

1 Timothy

I. Introduction

A. **1 Timothy 1:15-20** . . . 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.

B. Pray

II. Humility, God's patience toward sinners,

A. **Vs 15** begins with "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance." The statement that is trustworthy and therefore worthy of being completely believed is "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I (*that is, Paul*) is the worst of all."

1. Just as a point of interest, there are five "trustworthy statements" in the NT. Three in 1 Timothy, one in 2 Timothy, and one in Titus.
 - a. **1 Timothy 1:15** tells us that Jesus Christ will save even the worst of sinners.
 - b. **1 Timothy 3:1** deals with the worthiness of aspiring to the position of overseer – whether over a single church or a group of churches.
 - c. **1 Timothy 4:7b-9** deals with the value and importance of disciplining yourself for the purpose of growing in godliness.
 - d. **2 Timothy 2:11-13** appears to contain the words to an early Christian hymn about martyrdom. "It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; [12] If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; [13] If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."
 - e. **Titus 3:3-8** deals with the topic of our sinfulness and God's salvation. "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. [4] But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, [5] He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we

have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, [6] whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. [8] This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.”

2. The first part of the trustworthy statement here in **vs 15** is, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” –
 - a. Jesus said it this way to Nicodemus, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (**John 3:16**).
 - b. And in **Romans 3:10-11 & 3:23**, Paul reminds us that we are all sinners in need of salvation. And it is this truth – that **we are all sinners** – that I want to talk about for a few minutes.
3. I doubt any of us would ever say we’ve never sinned. However, there is a significant difference between saying you are a sinner and knowing you are a sinner because you have honestly assessed your thoughts, words, and deeds over the course of your life.
 - a. In other words, it is easy to say the words, “I am a sinner – saved by grace,” and quite another to admit you have committed specific sins that confirm your need for salvation and that drive a deeply felt gratitude for God’s saving grace.
 - b. And it is easy to admit you have committed a sin here and there – especially when you include explanations as to why it wasn’t all your fault, and quite another to admit you’ve been a prolific sinner deserving God’s wrath.
 - c. Therefore, to know you are a sinner requires a humble honesty with yourself and with God about your life, before and after your conversion.
4. Now you may be wondering why I am talking about this. The reason is, our need for honest humility. WHY? Because honest humility regarding our sinfulness is essential to living according to God’s word in so many areas of the Christian life. For example,
 - a. Without an honest humility about your own sinfulness, you will never be broken hearted or have genuine feelings of sadness or tears in your eyes over how poorly you have treated God and those around you (**Psalm 51:14-17; Matthew 5:4**).

- b. Without an honest humility about your own sinfulness, it will be hard for you to feel compassion for other sinners since you have yet to face up to how easy it is for you to sin and how hard it is to do what is right.
 - (1) However, the lack of compassion is just the first weakness in your dealings with other sinners. You will be stingy with mercy, easily angered, often impatient, unkind at times, and unfairly judgmental – all because you hold them to a higher standard than you hold yourself.
 - (2) And your double standard is the result of not having an honest humility about your own sinfulness.
 - c. Without an honest humility about your own sinfulness, it will be hard for you to feel a genuine and deep sense of gratitude for Jesus' sacrifice on your behalf, and for God's grace in giving you the gift of eternal life. You may sing songs like "Amazing Grace" with enthusiasm, but your enthusiasm will be shallow and temporary.
 - d. Without an honest humility about your own sinfulness, you will expect God's forgiveness and patience and tolerance over the sin or sins committed today. It takes honest humility to admit you don't deserve God's forgiveness because you knew better, yet you are asking for His grace because you do not want to lose your relationship with Him.
 - e. Without an honest humility about your own sinfulness, you will expect to be loved better than you love, and it is probable you won't even be concerned that you are doing this. Yet think about the damage such a mindset, attitude, and subsequent behaviors does to your character, your testimony as a Christian, and to those dear and near to you.
 - f. I could go on, but I won't. Yet I hope you are seeing the value and importance of an honest humility regarding your own sinfulness.
5. We know Paul had this kind of honest humility because he said to Timothy – a younger believer and someone who probably looked up to Paul – "Among whom (*among sinners everywhere*) I am foremost of all."
- a. Paul not only admitted his sinfulness to Timothy, he made similar statements to the Christians in Corinth and in Ephesus.
 - (1) **1 Corinthians 15:9**, "For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

(2) **Ephesians 3:8**, “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.”

