

Christ Came to Save Sinners: 1 Timothy 1:12-20 Explained Scriptures for Today

1 Timothy 1:12-20

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; 13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. 17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. 18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; 19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: 20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Introduction — The Book of 1 Timothy

This is Paul writing directly to Timothy. This is not a general letter—it is instruction to a preacher. Timothy is dealing with false doctrine, confusion, and people teaching things they shouldn't.

Right before this, Paul is warning about people who want to teach the law but don't even understand what they are saying. So he brings everything back to the center—the gospel.

To start, Paul uses himself as the example. He shows exactly what the gospel does by pointing to his own life.

What Happened Before This? (1 Timothy 1:1–11)

Before this, Paul explains that the law is for the lawless. It exposes sin. It shows people what they are. He lists out sins—ungodly, sinners, unholy, murderers, liars—and shows that the law identifies sin but does not save.

Then he points to “the glorious gospel.” That is the answer. Not the law. The gospel. Now he shows what that gospel did in his own life.

Enabled and Put Into the Ministry

1 Timothy 1:12

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

Paul starts with gratitude. "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled me." The ability didn't come from Paul. It came from Christ. My ability doesn't come from me. It all comes from Christ.

"For that He counted me faithful." God chose to use him. Not because of his past, but because of His grace. Paul didn't deserve this at all. His past shows that clearly. But God knew Paul and knew that Paul's story would be great.

"Putting me into the ministry." Paul didn't place himself there. God did. And God knows all of us. I do believe God chose Nathan and I to be here. He knows us. He knows how we make decisions. We asked Him to send us where He wanted us to be. And this is His answer.

1 Corinthians 15:10 says: "But by the grace of God I am what I am." That is the foundation. Everything starts with grace. And we must realize this. Every one of us **MUST** realize that we are only here by the **GRACE** of God. "By the grace of God I am what I am."

What Paul Was Before

1 Timothy 1:13

Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Paul does not hide his past. He was a blasphemer. He spoke against God. Some people will think they are headed to hell forever if they blaspheme God. It's definitely not good at all. It's a horrible thing to do, but take a look. Paul did it before.

Persecutor. He hunted down believers. He persecuted God's people. He stood by watching as Stephen, a follower of Jesus Christ, was stoned to death. Paul was injurious the Bible says. He caused harm to others that were doing good.

Acts 9:1 says: "Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." He went straight at the disciples of the Lord. That was Paul.

"But I obtained mercy." And that changes everything for Paul and for you and I. "But I obtained mercy." Thank God. And I thank God for giving Paul mercy. He didn't deserve it. He received it.

Now look at the reason given for Paul receiving mercy — "because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." That doesn't mean what he did was okay. It doesn't excuse it. It explains his condition. He did not believe. He thought he was right, but he was wrong. He didn't understand who Jesus Christ was.

Acts 3:17 says, "through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Many of the Jews killed Jesus through ignorance. Same idea as you see with Paul here. Ignorance tied to unbelief. Paul wasn't rejecting Christ with full understanding. He didn't believe yet. That's why mercy was applied when he did believe.

But once truth is known, things are very different. Hebrews 10:26 says "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth." God is going to be much tougher when you know the truth and you reject it.

There is a difference between ignorance in unbelief and rejecting truth after knowing it. Paul is showing that he acted in unbelief. He didn't believe the truth, so he acted wrongly. Then he believed—and received mercy. Paul was against Christ because he didn't believe. Once he believed, he received mercy.

Grace Exceeding Abundant

1 Timothy 1:14

And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

This wasn't a small amount of grace. "Exceeding abundant." Overflowing. More than enough to cover everything he had done. Romans 5:20 says, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." No matter how much sin, grace goes beyond it.

And notice — faith and love are "in Christ Jesus." Not in yourself. Not in effort. In Him. It all comes down to faith "IN" Christ Jesus.

The Core Statement — Why Jesus Came

1 Timothy 1:15

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

This is the center of the passage. Christ came to save sinners. Not to improve them. Not to make them better people. To save them.

Luke 19:10 says, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Remember the reason that Jesus Christ came the first time. "TO SAVE SINNERS." And then watch what Paul says there.

Paul says, "of whom I am chief." He puts himself at the top of the list of sinners. That shows the point. If the chief of sinners can be saved, anyone can. Paul threatened God's people with slaughter. He put them in prison. They were put to death because of Paul. He spoke against them.

So, when he says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; OF WHOM I AM CHIEF" that's what he means. The Bible is truth. This is spoken through the Holy Spirit.

A Pattern for Others

1 Timothy 1:16

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Paul says his salvation is a pattern. God showed patience to him as an example. You can take a close look at Paul, his example, and how well God treated him. Jesus Christ showed forth ALL LONGSUFFERING to Paul. It's more than what we think too.

So when someone thinks they are too far gone, they can look at Paul and see—that's not true. When we want to look at others and think they've gone too far, look at Paul.

