

Christ Jesus Came to Save Sinners

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[0:00] 1 Timothy chapter 1 is our scripture reading for this evening. We begin reading in verse 8 through verse 17. May the mind of Christ our Savior now permeate and renew our minds so that we'll think and live after his thoughts.

1 Timothy 1.8 We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which he entrusted to me.

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.

Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

[1:37] Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy, so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Now, to the King Eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. Let's hear God's word preached.

I want you to think with me for a moment about a stereotypical high school athlete. Not like some of the fine student-athletes that we have with us tonight, but one who is just an athlete.

And no academics whatsoever. He only thinks about sports and maybe girls occasionally. He's a great big football player, and he's pretty good at football, but not much besides that.

He couldn't have spelled his way out of kindergarten. The only reason he's not failing his classes is because he knows that if he does, he won't be able to play football anymore. So he takes simple classes and lots of P.E. classes.

[3:00] And if he were to take the SAT, his score would barely register. In the yearbook, he was voted most likely to be unemployed. I'm not saying all football players are this way, okay?

Take no offense, those of you that have played football or have had children that have played football. I'm just imagining this one guy in particular. In the first game of his senior year, he blows out his knee.

With no hope of returning for the season, little hope of ever playing again. Certainly not in college. Wasn't much hope of that to begin with. And now would it seem that his life is a wreck.

It's a mess. The one thing that he could do, he can no longer do. But now imagine if there was a teacher at that school that was full of mercy and grace.

A teacher in whose class this football player had slept, had missed, had pulled pranks, and various things. But the teacher, full of mercy and grace, goes to this football player and offers to help him with his studies.

[4:08] He says, I'm going to turn you into an A student. I'm going to help you learn to study. I'm going to help you get good grades. I'm going to help you learn to take the SAT. And I'm going to get you into college. And so he begins to work with him.

Now most people would laugh at the teacher and say that he's a fool for even attempting such a thing. The teacher ignores all of that and he focuses on the job at hand. And over the course of that guy's senior year, radical transformation takes place.

The jock becomes a serious student. He begins showing up to class. He begins studying. He begins getting good grades. He stops picking on the nerds on the academic team and he starts studying with them.

And when time for the SAT comes around, he gets the highest score in his senior class. He's accepted to college where he completes a degree and goes on to be a successful businessman. The guy that was most likely to be unemployed. There's been a radical change. An extreme makeover of sorts. A radical transformation.

[5 : 12] If the teacher had wanted to pick someone to help out and make successful, he should have chosen anybody except this guy. And he chose him anyway.

The teacher had mercy and it changed this football player, now student's life. That's just a shadow of an idea of what happened to the Apostle Paul. He was the most unworthy of candidates to be an Apostle.

to even be saved in the first place. And yet Jesus had mercy on him. And so to encourage Timothy to not give up in the midst of dealing with these hopeless Ephesians, these hard-headed Ephesians, these vain babbling Ephesians, Paul reminds them of the most basic, the most important thing.

There's someone who takes hopeless causes and turns them into trophies of grace. There's someone who does a great work of salvation. He came into this world to save sinners who were the most unlikely, the most undeserving candidates.

And so Paul reminds them, here is a trustworthy saying, deserving full acceptance, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

[6 : 27] Two points tonight. There's a faithful saying, and it's worthy of your acceptance. The faithful saying, Paul says this five different times in these pastoral epistles.

There's a faithful saying, a faithful word, a trustworthy saying. And twice he adds this, deserving full acceptance, worthy of all acceptance. These sayings were probably quotable, memorable things, like our catechism questions, or maybe creeds, things that have become common in the early church that people remembered and they were faithful because they came from a faithful God. And so, pay attention tonight. This is as faithful a saying now as it was when Paul wrote it. Christ Jesus came into the world sinners to save.

That may not sound very earth-shattering to you. You know it already. You're familiar. You're the ones that would be willing to come out in the middle of an ice storm to hear the Word preached, and so you've heard this before. That He came into the world to save sinners.

But don't let your familiarity with this glorious truth cause it to lose any of its luster or glory for you tonight. Don't write me off because I'm going to be droning on about something that you've heard a thousand times before.

[7 : 43] Listen to it again and let the magnitude of it, the remarkable truth that's proclaimed here, strike you afresh tonight as though you had never heard it before. It's a faithful saying.

And Paul doesn't say it. Jesus said it about Himself. He said, I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Or again, He says, For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

The Apostle John says this about Jesus coming into the world. We find this theme throughout the Scriptures. He came into the world. What a remarkable thing. Just that part of it is that the Son of God came into the world.