- b. Paul not only admitted he was a sinner in need of God’s saving grace, he was both humble and honest enough about his own sinfulness to describe in detail how sinful he had been before meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus.
6. Once again, the truth I am trying to convey is that honest humility regarding our sinfulness is essential to living according to God’s word in many areas of the Christian life.
- a. Therefore, may we fear pride more than the embarrassment or shame that may accompany an honest humility about our sin.
 - b. And may we believe God when He says He opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
- B. The next thing Paul does is present a reason why God showed him mercy instead of condemning him to the eternal fires of hell. [16] Yet for this reason (*because I was the worst sinner*) **I found mercy, so that in (saving) me as the foremost, Jesus Christ demonstrated (or showed the extent of) His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.**
1. The basic idea in **vs 16** is that if God was patient and merciful with Paul – the worst of sinners, because of the way he mistreated God’s people – then surely He will be patient and merciful with any sinner who repents, trusts in Jesus Christ, and proceeds to live a godly life.
 2. Paul could not and would not have used himself as an example of God’s patience and mercy with sinners without an honest humility about his own sinfulness.
 3. Have you had the thought that if God could be patient and merciful with you, then He could be patient and merciful with anyone? Such thinking requires an honest humility that refuses to compare your sinfulness to those you think are worse than you.
 - a. The reality is, to get an honest and humble assessment of your own sinfulness, you must compare your thoughts, words, and deeds to the holiness of God, or to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. And you must take responsibility for the needless pain and suffering you’ve brought into the lives of those effected by your sinful choices and behavior.
 - b. Sadly, this kind of thinking and self-assessment does not come naturally. You have to want it and pursue it to have it.

4. I want to take a few minutes and talk about God's patience with sinners – a patience that includes the idea of long-suffering, which means putting up with bad behavior for an extended period of time with the hope that the sinner will come to his senses, and repent.
 - a. We are prone to ask why God allows evil to continue in our world. After all, the continuation of evil is the cause of so much suffering, poverty, disease, and death. And if anyone can stop it, God can. But it seems that He doesn't. And that is perplexing to many unbelievers, and some Christians.
 - b. Yet how many of us have wondered why God has allowed us to continue living – rather than putting a stop to the selfish, sinful, and hurtful things we've been doing over the years?
 - c. If you haven't wondered this about yourself, why not? Have you stopped having selfish or impatient or angry or fearful or thoughtless moments where you unnecessarily sin and hurt someone near or dear to you? And if you haven't stopped, shouldn't God stop you for the sake of others – just like you want Him to stop others for your sake?
 - d. Is it possible you hold yourself to a more sympathetic and forgiving standard than you hold others? Maybe you judge your selfish and sinful moments as minor, or the result of someone else's bad behavior – while judging other's selfish and sinful moments as evil and deliberate.
 - e. Whatever your reason for not wondering why God hasn't stopped you from sinning by taking your life, it ultimately points to the fact that you lack an honest humility about your own sinfulness, and you lack a sincere gratitude that God is patient and even long-suffering with you and every other sinner.
5. But why is God so patient with sinners? There are several scriptures that give answers to this question, and we will look at a two of them.
 - a. Though **2 Peter 3:9** is directed toward the return of Christ, I believe it is reasonable to apply the principle in this scripture to God's patience with all sinners everywhere.
 - (1) **2 Peter 3:9**, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."
 - (2) An OT example of God's long-suffering patience toward sinful unbelievers are the nations living in the Promised Land. After condemning them to destruction for their sinfulness, He waited 400 years before carrying out His judgement on them.

Why? Because He doesn't want any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

(3) What if, in order to put a stop to your sinful ways, God had ended your life before you came to your senses, repented, and trusted in Jesus for salvation?

(4) Are you grateful He didn't? And if so, shouldn't you want Him to be patient with others? Yet, can God be patient with sinners – including myself – without allowing evil to continue in our world.

b. **Psalm 103:8-14**, “The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. [9] He will not always strive with us (*show His displeasure or rebuke us for our sins*), nor will He keep His anger forever (*He may be angry at times, but it will only be for a time*). [10] He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. [11] For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. [12] As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. [13] Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. [14] **For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.**

(1) In other words, God is patient, and even long-suffering with sinners because He knows how weak we are, how often we want our own way, and how easily we can be led astray.

(2) Should you not have this same mindset toward those in your life whose sin makes your life miserable, disappointing, or just plain hard?

III. Conclusion

A. When Paul wrote the words, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus” (**Philippians 2:5**), he was referring to the attitude or mindset of humility in relation to how we see the people around us.

B. May we thoughtfully and prayerfully pursue an honest humility about our own sinfulness so that we can show the sinners around us the kind of patience and grace that God has shown us.