

**KHC - January 28-29, 2017**  
**1 Timothy 1:12-20 "The Merciful Patience of Christ"**  
**Pastor Jason Flentye**

*<sup>12</sup> I thank Him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to His service, <sup>13</sup> though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, <sup>14</sup> and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

*<sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, <sup>20</sup> among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

- This book is an epistle (that is, a letter).
- The apostle Paul wrote this epistle to his understudy, Timothy.
- Consequently, because the letter was written to his understudy, it is more specifically referred to as one of the Pastoral Epistles.
- The purpose of this letter was to instruct Timothy in his pastoral duties as the leader of the church in Ephesus.
- While the letter contains governing attributes for pastors and elders, it equally offers every believer instructions on living a godly life.

Our text for today: 1 Timothy 1:12-20

- I find there to be 4 distinct aspects of this passage:
  - Vs 12-16 Paul's Testimony
  - V 17 Doxology
  - Vs 18-19 Paul's Instructions to Timothy
  - Vs 19-20 An Example of Church Discipline
- Now that we have identified the flow of the text, I'd like to take the liberty to have us to look at this text a bit out of order.
- I do not want to attempt to rewrite or reorder God's Word.
- But simply, to construct the sermon in the manner in which God grabbed my attention as I prayed, studied and prepped.

***Vs 19-20<sup>19</sup> holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith,<sup>20</sup> among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.***

As I read through verses 12-18, I thought, "Wow this is great. Paul's words about himself are so humble. And his words about God are so powerful." Then I got to verses 19-20, and I thought, "Wait. What?"

- I can understand how letting go of faith leads to a shipwrecked faith, but why would any Christian, especially a pastor, have someone handed over to Satan - and why would Paul be instructing Timothy to do the same in the future?
- The 2 men (Hymenaeus and Alexander) were false teachers
  - That is, that they were among the group of men that Paul mentioned in the precluding verses - teachers of false doctrine.

- They were not men who merely had a different religion than Christianity; these were men within the church of Ephesus who were leading others astray by false doctrine/false teaching.
  - Essentially, the Bible says they were blaspheming the name of God. To blaspheme God is to reject His Son, the Christ, the Messiah. This blasphemy worked to destroy God's glorious gospel by adding to it, taking away from it, or discarding it altogether.
- Because Hymenaeus and Alexander had "let go faith in Christ and had rejected a good conscience," they had "shipwrecked their faith."
  - This was a very appropriate usage of words considering Ephesus was on the coast and every one of the Ephesians would be familiar with the illustrative phrase of "shipwrecked" meaning helpless and at a total loss.
  - But H & A hadn't just shipwrecked their own faith; they were consciously taking others with them to their destruction. As leaders and men of influence within the church, they were leading others astray by teaching false doctrine - blaspheming God's holy name.
  - Because of this, Paul "handed them over to Satan."
  - What this means, is that Paul excommunicated them from the church. After repeated warnings, these men did not repent and turn from their error, and so Paul cast them away from the covering protection of the church (not just the church as a building, but the church as a the congregation).
  - Satan loves to meddle with church affairs but he is limited in his ability. But outside of the church is Satan's realm. He is the ruler of this world. So to be cast out of the church was to be handed over to Satan, because it allows him total access to the individual.

- (Indirectly, this verse could lead us into a wonderful discussion on the blessings of being a part of the church body, but that's not the point of this text.)
- Regarding these 2 verses - look at the reason that they are handed over to Satan: "so that they may learn to not blaspheme."
- It was a corrective action, more than it was a punishment. Certainly it was punitive - but for the purpose of disciplining, learning, and in hopes of returning!
- The corrective action seems harsh, but it is warranted.
  - You cannot lead God's sheep away from the sheepfold and expect that He will ignorantly allow you to continue doing so.
- The purpose to casting them away was 2-fold:
  1. Preserving the integrity of the body of the church, and protecting the people.
  2. It was the final attempt to get these men to realize the error of their ways, to repent, to receive grace, and to return.

**V 18 <sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> holding faith and a good conscience.**

- Paul is obviously giving Timothy a command. This is a military-type of command that does not involve discussion. It is to be carried out without question because the superior has said so to the subordinate.
- Paul uses 4 emphases to make his point:
  - **"This charge..."** - is a command to be obeyed
  - **"...I entrust to you..."** - points to the value of the duty
  - **"...Timothy, my child..."** - speaks to the personal relationship
  - **"...in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you..."** - highlights the calling Timothy received long ago from God, confirmed by the elders of the church that commissioned him in to his role.
- Next we see to severity of the reason the command is given: **"that by them you may wage the good warfare."**
- Timothy is being entrusted with caring for the spiritual health of the souls with the church of Ephesus.
- From one pastor to another, Paul wants Timothy to know that this will be difficult. This will not be easy.
- He isn't just being charged to tell some Bible stories and sing some songs.
- He is being sent into battle - a spiritual war - not against other human beings, but against the enemy of God, Satan and his demonic army.