That He came from the worship of angels to the reviling and spitting of mocking sinful men. That He came from the glorious heaven to the sin-cursed earth.

That He came from fellowship with His heavenly Father to be abandoned by His Father on the cross. That He came from being sinless to be made sin.

[8 : 46] That He came from receiving honor to bear a curse. That the promised Messiah who is called Jesus, because He shall save His people from their sins, He came into the world.

And He did it for sinners. He did it for people like you and me. He didn't come for someone lovable and likable. He didn't come for the cream of the crop.

He came for people who hated Him. He came for dirty, sinful, rebellious, law-breaking, proud, doubting sinners like Peter and Thomas, Paul, Timothy, or you or me.

And He came sinners to save, to deliver us from our bondage to sin and set us free. He came to wash away our iniquity and cleanse us from our sin.

He came to save us from the penalty of our sin by taking that penalty in our place, even as we heard this morning, to receive the justice of God in our place.

[9:48] He came to break the power of sin in our lives that we might walk in newness of life. He came to make us right with the Heavenly Father, the only God. He came to do what we could not do. He came to save.

And we see that salvation worked out here as Paul describes it. He speaks of abundant grace and mercy from God. The grace of our Lord, he says in verse 14, overflowed. It superabounded. It was poured out in great measure to me.

He showed mercy to sinners in verse 16. The nature of grace and mercy is that they are undeserved. It's not just that we haven't done anything to deserve it. We haven't earned it. No, we've done everything to deserve judgment and punishment.

And instead, God shows us favor. That's grace poured out in abundance in spite of our sin, in spite of who we are and what we've done. And those who have had grace poured out in their lives, verse 14, have faith and love worked in them.

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Faith in Christ the Savior and love towards our fellow man. And who else?

[10:53] Who is going to have faith and love? Proud, arrogant sinners that think they're something special? Are they going to put their faith in someone else?

Self-righteous sinners that think they're okay? Are they going to put their faith in someone else? No, it's only those that have had grace shown to them that will put their faith in a Savior. And what about love to the brethren?

What about love to God's people? Those who once hated God's people, will they, of their own accord, start showing love to them? No, it's only those that have been shown grace. Are you finding increasing measures of faith and love in your life?

These things come to us in Christ. As we draw near to Him, your faith in Him grows. Your love for His people deepens. This is what He has saved us for. And all who believe in this Jesus have eternal life.

Verse 16, Paul was an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life. It's what Isaiah prophesied. So this is what the Sovereign Lord says, See, I lay in Zion a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation.

[11:59] The one who trusts will never be dismayed. Jesus is that cornerstone, and all who trust or believe in Him will not be disappointed. They'll be heirs of abundant, eternal life.

He came to save sinners that we might have life, and have it abundantly, and have it eternally. No fear of death because Jesus conquered death. He gives life to all who trust in Him.

Forever to live with Him in the new heavens, the new earth. The alternative, of course, is eternal punishment and hell for those who do not believe. And so it's a good thing that Jesus is patient. All of us on our way to eternal punishment, not life, but in saving Paul and saving us, Jesus puts His patience on display. Not unlimited patience. It is a poor translation.

It should be all patience. That Christ Jesus might display all patience as an example for those who would believe on Him. His patience is not unlimited. We know that it will come to an end one day.

[13:03] But Jesus came to save sinners. And so He'll be patient until all for whom He died are brought into the fold. And that's good news. His patience means you're here another day.

You have another opportunity tonight to trust in Him, to believe on Him. And so to find this eternal life. Another breath in your lungs. Another moment where He's been patient.

Shown you mercy. More time to come and believe in Him. It's a good thing He's patient. We know we're stubborn in our sins, slow to repent. And so it is a trustworthy saying.

It deserves full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And to drive that point home, Paul uses himself as an example.

There's a striking example of this truth right here. Right in our passage for us. And it's Paul. He says in verse 16, He's an example. He's a sketch, a drawing. One commentator puts it this way.

[14:01] In Paul, Christ has sketched out what He will do for sinners who repent and believe. You want to know what will happen? If you repent and you believe, you come to faith in Christ, look at Paul. And here's a picture. Here's an example of what will happen.

So let's think about Paul for a moment. A picture of this faithful Word. If ever there was a sinner, it was Paul. An ignorant, unbelieving sinner. He says so himself right here.

