... to keep a clear conscience.

He doesn't command him to behave perfectly so that his conscience wouldn't be burdened ... he only commands him to keep a clear conscience. That means knowing that you're an awful person, but that, in spite of your vileness ... for the asking ... you're completely forgiven.

And then he goes on to warn that some in the church had failed in those areas and as a result ... had suffered spiritual shipwreck. They spiraled to the bottom of the cold, dark sea of hopelessness.

And he names Hymenaeus and Alexander as two of them ... accusing them of blasphemy. We'll talk more about them next week, but for now ... just know that they were guilty of blasphemy.

Blasphemeo (blas-fay-meh'-o) ... it means to vilify God. Let me give you a few synonyms to help add some perspective ... to disparage, denigrate, defame, run down, revile, berate, belittle, insult, criticize, condemn, decry and/or denounce.

So, it's not hard to see why Paul was less than pleased with these two men.

And he sets forth the practice that he wants Timothy to exercise toward them ... for the purpose of reconciling them back to God and ultimately ... back to the body.

Q. But these guys were guilty of vilifying God! Can it get any worse than that? –

Well ya ... and, as a matter of fact, it does, since **2nd Timothy 2:17-18** says that they were, not only, guilty of vilifying God personally, but also of enticing others to do the same.

That sounds nearly unforgivable! And Paul knew it would ... which is why, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, He included this same sin on his own resume.

He said back in **verse 13** that he too was a blasphemer. But Paul didn't just try to persuade others through teaching like Hymenaeus and Alexander ... no ... he tried to compel them through violent aggressions (**Acts 8:3**).

Now consider again what he says in **verse 16** ...

Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost [sinner], Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

That's how this showcase thing works.

Paul's not taking away from the importance ... the necessity ... of confession and repentance ... he's clearing the way for it ... as he says in **verse 15** ...

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ...

To save everyone who will say yes. No matter what Satan whispers.

Conclusion: This is a passage that reminds us how important it is to meditate regularly on the fact that we've been forgiven and by that ... our fellowship with God is made possible.

As the prophet Isaiah reminds us in ...

Isaiah 53:5 ... He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

We're forgiven and invited to commune with God Himself. To enjoy fellowship with Him. Something that can only happen once we're washed.

Paul was nothing less than a horrible human being ... a truth that caused him to rejoice all the more in his salvation and that compelled him to recklessly abandon his days to Christ's service.

But good news ... you're nothing short of a horrible human being as well! So, rejoice! God can use you ...

