

Perfect Patience; Perfect Redemption

1 Timothy 1:15-17

We have a lot of ground to cover this morning so let us get right to it.

1 Timothy 1:15-17 (NASB):

¹⁵ *It is **a trustworthy statement**, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.*

¹⁶ *Yet for this reason **I found mercy**, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate **His perfect patience** as an example for those who would believe in Him for **eternal life**.*

¹⁷ *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

I just love 1 Timothy 1:15. However, with all due respect to Paul I must tell you that this is the only inaccuracy in the Bible. It is not Paul who is the foremost sinner of all. It is I (Ron). Now you may want to argue with me about that because you believe that you are undoubtedly deserving of that title. Well, whomever of us wins that hotly contested gold medal, we can be entirely certain that no one deserves it more. But it does not really matter whether it is you or me or uncle Ed that gets to claim the title, the most important and meaningful message in that verse is “*that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” and that fact is undoubtedly and absolutely “*trustworthy*” and “*deserving of full acceptance*” by everyone.

This verse had a tremendous influence on an early English reformation martyr by the name of **Thomas Bilney**. Thomas Bilney, known by his affectionate nickname “*little Bilney*” (because we presume he was little), was born in 1495 at which time he was really “*little*.” Because he grew to be an intelligent young man, still being little for his age, he studied law at Cambridge, becoming a fellow of Trinity Hall in 1520. “But neither his studies nor his ordination brought him the peace he had expected. Then he began to read the Latin translation of Erasmus's Greek New Testament, and as he read he came upon 1 Timothy 1:15: ‘*It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.*’¹ Bilney remarked:

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching The Word*.

“This one sentence, through God's instruction and inward working did so exhilarate my heart, being before wounded with the guilt of my sins, and being almost in despair, that even immediately I seemed unto myself inwardly to feel a marvellous comfort and quietness, insomuch that "my bruised bones leaped for joy" (Psalm 51). After this, the Scripture began to be more pleasant unto me than the honey or the honey-comb. . . .”²

Verse 15 is the very heart of the Gospel — *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — among whom I am foremost of all."* This is the honest expression of a heart touched by grace. Bilney soon became a major player in a group of theologians who began making preparation for the Reformation in England. Bilney was arrested in 1527 and was forced to recant (take back the doctrine he had presented regarding the Bible). But *"little Bilney"* was not able to remain silent and he began preaching that same doctrine again in 1531, at which time he was arrested, tried, and without delay burned at the stake. His most famous convert, **Hugh Latimer**, who became the most prominent preacher of the English Reformation, was inspired by Bilney's courage and reverently referred to him in his sermons as *"St. Bilney."* Latimer, too, died in the same way, by being burned at the stake, in Oxford in 1555.³

Now Paul knew he was a gold-medal type sinner, but could he believe he was the worst of all sinners? Do you believe you are really the worst of all sinners? *"Come on, Paul! There are far greater sinners than you! You never even dreamed of the sins I commit."* But Paul really meant it. What he says here is no different than what he says other places in Scripture (1 Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8). This is an honest appraisal by Paul of just who he is. Now that might not fit in with today's belief that we should all have a high level of self-esteem, but Paul was being realistic. He may not have been politically correct but he was scripturally correct. In another place he wrote, *"For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith"* (Romans 12:3 NAS). You see, God wants us to have an accurate opinion of ourselves, not too high and not too low. In God's eyes we are all sinners, but if we have asked Jesus to be our Savior then we are sinners saved by grace. In verse 16, Paul affirms he is just that: a sinner who had found mercy and experienced God's perfect patience.

Then in 1 Timothy 1:16 we have, as they say, the *pièce de résistance*. In fact, let us look at 1 Timothy 1:15-16 from the *New Living Translation* so you might read it as it might be said today in plain everyday language.

1 Timothy 1:15-16 NLT:

¹⁵ *This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them all.*

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

¹⁶ But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.

And for you purists we will also give you verse 16 in the New American Standard translation:

1 Timothy 1:16 NAS:

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

Let us just assume that Paul was the worst sinner in all recorded history up until that time.

Why would God give forgiveness and salvation to such a person? So that all the other people in the world could know that no matter how awful their sin may be, they can receive forgiveness from God and eternal life in Heaven.

It does not matter if you have had sex with every man or woman in town. It does not matter how many banks you have robbed. It does not matter how many people you have murdered. It does not matter how many abortions you have performed, nor how many lies you have told in cheating people out of their money.

What does matter is that you get down on your knees and beg God to forgive you for your sins and tell Him that you want to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior because He is the only One who has paid the price that God required for sin; a perfect, sinless sacrifice. When you have done that, God will by His **grace** pronounce you officially saved with a future that includes eternal life in Heaven with Him. As a confirmation and symbol of this salvation, God will send His Holy Spirit to live within you. He will then be available to guide you in all righteousness as long as you are willing to seek that guidance and submit your will to His.