A blasphemer. A persecutor. A violent man. The worst of sinners. And he's not just exaggerating here. He truly believed it. And the Scriptures bear it out. We read in Acts of what kind of man Paul was.

He's not the most likely candidate for leading apostle in the church. Saul. His name was Saul before it was Paul. Saul in Acts 8 was there after Stephen Stoning and giving approval to his death.

On that day, a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem. And all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.

[15 : 05] But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. You notice that? Saul began to destroy the church.

That's who we're talking about here. That's who wrote the letter we're reading here to 1 Timothy. And in Acts 9, meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples.

Went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus so that if he found any there who belonged to the way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. He confesses later as he's giving his testimony that he sought to cause believers to blaspheme God's name.

This was a violent opponent of God's kingdom. Now, his sin was in ignorance, in unbelief. He didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah. He didn't fully comprehend that.

And so, room for some lenience, but it didn't take away the crime. He was still a sinner. He still needs mercy. You know, kids, it's not an excuse to say, well, I didn't know. Maybe that reduces the severity of what you've done by just a notch or two, but you've still done a wrong thing even if you didn't know.

[16 : 16] Paul's ignorance wasn't an excuse. And I think it's fascinating that you find Paul frequently in his letters saying, I do not want you to be ignorant. And then he goes on to explain something further to them so that they won't sin in ignorance even as he had in his ignorance.

There are sinners like this around today. Atheists who blaspheme God, who denies existence, mocking those who believe, men like Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins. And we think, these are really bad sinners.

But Paul was even worse than these in many ways. There are those who persecute Christians. We think of radical Islamists, oppressive rulers. And we think these will have their place in the lake of fire.

And unless they believe in Christ, they will. But even as with Paul, God is able to take the most unlikely candidate, the most unworthy, and make them shining trophies of His grace.

You go back to the days of the early church before Paul was saved when he's breathing out murderous threats against God's people. You ask anybody in the church, who do you think will be one of the key figures in the church?

[17 : 27] Who do you think will be one of the greatest apostles to ever live? One of the greatest theologians to ever live? Who do you think will write a large portion of the Scriptures? Not one person would have said Saul.

Nobody would have said Saul. Not a chance in the world. Just like if you had asked this, our students or our athlete from the beginning, if you had asked somebody at the school at the beginning of the year, before the knee went out, who do you think in the senior class is going to have the best score on the ACT?

Or the SAT. It was the ACT. I took the ACT. Who's going to have the best score? Nobody would have picked this guy. Not a chance in the world. That's how radical of a transformation we're talking about.

That's what makes Paul's story so remarkable. God didn't leave this man to perish in his sin as he would have been perfectly right and just to do. But no, he saved him by his grace.

Paul testifies here. What we've described as salvation is Paul talking about what happened in his life. God reaching down and saving him by grace. The man who said, Jesus is not the Messiah is given the gift of faith that he might trust in the Messiah.

[18 : 38] The man who persecuted God's people, giving grace to love and serve those same people. The one who was destroying the church. Being one of the chief foundation layers that built the church.

This is a remarkable thing that only could come from the grace of God. A remarkable change. But isn't that what Jesus came to do? That's the point.

It's a faithful saying. He came to save sinners. Not just the polished up, pretty looking ones. No, the really bad ones. Not the righteous. Not the righteous.

Not the righteous. Sinners. Jesus came to save, says the hymn writer. And he didn't just save them as we've already noted. He put them into service for his kingdom.

Paul had been entrusted with the gospel. His service, our ministry, was proclaiming that gospel. He was an ambassador for Christ. He went from worst to first in some ways. The last guy you would want building the church.

[19 : 36] That he was just days before persecuting. It would be like God taking an Osama bin Laden and making him one of the greatest modern day missionaries for the gospel that's ever been known.

It's that radical of a thing. The only way that that could happen is if someone outside of himself enabled him. And that's what Jesus did. It's what launches the whole discussion if we go back to verse 12.

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength. That he considered me faithful pointing me to his service, to his ministry. It was only by the strength of Christ that Paul could do these things.

A strength outside of himself. And so he gives thanks for it. And just after his conversion we read in Acts 9.22, Yet Saul grew more and more powerful.

That's our word. Was strengthened. Christ who has given me strength. Paul was strengthened and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. He was on his way to persecute those that said Jesus is the Christ.

[20 : 35] And now he's proving it. That's only by the strength of Christ. Now Timothy, if God can do this with Paul, what do you think he can do with these lousy teachers in Ephesus?

