

The Gospel is for Sinners

1 Timothy 1:12-17

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him,¹³ even though I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief.¹⁴ Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus.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.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.¹⁷ All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God.”

Our focus in tonight’s study will be on verse 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.” In the midst of deep theological truths and biblical research, there is no greater biblical insight than what we find in this plain and simple truth: That the gospel of the Son of God is for sinners.

The coming of our Lord into this world had its relationship to guilty men. There must have been some reason for the descent of our Lord from heaven. What is that reason? The answer is found in this very, very, familiar John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

The Lord’s coming to this earth was for one reason and for one reason only and that was to save sinners. He came to pay a price that He did not owe for a debt that was not His. In other words,

humanity was fallen and guilty before holy God, and our pardon could not be obtained by any deeds of righteousness on our own part.

As one studies the Scripture, it becomes very clear that the explanation of the death of our Lord is found in our sin. If there had been no sin – there would have been no Savior. If there had been no fall in Eden – there would have been no agony in Gethsemane. **If there had been no eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil —there would have been no bleeding and suffering on the Cross.** Therefore, the explanation for the suffering and death of our Lord is found in our sins.

This is exactly what was prophesied in Isaiah 53:3-10 and reads like this in the Hebrew, “He was despised and rejected - a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all. He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man’s grave. But it was the Lord’s good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life (this speaks of His resurrection), and the Lord’s good plan will prosper in his hands.”

The burden that was placed upon our Savior was in no wise a fictitious burden. He died on the cross under the load of our sins, as

seen in Matthew 27:33-35, 45-50, “And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots...Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, This Man is calling for Elijah! Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him. And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.” **It is very clear from Scripture Christ suffered and died under an actual burden of all of the sins of the world. And the life of Christ on this earth had its to guilty men.** He came and He lived that He might call men to repentance, to seek and to save the lost.

He died for our sins, when we were without strength. He was raised for our justification to declare us righteous before God. He ascended on high to lead captivity captive and to give gifts of salvation, and life, unto men.

He lives in heaven, that He might make intercession for us whom He's able to save to the uttermost. And, someday, He is coming again for His redeemed who are washed in the blood of the lamb. All of the life, and ministry, and meaning of our Lord has its relationship to sin, to our guilt: “This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Jesus himself put it this way in Luke 5:32, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

Therefore, it is obvious the gospel has it's meaning in relationship to sin, to sinful men. So the question that comes to our

mind tonight is - **What is the gospel?** Jesus made this observation in John 6:48-51, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread, which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

As the Israelites grew weary, tired, and hungry in the wilderness, God provided them with a sustenance called “manna.”

By the way, the word “manna” actually means, “What is it?” As those Israelites looked on the ground at what God had provided for them, they saw a small round thing much like our present-day biscuit, and they simply asked, “What is it?” **After being assured that it was from God, they tasted it - like a wafer covered with honey.** And they felt it in their hands, and they looked at it; and how happy they were when Moses said, “It is bread to eat!” **And each man filled his “pouch” and prepared it to his own liking.**

What does “manna” have to do with the gospel? Jesus made this statement in John 6:53, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”

What is the gospel? There are some who think it is a line of improved law: Moses and the Ten Commandments—Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount. There are some who think the gospel is an easier way for a man to be saved by works. **There are some who think of the gospel in terms of the reward of a virtuous, and meritorious, and excellent life.** It has nothing to do with any of that! The gospel is turned always and inevitably toward sin and toward guilt. **The good news is not: We have a great reward for the excellent, and the pure, and the innocent, and the virtuous.** But the gospel is this: We have good news for the ungodly, and the sinner, and the liar, and the thief, and the outcast, for the prodigal who's wandered away from home, for that the sheep that has gone astray.

The gospel turns toward the sinner, like the physician turns toward the sick; like the community-chest turns toward those in need of charity; like a pension-fund turns toward old age. The gospel, in all of its representations, turns toward sin and toward sinners. It speaks of a king making a great feast, and calling in - from the highways, and the hedges, and the streets and the lanes - he calls in the blind, and the halt, and the cripple, and the infirm, and the lost.

Isaiah 55:1 gives us this prophecy, “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Jesus made this statement in John 4:13-14, “Whoever drinks of this water (natural water from a well) will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” Jesus continued in John 7:37-38, “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” **Ladies and gentlemen, if there is a Fountain (and there is), it is for the cleansing of the soul.** All of the great gospel invitations have to do with sin and sinners. For example, Isaiah 1:18 says, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Jesus has given this invitation in Matthew 11:28, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The invitations of the gospel are always for sinners, and the gifts of the gospel are for sinful men.

In the Old Testament we are introduced to the Law. If the law could save a man, salvation would have been by the law, because the law speaks of goodness, and justice, and holiness, and purity, and righteousness. And, if the law could save a man, he could stand justified in the presence of God without stain, without sin, without wrong, without mistake, without dereliction. **But the law concludes:** “All have

sinned and come short to the glory of God. There is none that doeth good, no not one!”

The Law was never given to offer salvation. In fact, John 1:17 says, “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **Moses told how a holy man ought to behave - Jesus told us how an unclean man could be washed and made whole again.**

Ephesians 2:8-9 puts it this way, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” **Simply put - According to His mercy, He saved us.**

Paul said this in Romans 5:20, “Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.” The New Testament speaks of mercy and of grace. **Grace is for offenders.** No man would need the grace of God if he could stand in the presence of God and say: “I have won my salvation by my own merit!” Then his salvation is *not* of grace, it is of debt, of reward—God owes it to you. You could stand in the presence of God and say: “You owe me eternal life. Look at this life of mine: Without a stain, without a spot, without a sin; altogether holy and pure. Give me my just deserts—eternal life!”

You see, when grace comes in, an altogether different principal is introduced - unworthy, not merited, just the unmerited favor of God, “saved by grace;” and mercy is for those who have sinned. **Mercy does not speak of a man who is not guilty.** The mercy of God is for sinners.

The Law says: “Stone her to death!”

Grace says, “Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more.”

It is true; the gospel has to do with sinners. And that is exactly what Paul said, when he said, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...”

Oh what a Savior, what a hope, what a gospel! And it is ours.