Paul wrote elsewhere on this, in the book of Ephesians (which is noteworthy since Timothy is being charged to pastor in Ephesus)...

**EPHESIANS 6:12-13** <sup>12</sup> *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* <sup>13</sup> *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

- It is a difficult thing for the church to speak of such things.
  - Our culture is semi-entertained to hear about God's great love, so long as we do not proselytize.
  - If we speak of mankind's sinful condition in need of a saving grace by faith, then even less of the masses will listen.
  - If we speak of handing people over to Satan as a corrective disciplinary action, who will listen?
  - The list of Biblical truths that is difficult to accept goes on and on. And among the things on that list is the reality of spiritual warfare.
- But brothers and sisters, this is the Word of God, and it must be accepted in its fullness if it is to have any power in your life.
- To avoid the verses on spiritual warfare is like going to the beach barefoot and pretending the sand will not get in between your toes.
- The Bible tells us that spiritual warfare is real. Satan and his demonic army are real. Satan is the enemy of God - the prince of this world. He masquerades as an angel in white, while he prowls around roaring like a lion looking for someone to devour.
- To ignore this is not only foolish, but it is extremely dangerous.
- This is what Paul is charging Timothy to do - wage the good warfare - fight the good fight.
- This is critical for Timothy as he carries out his duties because it will preserve him, as well as preserve the ones that have been entrusted to him.

- Every believer should take note of this. You are in a spiritual battle. And so are the ones you have been entrusted to love. To this end, Scripture exhorts us:
  - Elders - commit to praying for your congregation.
  - Pastors - commit to praying for those you pastor.
  - Youth Leaders - commit to praying for your students.
  - Community Group Leaders - commit to praying for your group members.
  - Spouses - commit to praying for your husband or wife.
  - Parents - commit to praying for your children.
  - Children - commit to praying for your parents.
  - Friends - pray for one another.
  - Young, old, man, woman - pray at all times
  - Because the battle is real and it is upon us! God has given us the unending resource of prayer to fight the good fight and in the end to be able to stand firm.
  - God has commanded us through His Word to pray.
  - He sent His Son Jesus to teach us how to pray.
  - He has sent His Spirit to empower us to pray.

**Vs 12-16 <sup>12</sup> I thank Him who as given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to His service, <sup>13</sup> though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, <sup>14</sup> and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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.**

Verse 15 is the central point that Holy Spirit is making.

- Only from verse 15, is Paul able to write any of the surrounding words.
- **<sup>15</sup> 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.**
- Notice the double emphasis - (The saying is trustworthy) (and deserving of full acceptance). It could not be more explicit of how critical the following words are to understanding God.
- **"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."** - Each of these words has been precisely selected and placed.
- **"Christ Jesus"** - the order here is very important to note. Paul seems to prefer the order "Christ Jesus" over "Jesus Christ" since he uses it so often. In fact none of the other apostles use this order. Why?
  - Because all of the other apostles first knew the man (Jesus of Nazareth) before they came to know him as the Savior (Christ the Messiah).
  - But Paul never knew Jesus as a man. Paul's first encounter with Him was on the road to Damascus when Christ supernaturally appeared, knocks him down, and asked, "Saul,

Saul, why do you persecute me?" This was the moment of Saul's conversion (and his name would later change to Paul). The point is, Paul's first encounter with Jesus was as His Savior. The Messiah. Christ Jesus.

- **"Came into the world"** - this phrase is also very important because it does not say that Jesus came into existence, or came into being. He came into the world, meaning that He pre-existed elsewhere and came to earth for a temporary time and purpose.
- **"To save sinners"** - that is the purpose. The reason that Christ (the eternal Messiah that pre-existed) came into this world as Jesus (the man from Nazareth) was for the purpose of saving sinners. To save is to redeem, to reclaim, to restore, to reconcile mankind as fallen sinful creatures back to their rightful relationship with their Creator, God the Father in heaven.
  - He did not come into this world to teach, or heal the sick, or feed the hungry, or turn water to wine, or walk on water. These were all secondary blessings of His coming. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners! Amen?

