

1 & 2 Timothy Part 4
Jesus Came to Save Sinners
1 Timothy 1:15-20

1 Timothy 1:15 *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.*

Paul summarizes his personal experience of the gospel.

Jesus came not merely to set an example or to show that He cared.

- He came to salvage **sinners** from their spiritual destitution—
- and Paul said he was **the worst** of that lot.
- There must be no misunderstanding of this most fundamental point.
- It is a truth that is completely **trustworthy** and deserving of **full acceptance**. (Four other passages include this “trustworthy” phrase: 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8.)

Jesus came to save **sinners**, not those living under the illusion of their own righteousness. It is the sick who need a physician.

Mark 2:17 *And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

Since Jesus came into the world to save sinners,

- Being a sinner is the first necessary qualification for becoming a child of God
- Sinners are not disqualified from coming to God, because Jesus came to save *them*.
- Cleaning up your “behavior” is not a pre-requisite to knowing God.

There is great danger in taking the terms *sin* and *sinner* out of our vocabulary.

- Many preachers deliberately do this today,
- because they don’t want to offend anyone from the pulpit.
- The gospel is an offence.
- It is offensive to our humanism and our perceived right to our own will.

Jesus came to save sinners

- To be saved... you must first be a sinner

“Even those who recognize that Christ’s work is to save admit that it is more difficult to believe that this salvation belongs to sinners. Our mind is always prone to dwell on our own worthiness and, as soon as our unworthiness becomes apparent, our confidence fails. Thus the more a man feels the burden of his sins, he ought with greater courage to betake himself to Christ, relying on what is here taught, that He came to bring salvation not to the righteous but to sinners.” (Calvin)

Paul’s claim to be the **chief** of sinners was not an expression of some super-pious false humility. He genuinely felt his sins made him more accountable before God than others.

“All men are truly sinners, but all men are not equally sinners. They are all in the mire; but they have not all sunk to an equal depth in it.” (Spurgeon)

Paul felt that his sins were worse because he was responsible for the death, imprisonment, and suffering of Christians, whom he persecuted before his life was changed by Jesus

Acts 26:11 *And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.*

He compelled others to blaspheme Jesus.

"This, indeed, was a very horrible part of Saul's sinfulness. To destroy their bodies was bad enough, but to destroy their souls too—to compel them to blaspheme, to speak evil of that name which they confessed to be their joy and their hope, surely that was the worst form that even persecution could assume. He forced them under torture to abjure the Christ whom their hearts loved. As it were he was not content to kill them, but he must damn them too." (Spurgeon)

There are worse kinds of sin;

- sins that harm God's people are especially bad in God's eyes.
- We must soberly consider if we are guilty, now or in the past, of harming God's people.

"[God] remembers jests and scoffs leveled at his little ones, and he bids those who indulge in them to take heed. You had better offend a king than one of the Lord's little ones." (Spurgeon)

"Despair's head is cut off and stuck on a pole by the salvation of 'the chief of sinners.' No man can now say that he is too great a sinner to be saved, because the chief of sinners was saved eighteen hundred years ago. If the ringleader, the chief of the gang, has been washed in the precious blood, and is now in heaven, why not I? Why not you?" (Spurgeon)

1 Timothy 1:16 *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.*

Paul's salvation is an example of mercy to others.

A man as bad as Paul obtained mercy.

- This means that the door is open to others who are not as bad sinners as Paul was.

This explains another reason why God loves to save sinners.

- They become an example to those who are **going to believe on Him**.
- God wants others to see what He can do by working in us.
- We become trophies of His grace.

Paul is adamant to Timothy to guard the truth. Paul was aware of his sin and his life was saved by the truth he commanded Timothy to guard earlier in the chapter.

1 Timothy 1:17 *To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Paul's praise to the God who saved him.

Paul could not think of how bad he was, and how great the salvation of God was, and how great the love of God was, without simply breaking into spontaneous praise.

"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God"

This shows that Paul both *knew* God and that he *loved* God.

He knew God to be **the King of the ages**,

- ruling and reigning in complete power and glory.

He knew God to be **immortal**,

- existing before anything else existed, and being the Creator of all things.

He knew God to be **invisible**,

- not completely knowable by us; we can't completely figure out God, or know all His secrets.

He knew God **alone is wise**,

- that He is God - and we are not.
- We think our plans and insights are so important, but only God really knows and understands all things.

"Be honor and glory forever and ever"

- Knowing all this about God, Paul couldn't stop praising Him.
- If we ever have trouble worshipping God, it is because we don't know Him very well.
- You've got to know yourself, know your past, know your sin to begin to know what God has done for you.
- When I say "ask God to show you your sin" it is not so that you will feel shame and condemnation... It's so you will know the greatness of God almighty!

