

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday October 26, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



**HONORING GOD**  
**“Grace Abounds for the Chef of Sinners”**  
*1 Timothy 1:12-17*

We began our study through the book of 1 Timothy a couple of week ago now. 1 Timothy is a New Testament book that is actually a letter and a different type of letter. It's a personal letter, not written to a particular church or group of people like most of the New Testament letters, but to an individual, and it has a personal word and truth for us as well... for our lives. Sometimes when a book of the Bible is titled with a personal name it indicates that the book is written by that person. For example in the Old Testament we have the book of Jeremiah written by the Prophet Jeremiah, or Isaiah written by Isaiah, or Daniel written by Daniel. In the New Testament we have the book of Matthew, written by Jesus' disciple Matthew, or John written by the beloved disciple John. But the book of Timothy is different. Timothy didn't write the book of Timothy. Rather the book is written to him, for him, and it's personal... for a reason. Here is a simple truth that we need to get our heads around even as we begin this study. God's inspired Word is personal and sometimes the word is personally directed to us. God inspired the writer of Timothy to write a personal letter to Timothy (2 of them to be exact), and it included in the canon of Holy Scripture, and Timothy is one of the only individuals (Titus the other), to get a book of Bible written personally to Him. That is an incredible thought, and an important thought. It reminds us of how personal God desires to be in our lives, in directing our lives, in speaking into our lives, in helping us with our troubles and struggles, how much He cares what we are facing. If he cared enough about Timothy to, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have one of His men write a personal letter to him, He (God) surely cares for us in the same way. And it says we need to study this great personal book and grab hold of the truths it has for us.

The book of Timothy is a letter. This is the first of two inspired letters Paul wrote to his beloved son in the faith. Since the title of the book/letter bears the recipients name it might

be good for us to get to know the letter's namesake... Timothy. The following are some facts about Timothy that will be helpful in our study.

### **Getting to Know Timothy Facts:**

- (1) **The name Timothy means “one who honors God”** – Hence the name of our study “Honoring God.” Timothy received his name, which means “one who honors God,” from his mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Lois), devout Jews who became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 1:5) and taught Timothy the Old Testament Scriptures from his childhood (2 Tim. 3:15). His father was a Greek (Acts 16:1) who may have died before Timothy met Paul
- (2) **Timothy was from the town of Lystra** - Timothy was from Lystra (Acts 16:1-3), a city in the Roman province of Galatia (part of modern day Turkey).



- (3) **Timothy came to know Jesus through Paul during his first missionary journey** - Paul led Timothy to Christ (1 Timothy 1:2; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 1:2), undoubtedly during his ministry in Lystra on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23).
- (4) **Paul recruited Timothy to join his ministry team during Paul's second missionary journey** - When Paul revisited Lystra on his second missionary journey, Paul chose Timothy to accompany him (Acts 16:1-3).
- (5) **Timothy was likely a teenager when he first joined Paul's ministry team** - Although Timothy was very young (probably in his late teens or early twenties, since about 15 years later Paul referred to him as a young man, 1 Timothy 4:12), he had a reputation for godliness (Acts 16:2).

- (6) **Timothy was with Paul throughout the rest of Paul's life and ministry** - Timothy was to be Paul's disciple, friend, and co-laborer for the rest of the apostle's life, ministering with him in Berea (Acts 17:14), Athens (Acts 17:15), Corinth (Acts 18:5, 2 Corinthians 1:19), and accompanying him on his trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). He was with Paul in his first Roman imprisonment and went to Philippi (Philippians 2:19-23) after Paul's release. In addition, Paul frequently mentions Timothy in his epistle (Romans 16:21; 2 Corinthians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1).
- (7) **Timothy became the pastor of the church at Ephesus** - Paul often sent Timothy to churches as his representative (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:2), and 1 Timothy finds him on another assignment, serving as pastor of the church at Ephesus (1 Thessalonians 1:3).



- (8) **Timothy was imprisoned for his faith** - According to Hebrews 13:23, Timothy was imprisoned somewhere and released. In Hebrews 13:23 the writer says, *"Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly."* This indicates that Timothy has been imprisoned and released. Interestingly, this statement has also led many to believe Paul the author of Hebrews, because of his close association with Timothy.

