

(1 Tim. 1:12-13) – Paul’s emphasis in this letter to Timothy is that all things that we as individual believers in Christ and as a true Gospel church collectively believe and do should be guided and should consistently with “sound doctrine” and “according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God” (1 Tim. 1:10b-11). No teaching or practice, whether it concerns the law or other issues, should ever be against the Word of God and should never deny, challenge, or confuse the simple Gospel of salvation by God’s grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness imputed alone.

Paul continues with a word of thanksgiving unto God for saving him and for enabling and putting him **“into the ministry”** of the Gospel. Paul did not take this office to and of himself, but Christ called him to it. He was given the gift of faith along with the abilities, gifts, knowledge, and grace for faithfulness in this work. Paul emphasizes that his salvation, office, and abilities were all of God’s grace and mercy in Christ Jesus. Paul had no qualifications for and met no conditions to attain any of the blessings of salvation and ministry. He **“was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy.”** What an honest confession from one who was self-righteous and who hated the Gospel. Paul’s confession was, “I obtained mercy, though I was a blasphemer, calling Christ an imposter. I was a persecutor; not content to blaspheme Christ, I put His people in prison and consented to their deaths. I was injurious, making havoc of the church, using force and violence to blot out the Gospel (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2). Yet, God had mercy on me, mercy unasked, unsought, and unmerited (Eph. 2:3-8).” Like all who obtain mercy, Paul did not earn or deserve God’s mercy. He did not attain (achieve) mercy. He **“OBTAINED”** mercy as a free gift of God’s grace in Christ Who is every believer’s mercy-seat.

The nature of God’s mercy is that it cannot be earned or deserved, else it is not mercy. God delights to show mercy, but His mercy is sovereign mercy. He gives it or withholds it as He wills (Rom. 9:15-16). The same holds true with His love and grace. Before Paul was converted to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works, he was an enemy of Christ and His church. This holds true, in different degrees, for all who obtain mercy from God. **“Because I did it ignorantly in unbelief”**– Ignorance and unbelief are not the cause of God’s mercy, but they show the need of God’s mercy. The cause of God’s mercy is God’s sovereign will. The ground of God’s mercy is the merit of Christ’s obedience unto death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people.

(1 Tim. 1:14) – God’s grace was (and is) **“exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”** God’s Word tells us that “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20). God’s sovereign mercy, grace, and love reaches to the worst of sinners, from the most self-righteous like Paul (Php. 3:4-5) to the worst offenders like the thief on the cross. None of us have anything that we can plead that

would recommend us unto God. Our hope of salvation, of mercy, grace, and love lies solely with, in, and by the Lord Jesus Christ and the merits of His righteousness alone! And where God in mercy and grace has imputed Christ's righteousness to His people, He gives them both faith to believe and love to embrace Christ, His truth, and His people. All who God brings by His Spirit to believe on Christ love Christ, love the truth, and love His people. They are all justified by His grace and born again by the Spirit (Rom. 8:10).

**(1 Tim. 1:15) – “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance”** – What Paul is about to say is a true saying, not to be doubted, argued, or debated, but to be received and believed by all true believers, **“that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”** God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, came into the world and united Himself to sinless human flesh (John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16). He became Godman to save His people (sinners) given to Him by the Father before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9-10). This proves beyond any doubt that salvation is of the Lord by His sovereign mercy and grace in Christ. It is all conditioned on Christ and not on sinners. Paul viewed himself as the chief (greatest) of sinners. This is no false modesty or pretended humility. It was from a real conviction of his own sinfulness brought on him by the Holy Spirit. This is how the Spirit called and drew Paul to Christ for salvation, righteousness, forgiveness, and eternal life and glory (Php. 3:3,7-10).

**(1 Tim. 1:16) –** Have you ever heard a person, who looked at another person whom he considered a great sinner moreso than himself, say something like, “I’m surprised that God doesn’t just strike him with lightning and send him on to hell”? I hope you realize that this is a very self-righteous statement because we all deserve hell (Luke 13:1-5). Salvation is by God’s grace in Christ for all who are saved! When God gives us faith to believe in and follow Christ, He also gives us the gift of repentance of which we are all equally in need. We are all in need of God’s mercy just as Saul of Tarsus was in need of it. And in Paul’s case, what does this show us about God? It shows us that *“the Lord is not slack concerning His promise [to save His people from their sins and give them life], as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward [His chosen people] not willing that any [for whom Christ died and arose] should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pet. 3:9). In other words, Paul, even as the chief of sinners, was set forth by Christ **“for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”** No sinner is beyond the power of God’s mercy that he cannot be saved by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. And all whom God chose before the world began and gave to Christ, all who are justified and redeemed by His blood, no matter how old or how sinful, will perish. Like Paul, they will be born again, called to faith in Christ and true repentance (John 6:37)