This description of God gave Timothy still another reason to *remain in Ephesus*.

- He could and should stay there when he considered the greatness of the God who he served.
- *This* great God is worthy of His service and can empower his service in Ephesus.
- Timothy has nothing to fear.

1 Timothy 1:18 *This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,*

The charge to fight the good fight.

The Greek word for "charge" (*parangelia*) is the same as in 1 Timothy 1:3;

- it is a military word, referring to an order from a commanding officer.

At the same time the words "**Timothy my child**" express a note of fatherly love.

- Paul is serious, but full of love.

"In accordance with the prophecies"

- Paul wanted Timothy to consider what the Holy Spirit had said to him through others in the past,
- and receive the courage to *remain in Ephesus* from those.

When and by whom these prophecies were made can only be guessed.

- But God had spoken to Timothy through others through the gift of prophecy
- and the words were an encouragement for Timothy to stay strong in the difficulty right in front of him.
- It may have been a description of Timothy's future ministry; it may have been a warning against being timid in his work for God.
- Whatever it was, God wanted Timothy to draw strength from it in his present difficulty.

The **prophecies** Timothy had received before

- might have been predictive of his future ministry,
- or may have not been.

1 Corinthians 14:3 *On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.*

It is not strange that God would speak to us through others in a prophetic manner;

- but we should take care to test all prophesy according to both the Word of God and the witness of the Holy Spirit in others.

1 Corinthians 14:29 *Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.*

We must also be on guard against the “extravagant” prophecy; the one that declares that this person or that is going to have “the most powerful ministry the world has seen” or such. These prophecies are extremely manipulative, because they are awkward to speak against.

Today, in some circles, it isn’t unusual to hear someone being declared as greater than Paul, Peter, Moses, or Elijah; declarations like “You will be a prophet like unto Daniel and receive an anointing ten times greater than any of your associates” are obviously extravagant, manipulative (because few will speak against it), and not of God.

However, the focus is not the prophetic word Timothy heard in the past.

- The focus is on battle right in front of him now, where he must **wage the good warfare** - that is, “fight the good fight.” (KJV)

1 Timothy 1:19 *holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith,*

Tools for the warfare: **faith and a good conscience.**

Faith and a good conscience

- These are essential when battling for the Lord.
- They protect against the spiritual attacks of doubt and condemnation.

Timothy had to have the **faith** that **God was in control**, and would guide him as Timothy continued to seek him.

He had to have **a good conscience**, because his enemies would be attacking him, and if Timothy had not conducted himself rightly, they would have good reason to attack. A **good conscience** isn’t just a conscience that approves us, but one that approves us because we’ve been doing what is right - it is connected with good conduct.

Some have rejected these weapons; specifically, Paul speaks of rejecting **the faith**; those who reject what Jesus and the apostles taught are headed for ruin (**shipwreck**).

ii. “We are not justified in interpreting *suffered shipwreck* as though it meant that they were lost beyond hope of recovery. St. Paul himself had suffered shipwreck at least four times (2 Corinthians 11:25) when he wrote this epistle. He had on each occasion lost everything except himself.” (White)

1 Timothy 1:20 among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Two people that rejected the tools for warfare.

We know nothing of **Hymenaeus and Alexander** other than what Paul said of them here. Paul apparently disciplined them for their disobedience to God in heresy, in conduct, or in both.

Paul was not afraid to point out opponents of the truth by name, as he said to do in **Romans 16:17** *I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.*

This was not a contradiction of Jesus' command not to judge

Matthew 7:1-5 *"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*

"While Christians are not to judge one another's motives or ministries, we are certainly expected to be honest about each other's conduct." (Warren Wiersbe)

Whom I delivered to Satan:

- From other New Testament passages we can surmise that he did this by
- putting them outside the church, into the world, which is the devil's domain.
- The punishment was a removal of protection, not an infliction of evil.

The Lord protects us from many attacks from Satan

Job 1:10 *Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.*

and much of this protection comes to us in what we receive as we gather together as Christians.

Luke 22:31-32 *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."*

In this, Paul gave Timothy one more reason to *remain in Ephesus*. He should do it because *not everyone else does*. We can't simply act as if every Christian does what God wants them to and stays faithful to the gospel. The fact that some do not should give us more incentive to not give up.

We see six reasons why we should follow the pattern of Paul's command to Timothy to *remain in Ephesus* and not give up in difficult times.

We should "Remain in Ephesus" . . .

- Because they need the truth (1 Timothy 1:3-7).
- Because you minister in a hard place (1 Timothy 1:8-11).
- Because God uses unworthy people (1 Timothy 1:12-16).
- Because you serve a great God (1 Timothy 1:17).
- Because you are in a battle and cannot surrender (1 Timothy 1:18).
- Because not everyone else does (1 Timothy 1:19-20).