Those 8 facts give us a little more information about the one to whom this letter is written. These are just some things we know from Scripture itself, but they do give us something of a picture of the young man we are talking about here.

*“<sup>12</sup> And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, <sup>13</sup> although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. <sup>14</sup> And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. <sup>17</sup> Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” -1 Timothy 1:12-17 (NKJV)*

### **SOME QUESTION TO PONDER**

1. Where’s the balance between seeing ourselves as “chief of sinners” versus “saints in Christ”?
2. Which is better, to be saved as a child and be spared a sinful past or to be saved after a few years of sin?
3. How can a person who seems to be “forgiven little” grow to “love much” (Luke 7:36-50)?
4. Is it biblical to say that every Christian is “in the ministry” in an equal sense? If so, what are the implications?

The title, “Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners,” comes from the title of John Bunyan’s autobiographical account of his conversion which he took from the Apostle Paul’s words in our passage, 1 Timothy 1:12-17. Verse 15 says it, *“<sup>15</sup> 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 his well-known classic, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Bunyan has Greatheart say to Christian’s boys as they journey to the Celestial City, “[Forgetful Green] is the most dangerous place in all these parts. For if at any time the pilgrims meet with any brunt, it is when they forget what favors they have received, and how unworthy they are of them.”

***What are some things we often forget in the Christian life and why? Why is so dangerous for Christians to dwell in ‘Forgetful Green’... in other words why is it so dangerous to forget who they are, where they were when Christ found them, and all that God has done and does for them?***

I fear that as American Christians, living in this day of a watered down, feel good about yourself “gospel,” we have forgotten what favors we have received from God and how unworthy we are of them. I wonder if we have somehow wandered into Forgetful Green and have forgotten God’s abundant grace that covers all your sins.



The apostle Paul stayed out of “Forgetful Green” by taking frequent trips down the “Memory Lane” of his past, recalling his former sins and the abundant grace of God that transformed him into the apostle to the Gentiles. The story of Paul’s conversion is repeated no less than six times in the New Testament (Acts 9, 22, 26; Gal. 1 & 2; Phil. 3; 1 Tim. 1). As Paul rehearses it here again for Timothy, I can hear his voice crack with emotion and see the tears well up in his eyes as he remembers God’s grace in his life. With Paul,

***We should often recall how God’s abundant grace saved us from our sins.***

Listen to this powerful passage... David’s words from Psalm 103:1-5, “<sup>1</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! <sup>2</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: <sup>3</sup>Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, <sup>4</sup>Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, <sup>5</sup>Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” -Psalm 103:1-5

***What benefits? What benefits are David pointing out to us in his psalm? See if you can list some you see there? (forgiveness, healing, deliverance, redemption, protection, love and mercy, provision, strength and empowerment)***

***Let’s personalize it a minute. If you could name one things that you would say is the greatest benefit to you from your Christian life, experience, and salvation... what would that be and why? How does that inform your life and who you are?***

Take your Bible and turn with me to Romans, the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter (Romans 5). I want you to look with me at Paul’s words here to believes in Romans 5:1-11. Follow along with me as I read **(READ: Romans 5:1-11)**

“<sup>1</sup>Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>and perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. <sup>6</sup>For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. <sup>10</sup>For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. <sup>11</sup>And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” -Romans 5:1-11 (NKJV)

This beautiful passage from the Apostle Paul describes for believers what God has done for us in saving us... all of the blessings and profits that are ours as saved believers. This is Paul telling us the benefits of our having been justified by faith (saved). Notice some of these... remember this is the same Paul who is writing to Timothy in our passage and in a concise way in 1 Timothy 1:12-17 reminding us of the benefits that are ours as Christians. Notice these 10 benefits of salvation that can be found in Romans 5:1-11:

### **10 Benefits of Salvation We Must not Forget:**

- (1) **Peace with God** -
- (2) **Access by faith** -
- (3) **Grace standing** – We get what we don't deserve
- (4) **Hope in God** -
- (5) **Joy in life** -
- (6) **Holy Spirit** -
- (7) **God's love** -
- (8) **Mercy** – We don't get what we do deserve
- (9) **Deliverance** -
- (10) **Reconciliation** -

We must never forget all that God, through Christ, has done for us.