Now we note Paul's view of himself - **"of whom I am the foremost."**

- Paul rightly identifies himself as the worst of sinners.
- This is the right view of every believer because he or she understands that God does not measure us by comparing us to other people. There is no defense case presented at Heaven's gate where God entertains statements like, "At least I didn't murder anyone," or "I never used drugs," or "I racked up thousands of volunteer hours."

- God judges everyone individually based upon His perfect righteousness and holiness. There is no sliding scale. You are either perfect and worthy, or flawed and unworthy.
- Which is why "**Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.**" Because we will never be perfect, therefore we are unworthy, and consequently we are condemned.
- For this reason alone, God sent His pre-existing Son into the world to do for all mankind, what mankind could never do for himself.
  - After a miraculous birth to a virgin, Jesus lived 33 years in perfect obedience, He died a sacrificial death by hanging on a cross for every tribe and every nation, He was buried, 3 days later He victoriously raised Himself to life, appeared to His disciples, ascended back to His throne where He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, living forever and always interceding on behalf of those who love Him.
- Back to Paul - in light of all that was just said - Paul is right when he considers himself the worst of sinners.
- And I hope that I considered myself the same.

But we can make an earthly case of why Paul was the foremost of sinners as we read his testimony in verses 13-14:

**Vs 13-14 <sup>13</sup> *though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, <sup>14</sup> and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.***

- Paul was a blasphemer, persecutor and insolent opponent.
  - **Blasphemer** - (sounds familiar - remember Hymenaeus and Alexander?) Paul was a rejecter of God's Son and His gospel. Paul was a false teacher in the sense that He denied Christ as the Messiah.
  - **Persecutor** - Not only did Paul blaspheme the name of God, he also hunted Christians to arrest them and have them murdered.
  - **Insolent Opponent** - He was an aggressive man that found pleasure in oppressing and harming Christians.

He goes on though and says, "**But I received mercy... and the grace of God overflowed for me... with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.**"

- The mercy of God is the sparing of deserved punishment (eternal death).
- The grace of God is the gift of undeserved blessing (eternal life).

**V 16 <sup>16</sup> 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.**

- Again Paul testifies that he has received mercy.
- Why?
- God chose to have mercy on Paul - the renowned worst of sinners - so that He could display His perfect patience.
- God did not have mercy on Paul so that Paul could go to heaven. (Paul did go to heaven, but that is secondary)
- God also did not have mercy on Paul so that Paul could proclaim the gospel. (God could have anyone do that, so this is also secondary)
- God chose to have mercy on Paul so that His perfect patience would be displayed to every sinner, as an example that His gift of grace can redeem the worst, filthiest, corrupted, evil person.
- God had mercy on Paul, to demonstrate evidence to you, and to me, that He offers us forgiveness and restoration and reconciliation.
- Paul did not earn God's mercy, and neither do we. That is why it's called mercy and grace.
- In mercy - God offers to withhold the punishment that we deserve, and
- In grace - God offers to give us the gift that we do not deserve.

In response to Paul testifying to the saving power of God's grace he pours out his heart in worship.

We'll close by reading this brief doxology in vs 17:

***V 17<sup>17</sup> To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.***

God is the King of the ages - the eternal everlasting sovereign ruler

God is immortal - unable to be corrupted, dying, altered, or muted

God is invisible - unable to be seen and fully understood

The Only God - there is one true and living God

Be honor and glory - all worship is rightly directed to His majesty

Forever and ever - for all time, superseding our comprehension of time and space.

Amen - declaring, "It is so."

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

- 1.** The example of church discipline in verses 19-20 ("handing them over to Satan") was for the purpose of 1. Preserving the integrity of the church body and protecting the members of the church body, and 2. Disciplining the men in hopes that they would repent and return to truth. Does this corrective action seem warranted, or too harsh? Why?
- 2.** In verse 18, Paul instructs Timothy to fight the good fight/wage the good warfare. What is spiritual warfare? Who is the enemy? What is the armor of God? How does the reality of spiritual warfare impact your prayer life?
- 3.** Paul's testimony (verses 12-16) describes his awareness of his sinful condition that was met by God's undeserved mercy and grace. Describe the mercy and grace of God. How are these 2 blessings similar? How are they different?
- 4.** How have you personally experienced the mercy and grace of God?
- 5.** A significant amount of time in the sermon was spent looking at the precision of the words selected and constructed in verse 15. What captivates you by verse 15? How does it deepen your understanding of God?
- 6.** Paul considers himself the foremost (worst) of sinners. Why does he say this? How can you identify with his humble posture?
- 7.** Verse 17 is a brief doxology in response to Paul's testimony. What stands out to you in the worshipful response to the perfect patience of Christ?