These guys that are vain babblers. What do you think he can do with you in Ephesus? If he can do this with somebody like Paul. He can strengthen you. He can strengthen them to be faithful servants.

And whatever it is God calls you to do, He'll give you strength for it. So Paul and we can do all things through Him who strengthens us. Paul will write to Timothy later and say he needs that strength in 2 Timothy 2.

It's what we and Timothy need to fight in the spiritual battles that we face in Ephesians 6.10. So don't become discouraged depending on yourself. Your strength comes from the Lord.

Whether it's for being a great apostle or a pastor or a piano player or a farmer or a carpenter or a mom or a dad or a student or a deacon or an athlete or any other calling from God. Our strength comes from Him and not from ourselves.

[21 : 40] There's a striking example of Jesus coming into the world to save a sinner and then using that sinner to extend His kingdom. Praise God. The best non-scriptural example I can think of is John Newton.

A wicked, if you remember the Sunday school biographies that Pastor John did on John Newton. A wicked, vile, blaspheming, wretched man. And God takes him and saves him by His amazing grace. Turns him into a faithful servant in His church. A hymn writer. That's the kind of work Jesus can do. That's a faithful saying. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

And secondly, tonight, that's worthy of your acceptance. You personally. I've had time to go around and name each one of you. It's worthy of your acceptance.

Yours, yours, yours, yours. Tonight. Everyone here is a sinner. And that means if you want to be saved, you need to accept this saying that it's Jesus who came to save sinners.

[22 : 44] Sinners like you and sinners like me. You'd be a fool to think that you'll be okay on your own when you read something like this. Sinners can't save themselves.

They won't be okay because they're mostly nice people or they do mostly nice things or they do more nice things than this person over here. No. All of us must be saved by someone else. We can't do it.

But don't despair tonight. Jesus can save even the worst of sinners. If He could save a Paul or a John Newton and make them faithful servants, He can reach you.

You think your sins are too great? His grace is greater. You're a sinner, but not a sinner beyond His reach. You're the kind of person He came to save.

Come, ye weary, heavy laden, bruised and broken by the fall. If you tarry till you're better, you will never come at all. Not the righteous. Not the righteous. Not the righteous. Sinners.

[23 : 39] Jesus came to call. Let not conscience make you linger, nor fitness fondly dream. All the fitness He requires is to feel your need of Him. Do you feel your need of Him tonight? Then come running to the Savior.

That's what He came to do, to save. You come and trust in Him tonight and He will save you by His grace. You believe and you'll be saved like Paul was. You ought not trust yourself, your friends, your parents, your money, your power, your talent, or anything else to save you.

None but Jesus. None but Jesus. None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good. Trust in Him. Paul has been given as an example. He believed and was saved.

And Jesus is patient and waiting for you to come in repentance and faith so you too can be saved and have eternal life. Won't you come tonight? You've nothing to lose. Only a life of sin and misery. And it is miserable, isn't it, when you're honest. You can be blessed instead of cursed. Happy instead of sad. You can be free from what is enslaved.

[24 : 44] You thought you would master your sin. You would sin when you wanted to not. Now your sin is mastered. You can be free from that. You can have a clear conscience, a good night's sleep instead of guilt and torment.

You can have the all-powerful God of the universe fighting for you instead of against you. You can have Jesus take your punishment instead of taking it yourself.

The justice of God meted out at the cross instead of in hell. You can have His righteousness on your record instead of your sin. You can have wisdom instead of folly. You can have eternal life instead of eternal punishment.

In other words, you can be saved if you would just come to this Jesus. That's what He came for. You come to Him and He will receive you. May God open your eyes tonight to your need.

May you find it to be a faithful saying that Christ Jesus came in the world to save sinners. It's a good Christmas message, isn't it? We have presents and decorations and all sorts of things.

[25 : 46] Don't miss what you're supposed to remember that Jesus was born. And why was He born? That's coming into the world. He was born to save. Make sure you remember that during this season.

And then you too can be put into faithful service like Paul. What a remarkable thing is the usefulness of sinners. Saved by grace. Useful for God's kingdom. And don't mistake your pastors or the deacons as the only ones who have been put into service for God's kingdom.

If you've been saved tonight, you've been put into service. And if you're not serving, then you can be. God has gifted each one to be of service in His church. You say, oh, I don't have anything to offer the church.

It's not valid. It's Jesus who strengthens us for service. It's like saying that Jesus hasn't given you strength. And He has. He strengthens each one according to His measure. And so pray for strength to serve in whatever capacity He calls you.