### **Some things we must never forget:**

- (1) **Where we were when Christ found us** – Sinners! Paul calls himself, ***“Chief Sinner!”***
- (2) **Who God is and reveals Himself to be** –
- (3) **What God, through Christ, has done for us** – His salvation, and all his benefits. Again, Psalm 103:2, ***“<sup>2</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits.”*** Don't forget all those benefits we just looked at in Romans 5:1-11.

We must never forget the simple, profound truth, that ***“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” (1 Timothy 1:15).*** In our study this evening we want to take a look at some truths that Paul is reminding his young protégé in the ministry of concerning what is ours in Christ. These, for Timothy and for us, are reminders for our own encouragement and strengthening in the our lives as believers so that we may be bold, courageous, and victorious as we navigate this life and the challenges it may hold; and at that same time not be discouraged and downhearted by the detractors, false teachers, and obstacles we may face. These are some reminders of the things we must never forget concerning the gospel message and all that it does for us... what it gives us!

## THE GOSPEL IS THE MESSAGE OF GOD'S ABUNDANT, TRANSFORMING GRACE FOR SINNERS

Saul the persecutor was transformed into Paul the preacher. And his case was no exception. In **verse 16** he says that his conversion is a model of what God can do with any sinner. None is beyond God's abundant grace. When God's grace in Christ floods into a life, it always radically transforms that person. And so in verses 12-14 Paul give us some important reminders about the gospel. Paul writes, *"<sup>12</sup> And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, <sup>13</sup> although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. <sup>14</sup> And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus."* Paul tells 3 things about the gospel, and what it does for that we must not forget.

### **3 Things About the Gospel We Must Not Forget: (and what it does for us)**

(1) **The gospel is based on God's mercy and abundant grace (1 Timothy 1:13-14) –** *"<sup>13</sup> although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. <sup>14</sup> And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus."* God does not save us because of any worthiness on our part. It is *all* of His mercy and grace. What is the difference between mercy and grace and why are each important? If you don't get this then much of what we experience and go through in the Christian life won't make much sense to you.

*What do statements like these really mean?:*

- *"There but by the grace of God go I!"*
- *"I am blessed beyond measure!"*
- *"I have it better than I deserve!"*

### **The difference between mercy and grace:**

1. **Mercy = We don't get what we do deserve** – This basic understanding of God's mercy extended to us may help us navigate us through times of personal suffering, pain and difficulty. The truth is, when Christians wonder why as Christians we suffer (or experience heartache or pain), our attitude should be "Why shouldn't we!" Why should we not experience pain, heartache and suffering? Isn't it true that that is what we deserve, and it is just a sign of God's mercy when we don't get what we deserve.
2. **Grace = We do get what we don't deserve** – God's grace is rich and abundant, as Paul says not only here in 1 Timothy 1, but through out God's Word. God is rich in mercy and grace. And Paul even pictures it a God being "super-gracious" to us. He give us forgiveness of sins, when we don't deserve it. He gives us salvation, heaven, eternal life, right standing with God when we don't deserve it. He sent His only son to die in our place when we didn't deserve it. We are saved by that free, undeserved, and unmerited (unearned) favor of and from God.

- *Ephesians 2:8-9*, “<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast.”
- *Romans 6:23*, “for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

When Paul says (1:13) that he was shown mercy because he “acted ignorantly in unbelief,” he does not mean that he somehow deserved it. He means that he had not willfully rejected the light he had been shown. Scripture draws a distinction between a person who sins in ignorance and one who willfully rejects the light God has revealed to him. The former may be shown mercy, but the latter is in danger of losing the light he has been shown and may be hardened beyond repentance (Num. 15:22-31; 2 Chron. 36:15-16; Prov. 29:1; Heb. 10:26-27; 12:15-17). Thus Paul does not in any way suggest that he merited God’s favor. Rather, it was quite the opposite. Did you not Paul said that God’s grace was “exceedingly abundant” (1:14).