And again, notice the condition there are at the end. "Believe on him to life everlasting."

John 6:47 says "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." That has not changed. Romans 10 doesn't change this FACT all throughout the Bible. Romans 10 doesn't add to the requirement for salvation. "Believe on Him to life everlasting."

It's believing because it's all Jesus. When you believe on Him, you're saying that it's 100% the works of Jesus Christ. And that's it. You see this same FACT throughout the entire Bible. Believing, trusting, or placing faith IN Christ ALONE is when you are saved.

Glory to God Alone

1 Timothy 1:17

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul stops and gives glory to God. We should all do that more in our life. We don't do it enough. Guaranteed. I know I don't. We should STOP and do that more often.

"Now unto THE KING ETERNAL." That makes me smile. That makes me happy. Our King is the King Eternal. No beginning and definitely no end. Immortal. Cannot die. Invisible. Not seen. Only wise God. No one compares.

Everything goes back to Him. Honour and glory forever and ever. Amen. If we spent the rest of our life, every second, on our knees giving Him honor and glory, it's not enough. He deserves more than that. Remember that.

The Charge — Now It's Your Turn

1 Timothy 1:18

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

Now Paul shifts to Timothy. "This charge" or this command. Paul needs Timothy to carry this out. This is serious. He calls him son Timothy. Paul is a figure of authority in Timothy's life. He's taking what he has been given and placing it on Timothy. "Timothy, this is now your responsibility. Don't let me down. Get it done."

"According to the prophecies which went before on thee." There were things spoken beforehand concerning Timothy – about his calling, his role, and what God would have him to do. God has called Timothy to get this job done.

"That thou by THEM mightest war a good warfare." Because of this calling on Timothy's life by God Himself, Timothy MIGHT war a good warfare. Carry on Timothy with God's plan for you. This is a fight. And God is with you, Timothy. And it won't be easy because it's warfare.

2 Timothy 2:3 says "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." You don't drift through this. You don't sit back and do nothing. You fight and fight and fight. And you don't quit. And you don't give up. You fight.

Hold Faith — Or Shipwreck

1 Timothy 1:19

Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

"Holding faith." Stay grounded in faith. Faith in Christ is the foundation. Listen to Jesus. Have faith in His words. Hold that faith. Don't let go.

"And a good conscience." Don't ignore truth. Hold that good conscience. Don't ignore what you know is right. Stay aligned with the good and with the truth.

Now some didn't hold faith and a good conscience. The Bible says "which SOME having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck."

They "put away" both—and the result was shipwreck. Not a small problem. Total collapse. A big time collision. A shipwreck. A ship that was supposed to reach it's destination, but instead it crashes, breaks apart, and is ruined.

They didn't lose salvation, but they didn't follow God's plan for them. Paul is telling Timothy to follow the calling of God on His life. You have one too. Don't shipwreck.

Real Names — Real Consequences

1 Timothy 1:20

Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Paul names these men that CLEARLY had faith and a good conscience, but they put those things away. This is real. This is truth. You don't put away something you never had. They had faith, but they put it away. They went the wrong direction. Happens all the time in this world.

“Delivered unto Satan.” Removed from protection. Left to consequences. This doesn't mean they lost their salvation. Satan doesn't run hell. Satan isn't even in hell right now. So delivered unto Satan doesn't mean hell for saved people.

1 Corinthians 5:5 says about fornicators in the Corinthian church: "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

The goal here is correction. Paul delivered them to Satan “That they may learn not to blaspheme.” The goal is for them to learn not to speak against God by teaching false things about Him.

For example, I ask men and women all over this world that teach the Sinner's Prayer is equal to calling upon the name of the Lord and that you MUST ASK for salvation to be saved, to be delivered unto Satan so that they may learn not to blaspheme Jesus Christ. That doesn't mean to send them to hell. I don't want them to be sent to hell.

But I want them to teach the truth and not lies. I ask God to fix that. And if need be, Satan is used as a way to fix that.

What This Means in the Bigger Picture

This passage shows the full picture. Paul was a chief sinner, a great sinner that received God's mercy. That mercy is available to anyone.

But once you have the truth, you are responsible to hold it and to carry it on to others. Some don't do that and they fall hard.

Practical Applications

1. Christ came to save sinners. That includes anyone who believes.
2. No matter how great the sin, if someone believes on Jesus Christ, they are saved—grace is greater than sin.

3. Once you have the truth, you must hold it. This takes action.
4. Rejecting truth leads to real consequences. Satan can be involved with those consequences.

Conclusion

Paul attacked Christ and His people—and he still received mercy. That tells you exactly what the gospel does.

Christ came to save sinners. Not improve them. Not work with them. Save them.

So stop looking at yourself. Stop measuring your past. The question is not what you've done. The question is: "Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Now that you do, keep that faith, and continue in the will of God for your life.

Let's pray.