If that's to be a pastor, a missionary, wonderful. We need men who will preach God's Word here and all over the world. And some young men need to give serious thought to that.

[26 : 54] But it may be other things. Others will be gifted and strengthened to teach, to use their musical talents, their gifts of organization and planning, their people skills, their technical expertise, their gift of hospitality.

Various gifts that Christ strengthens us for. You can say, oh, no excuses here that I was too bad of a sinner. No, I can't. So I see that God can save me but not put me to use.

No, He can put you to use. He wants to. He will. He will strengthen you for it. All of us should be bearing testimony to what God has done for us.

Inviting others to the services of the church. Another way to serve the kingdom. If God can use Paul, He can strengthen and use you for usefulness in His kingdom. And if you've grown weary in service, you're tired of the way that you've been serving and you feel as though you can't go on and pray for increasing measures of that strength that God provides to each one.

If you look around tonight, you'll see many people who Jesus has saved and put into service for His kingdom. It's not just Paul that's a trophy of grace or John Newton. We could go around the room

tonight and people could tell what a remarkable transformation has taken place in their lives.
[28:08] What a remarkable thing God has done for them. They could testify, it is a faithful, trustworthy saying. Christ Jesus came into the world to save me. And they could tell you all about it.

And praise God for that tonight, that there's a gathering of people that can testify to the trustworthiness of this statement. You can experience it tonight if you would come and trust in Christ.

And if you have tonight, you have trusted in Christ, you'll understand why verse 17 is where it is. Usually doxologies or maybe more at the end of a letter.

This one seems sort of just inserted at a random place, but Paul has just got done talking about how God has had mercy to him. And it's though he can't hold back. He has to overflow and praise to his God.

And if you have been saved by grace, these words ought to be on your lips as well in verse 17. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be glory or honor and glory forever and ever.

[29:09] Amen. He's just contemplating God's goodness and now he must praise Him. He must give glory to His name even as we must. And so if you have accepted this faithful word tonight, praise God.

He is the eternal King. From ever to everlasting, He reigns. He is immortal. He is imperishable. He can't be destroyed. He can't die. He is eternal.

He is invisible to the physical eye, but you know that He can be seen with the eye of faith. He is the only God. Anyone else will disappoint. He's the only one who would send His Son that we might be saved.

And so the result is then we must give all honor and glory to Him. He's worthy of it. We give it to Him. And this forever and ever. And what a blessed thought.

We trust in Christ and He gives us eternal life. And what do we do with that eternal life? Well, forever and ever we give Him honor and glory. And it's only a fitting response for the One who has given us that eternal life that the eternal King be praised for eternity.

[30:16] So what will it be for you tonight? Will you come and trust in Christ? Praise the Lord for what He's done in your life? Or will you walk away again empty-handed? Will you come running to this faithful Savior and be able to join with us in singing of His amazing grace?

Amazing grace written by none other than John Newton who is a radical sinner saved again by this Christ who came into the world to do that very thing. Another example of the trustworthiness of the saying that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

It is true. You may not believe it. Believe it tonight. Pray that God would open your eyes to see it. It is a faithful saying. Ask somebody here that's experienced this truth.

They know that if you believe you receive eternal life. They know that Christ has grace abundant far beyond our sins to cover all of them and to forgive them. You come and ask somebody.

Ask one of us that has experienced it and we will tell you that this is a faithful saying. That's not just something to blow over. Faithful saying, whatever, Paul. It is. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

[31:23] May he save some even this night right here in our midst. And we do want to conclude tonight by singing Amazing Grace. And that is the only way that we're saved. It's hymn 402 in your hymnals.

The amazing grace that Christ has shown to us. Let's pray together. Our Father, we thank you that you've given us eternal life that we spend that eternity praising our eternal God and King.

You are most worthy of all thanks and praise this night. And we pray that you would stir our hearts to it to give you the honor that is due to your name. To be amazed again at your grace.

The way you've transformed our lives from those who hated you and loved ourselves to those that love you and seek to serve you. Forgive us where we fall short.

Forgive us where we don't honor you as we should. Forgive us where we don't have thankful hearts. Where we're unwilling to serve. We pray that you would stir us to love and to good deeds.

[32:23] We pray that you would fill us with an ever-increasing, strengthened faith in Christ and love towards His people. And come and do a work of salvation in our midst.

We ask that you would again prove it true that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. May He save some here in our midst. We pray that you would do this work.

Do it that you might get more honor, glory, and praise to your name. We give you thanks. In Jesus' name. Amen.