Paul coins a word here by adding the Greek prefix hyper (meaning “above,” “over,” or “more”) to a word that already means “super-abundant,” so that his meaning is, “super-super-abundant.” God’s grace flooded over Paul like ocean waves that keep coming and coming without end. Not only is God’s grace more than abundant, but also “the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (1:14).

Listen, God is the supplier of everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

- He gives us the faith to believe in Christ for salvation -
- He fills us with the love of Christ that slops over from us to others –
- He extends his mercy and grace in our life that give us a peace, joy and hope to continue on his this life despite the difficulties -

Can you honestly join Paul in affirming with regard to your experience, “the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus”? We live in a day when many professing Christians either tacitly or boldly deny the all-sufficiency of God’s grace in Jesus Christ. In his excellent book that confronts the modern church’s turning from this fundamental biblical truth (*Our Sufficiency in Christ* [Word], p. 20), Pastor John MacArthur writes, “My grace is sufficient for you,” the Lord said to the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12:9). The average Christian in our culture cynically views that kind of counsel as simplistic, unsophisticated, and naive. Can you imagine one of today’s professional radio counselors simply telling a hurting caller that God’s grace is enough to meet the need?”

In another context (“Servant,” Sept., 1991, p. 10), MacArthur tells about being on a radio show where he asked the host if she believed that Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the living Christ were fully sufficient for our sanctification. She replied that some people can’t get in the position to be sanctified until therapy helps them deal with some



psychological issues! He responded, “That God can’t do His work in you until a good therapist gets it started is a frightening concept.” He adds, “Psychology didn’t come along as a gift from God to make up for biblical deficiencies in these complex times.

If God’s grace and the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus are not more than abundant in your life, the problem is not with God’s grace. Either you have not understood this fundamental truth of the gospel, that it is all of grace; or, you have not learned how to appropriate God’s abundant grace as the supply for your every need.

**(2) The gospel is for sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) –** *“<sup>15</sup> 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.”* Again, the gospel is for sinners... none others need apply. Christ came to save sinners.

- If you’re a basically good, churchgoing person, Christ did *not* come to save you. He came to save sinners only.
- If you’re a person with a few faults and shortcomings, Christ did not come to save you. He came to save sinners only.
- If you’re a person with too much dignity and self-worth to call yourself a sinner, Christ did not come to save you. He came to save sinners only.

Here is what you need to understand, the “gospel” we hear preached in our day is...

- A positive message that will help you achieve your full potential or feel good about yourself.
- It will help you succeed in your family or business.
- It will solve your problems and give you peace of mind.
- There are even Christian books that promise to help you lose weight by building your self-esteem.
- But where is the message that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?

Paul underscores it by saying, *“<sup>15</sup> 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.”*

- “Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners”
- Not just to make us feel better about ourselves or make us better people
- Not simply as a self-help credo, or self-improvement
- He primarily came to save us because... well, we needed saving because we are “sinners.”
- We must not forget this, but many times we have!

➡ Even in some hymn books today they have changed the words of Isaac Watts’ great hymn, *“Alas, and did my Savior bleed? And did my Sovereign die? Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?”* One version has it, “for sinners such as I?” (#274, *Hymns for the Family of God* [Paragon Associates, Inc., 1976]). But the other version has

softened it to, “*for someone such as I?*” (# 95, same book). They’ve take out the word “sinners” and even the idea that we are sinners.

Or take the great work by John Newton, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.” It originally said “saved a worm” like me.”

Of course, we’ve been redeemed by God’s grace, so that now we’re His children through faith in Christ. But I fear that many who claim to believe in Christ have no idea of the sinfulness of their own heart; thus they lack the deep gratitude for God’s grace that Paul had because he knew that he was the chief of sinners.

- We have magnified supposed human “worth” and have downplayed the holiness of God to such a degree that God’s grace in salvation isn’t seen as all that big a deal.
- Those who are forgiven little love little.
- So we end up with a bunch of lukewarm Christians who lack Paul’s fervent love for God because they don’t realize the depths of depravity from which God’s grace has saved them.