It might help if you think about it in this way-- If you are a saved, believing Christian, you have the **Holy Spirit** living within you. He is like your **rudder** (I hope you all know what that is or our comparison here will go up in smoke). The rudder is the device that controls the direction of a boat or ship. Now the rudder will not do anything on its own. A rudder needs someone to tell it what to do. It can be done manually, electronically, or mechanically. However it is done, you are responsible for telling your rudder, the Holy Spirit (no disrespect meant!), what to do. If you program the rudder on a boat to go to the left (port) it will go left. If you program it to go right (starboard) it will go right. If you do not tell it anything your boat will continue going around in circles and getting nowhere, which is a pretty good description of someone who does not have a relationship with God, don't you think? Now the great thing about this rudder is that it is a "*supernatural rudder*." If you tell it repeatedly during the day to steer a course due north on the waves

of righteousness, the rudder will keep you on the straight and narrow all the time. If, during the course of that day, you decide it might be fun to seduce your neighbor's wife while he is out of town, you will seize control of the rudder out of the hands of the Holy Spirit and you will be headed for rough seas in shark infested waters that might capsize your boat and bring misery to the lives of all those who are in that boat with you: your wife, your neighbor's husband, your children, their children, your immediate family, their immediate family, common friends, and who knows who else. It is something to **think** about, don't you **think**?

Jesus' purpose for coming into the world was **to save all sinners**: past, present, and future.

2 Peter 3:9 ESV:

⁹*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.***

Now do you remember what Paul said in verse 13?

"Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But "I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Timothy 1:13 ESV)

If you put all these verses back together again you have:

1 Timothy 1:12-16 NAS:

¹²*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,*

¹³*even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;*

¹⁴*and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.*

¹⁵*It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.*

¹⁶*Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.*

God wants to make it very clear to everyone that **all have the opportunity to come to him and receive salvation.** God tries to illustrate this by making it clear that if Paul can be saved for the things which he did, than anyone can be saved no matter what they did.

"Come one, come all, salvation is available for everyone and I want you all to be saved."

Sincerely,

God

In 1918 in Tokyo Tokichi Ichii was hung for murder. He had been sent to prison more than twenty times. He was as tough as men get. In response to his hatred and violence, on one occasion after attacking a prison guard he was bound and gagged and hung from the ceiling so that his toes barely reached the ground. Before receiving his death sentence, he received a New Testament sent by two Christian missionaries, a Miss West and a Miss McDonald — resulting in the notorious criminal's coming to know Christ. When Tokichi was sentenced to death, he accepted that as *"the fair, impartial judgment of God."* During a visit Miss West directed him to read 2 Corinthians 6:8-10, which deals with suffering:⁴

⁸ *We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors.*

⁹ *We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed.*

¹⁰ *Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are **poor**, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything. (NLT)*

There Mr. Ichii noted, among other things, the line *"poor, yet making many rich."* He wrote of this:

“This certainly does not apply to the evil life I led before I repented. But perhaps in the future, someone in the world may hear that the most desperate villain who ever lived repented of his sins and was saved by the power of Christ, and so may come to repent also. Then it may be that though I am poor myself, I shall be able to make many rich.’

Tokichi died on the scaffold with great humility. His last words were, ‘My soul, purified, today returns to the City of God.’⁵

“God through His grace had reached a man who called himself ‘the most desperate villain who ever lived,’ just as he had reached ‘the worst of sinners’ 1,900 years before (Paul). God's grace can reach *anybody*.”⁶

Now Paul recognized something in all of this that we should at least be feeling somewhat by now. God had made it clear to Paul that He wanted everyone in the world to be saved and He was willing to offer all the **grace** needed to bring people to salvation. **Is there anything a person can do that will not be forgiven?** Some people maintain that

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid.

blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Matthew 12:32 NLT:

³² *Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come.*

Mark 3:28-30 NLT:

²⁸ *"I tell you the truth, all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven,*
²⁹ *but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. This is a sin with eternal consequences.*"
³⁰ *He told them this because they were saying, "He's possessed by an evil spirit."*

There is no sin committed that God would not forgive because He died for all sin.

The Holy Spirit came into the world to make real the salvation of Christ in people's hearts. However, there is one sin that cannot be forgiven. If you resist the working of the Spirit of God when He speaks to you there is no forgiveness. There is no forgiveness because you have rejected salvation made real to you by the Holy Spirit. And it is the work of the Spirit of God that brings salvation to all people. So it stands to reason that if you reject the Holy Spirit's work within you, there can be no salvation.⁷

In Mark 3 Jesus intensifies this matter concerning the unpardonable, or unforgivable, sin by saying that the Pharisees were claiming that the work the Holy Spirit was performing through Jesus was actually being performed by Satan. They were rejecting the witness of both Jesus and of the Holy Spirit. Not a smart thing to do.⁸

There is only one sin today that you could commit for which there is no forgiveness.

Of course, if you resist the Holy Spirit, there is no forgiveness because He is bringing forgiveness. It is like the man who is dying from a certain disease, and the doctor tells him there is a remedy for it. The man refuses to take the remedy and dies, not from the disease but from refusing to take the remedy.⁹

But if you refuse the Holy Spirit's nudging, He does not force you to believe. If you blaspheme by denying that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh and by refusing to accept His death and resurrection for your sins, then God cannot forgive you. Grace and mercy are available to all, but if someone does not receive it, it does them no good. That person remains unforgiven and eventually will die in his or her sins.