Paul calls himself “the chief of sinners” (1:15). It is significant that Paul makes this statement, not as a new believer, but after he had walked with God for over 25 years.

- You can trace a chronological progression in Paul’s statements about himself.
- In 1 Corinthians 15:9 he says, “*I am the least of the apostles.*”
- In Ephesians 3:8, written later, he says, “*I am the very least of all saints.*”
- Here in 1 Timothy 1:15, written later still, he says, “*I am the chief of all sinners.*”
- ***Some say, “Well, Paul had a psychological problem! He was manic depressing, had a deep sense of insecurity and low self-worth! He as depressive, and had a low view of himself!”*** I don’t think that is it all. I think he had a accurate, realistic view of himself for who he really was... not self-deceived, not arrogant, not self-absorbed, self-promoting or egotistical. He was honest and transparent about his fault. And He had a high view of God (Christ)!
- Not notice, he does not say, “*I was the chief of sinners,*” even though he had a wicked past.
- He had blasphemed (v. 13), which is an argument for the deity of Jesus.
- As a Pharisaic Jew, Paul would never have blasphemed the God of Israel.
- What he means is that he blasphemed Jesus, the Son of God. He persecuted the church (v. 13).
- He was a violent aggressor.
- The word has the nuance of sadistic torture.
- But he doesn’t say “*I was the chief of sinners,*” but rather, “*I am the chief.*”

The closer a person walks with God, the more he is aware of the depths of his sinful nature, which in turn drives him to a deeper appreciation of the grace of God

- ➡ Alexander Maclaren said, “The sign of growing perfection is the growing consciousness of imperfection.... The more you become like Christ the more you will find out your unlikeness to Him” (*Expositions of Holy Scripture* [Baker], 15:332, 333).
- ➡ C. S. Lewis wrote, “When a man is getting better, he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still in him. When a man is getting worse, he understands his own badness less and less” (cited by Nathan Hatch, “Purging the Poisoned Well Within,” [*Christianity Today*, 3/2/79], p. 14).

Are you learning that lesson? As you walk with God, are you learning more and more the depravity that lurks in your own heart, which in turn drives you humbly and thankfully to God’s grace in Christ Jesus? Maybe you were raised in Sunday School and church, as I was. Maybe, like me, one of your earliest memories is of the time when you invited Christ to be your Savior. You especially need to learn that you are a chief of sinners. Otherwise you will fall into self-righteous pride and self-reliance, and you will never love God much because you won’t realize how much you were forgiven. Thus, the gospel is based on the mercy and abundant grace of God; and, the gospel is for sinners.

(3) **The gospel transforms sinners into servants of Jesus (1 Timothy 1:12) -** *“<sup>12</sup> And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.”* God put Paul into service. If you have a King James Version, it reads, *“into the ministry.”* That’s a stained-glass word, if there ever was one.

- But the New Testament teaches that if God has saved you from your sin, then He has put you into the ministry.
- You are just as accountable to God for your ministry as I am for mine.
- Yes, I am paid so that I can devote full time to my ministry; perhaps you have to “make tents” (like Paul) to support yourself in your ministry. But we’re all just as much in the ministry (see Eph. 4:11-16, esp. “whole,” “every,” & “each” in v. 16).
- None is exempt.

Are you seeking God for the ministry He wants you to have in the Body of Christ? Do you view yourself every bit as much a minister as I am? Do you view your job as a means of supporting yourself so that you can serve Jesus? You say, “But I’m not sure that I can do that!” But notice (1:12), the Lord strengthened Paul, and He will strengthen you to serve Him. He wants you to be faithful. The aim of the gospel is not to get a bunch of people to be churchgoers for an hour and a half on Sundays. It’s aim is to transform sinners into servants of Jesus, who live 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so that they might serve Him.

## RECALLING OUR OWN EXPERIENCE OF THE GOSPEL

We should often recall our own experience of the gospel. We must not wander into “Forgetful Green.” We need to remember often our former sins and God’s grace. That’s one reason we are to observe the Lord’s Supper frequently: We all tend to forget His great salvation, so He says, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” There are four things that recalling his experience of the gospel did for Paul and will do for us, as seen in these verses...