There is a remedy for the disease of sin, and the Holy Spirit is the attending physician who performs the heart surgery that will bring about the cure; but if you resist it, there can be no cure. Why not sign the surgical consent form today if you have not already

⁷ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 12".

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

done so. No one on this earth is beyond the reach of God's grace.

Why will God do all those things? Why will He forgive the worst of sinners, save them, give them a life full of purpose, and promise them a future in Heaven? Because of who He is. Paul speaks of this in the next verse.

1 Timothy 1:17 NAS:

¹⁷*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Paul is so overwhelmed with thankfulness, gratitude, and wonder that he bursts into a praise declaration for some of the unchangeable characteristics of God. Let us read the same verse from the Amplified Bible:

1 Timothy 1:17 AMP:

Now to the King of eternity, incorruptible and immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever (to the ages of ages). Amen.

When you think about God as described in this verse, there are not adequate words in our language to describe Him. Paul calls Him "*the King eternal*" or "*the King of eternity.*" God is the King of all ages who with Christ governs every age: past, present, and future. *Christ* is "*King*"; that is, He is the ruler of the universe. And He wants to be King or ruler in each of our lives.

Our great Lord God is "*eternal.*" He has no beginning and no end. Think of that: God is never-ending. The Greek word used here (*aiōn*) is often translated "forever and ever." If you think about that for a while, it blows your mind because it is incomprehensible to us humans that something, in this case Someone, never started and will never end. In our lives and experience everything has a beginning and an end. That is, everything and everyone but God.

The next word to describe God in this verse is that He is "*incorruptible and immortal.*" Here is another concept that is difficult for us to comprehend, but oh, so precious! "*Incorruptible*" means He can never decay or decompose; "*immortal*" means that He will never die. Governments, cities, institutions, cultures, you, and I all die, but the great Lord God lives forever and ever.

In addition, God is "*invisible.*" He cannot be seen by the human eye, as opposed to gods made by human hands, which are confined to one place and can be seen by anyone. Earthly idols are powerless, be they a wood or stone idol, money, position, self-gratification or whatever else people put in the place of God. Those "gods" or the effects of them can be seen; moreover, they are temporary and leave a person feeling empty. The fact that the true God is invisible need not be a problem to anyone. Because He is invisible, He can be everywhere at once; because He is invisible, we are spared the judgment that would come upon a sinful human for looking at Him (Exodus 33:20).

God is the only God and there is no other (Isaiah 45:18). Some translations include the word “*wise*,” rendering the phrase as “*the only wise God*.” God is the source of all true wisdom; there is no one better to whom to turn when you are seeking wisdom. And certainly He is the only true God. All other so-called gods are idols of one sort or another worshiped by people. To the only God who governs over all the world and possesses these incredible attributes, Paul gives the highest gratitude and praise.

There is a hymn written by John Newton that you all know, “**Amazing Grace**.” We would like to show you how much this hymn is a chorus of praise to God for the nature of His grace which has been described here and elsewhere in Scripture.

Amazing Grace¹⁰

Scripture

<p>1 <u>Amazing grace!</u> how sweet the sound, <u>That saved a wretch like me!</u> <u>I once was lost, but now am found,</u> Was blind, but now I see.</p>	<p><u>John 1:16 ESV:</u> <i>And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.</i></p> <p><u>Luke 15:32 ESV:</u> <i>It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this <u>your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.</u>' "</i></p>
<p>2 ‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, <u>And grace my fears relieved;</u> How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed!</p>	<p><u>Romans 3:24 ESV:</u> ²⁴<i>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,</i></p> <p><u>Romans 4:4-5 ESV:</u> ⁴<i>Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.</i> ⁵<i>And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, <u>his faith is counted as righteousness,</u></i></p>

¹⁰ Newton, John. “Amazing Grace.” Public domain.

<p>3 Thro' many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace hath bro't me safe this far, And <u>grace will lead me home.</u></p>	<p><u>1 Timothy 1:13-14 NAS</u> ¹³ <u>even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;</u> ¹⁴ <u>and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.</u></p>
<p>4 <u>The Lord has promised good to me,</u> <u>His Word my hope secures;</u> He will my shield and portion be As long as life endures.</p>	<p><u>Romans 4:6-8 ESV:</u> ⁶ <u>just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:</u> ⁷ <u>"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;</u> ⁸ <u>blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."</u></p>
<p>5 When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we'd first begun.</p>	<p><u>1 Timothy 1:15-16 NAS:</u> ¹⁵ <u>It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.</u> ¹⁶ <u>Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.</u></p>

Such amazing grace in the life of John Newton, a former slave trader, confirmed the offer of life-changing grace for all who respond to Christ.

So, whether it is Paul, John Newton, Ron Teed, or you yourself, God patiently waits for each of us to accept His grace and mercy, to accept His free gift of salvation, His perfect redemption.