*“<sup>12</sup> And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, <sup>13</sup> although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. <sup>14</sup> And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. <sup>17</sup> Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” -1 Timothy 1:12-17 (NKJV)*

### 4 Things Recalling Our Experience of the Gospel Will Do for Us:

#### **(1) Recalling our experience of the gospel will make us thankful (1 Timothy 1:12) -**

*“<sup>12</sup> And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.”* As Paul thought of the gospel of the glory of God (1:11) and how it had saved him from his sinful past, the first word out of his mouth is, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord.” To remember how much we have been forgiven is the surest way to fill our hearts with gratitude.

The Puritan preacher **Thomas Goodwin** (1600-1680) wrote to his son (quoted by William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* [Westminster Press], pp. 46-47), *When I was threatening to become cold in my ministry, and when I felt Sabbath morning coming and my heart not filled with amazement at the grace of God, or when I was making ready to dispense the Lord’s Supper, do you know what I used to do? I used to take a turn up and down among the sins of my past life, and I always came down again with a broken and a contrite heart, ready to preach, as it was preached in the beginning, the forgiveness of sins. I do not think I ever went up the pulpit stair that I did not stop for a moment at the foot of it and take a turn up and down among the sins of my past years. I do not think that I ever planned a sermon that I did not take a turn around my study table and look back at the sins of my youth and of all my life down to the present; and many a Sabbath morning, when my soul had been cold and dry, for the lack of prayer during the week, a turn up and down in my past life before I went into the pulpit always broke my hard heart and made me close with the gospel for my own soul before I began to preach.*



Do you want a heart of gratitude? Pause frequently to remember your own experience of the gospel.

**(2) Recalling our experience of the gospel will make us humble (1 Timothy 1:13-15) -**

<sup>13</sup> *although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.* <sup>14</sup> *And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.* <sup>15</sup> *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.* Although Paul was gifted, brilliant, and influential, he was not proud. He could honestly say, *“By the undeserved favor of God I am what I am”* (1 Cor. 15:10).

Elisabeth Elliot tells how she once heard her young daughter singing to her kitten, *“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like you.”* We can easily see how the other guy needs God’s undeserved favor. But me? I’m not so bad! But I need to realize that God’s grace saved a wretch like *me*. It will keep us from looking down in pride on fellow sinners.

**(3) Recalling our experience of the gospel will make us useful (1:16) -**

<sup>16</sup> *However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.* Paul says, *“I am an example of God’s perfect patience. If He can save someone like me, then He can save anybody!”* The word translated “to those who are going to believe” is literally “who are about to believe.” *In other words, no potential believer need despair that his case is too hard for God.* He delights in hard cases. If you will believe that Christ will save you, the sinner, then you will have eternal life and be used of God as Paul was. The key to being used by God is to be authentic in your experience with Him. If He has saved you from your sin and you’re applying the sound teaching of His Word (1:10) so that you’re growing in holiness, then your changed life will be used to change others. But if you’re just a cultural Christian, not confronting your sin with God’s Word, not living daily in reality with the living God, then you won’t be used by God. Have you found mercy as a sinner before God? If so, God will use you to bring His mercy to others.

**(4) Recalling our experience of the gospel will make us worshipful (1:17) -**

<sup>17</sup> *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.* As Paul thought about what God had done in his life, he broke forth in spontaneous worship and praise. Please note that the attributes of God which Paul praises here are those that separate Him from us, not His grace, love, and patience that Paul has just been extolling

- The gospel bids us draw near to receive mercy; but having received it, we also realize that God is altogether apart from us
- He is the King of the ages, but we are His finite subjects

- He is immortal, while we are subject to death
- He is invisible, while we live in the realm of that which is seen
- He is the only God, and we are definitely not gods!
- All we can do is bow in wonder and adoration that such a Being could save undeserving sinners like us!

Do you find your heart welling up with spontaneous worship of God, as Paul did? If you can't recall the last time, maybe it's because you don't pause often enough to remember your experience of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

I mentioned him a minute ago, and perhaps you've heard his story before. John Newton, was a wild, drunken sailor. His language was so foul that the captain, hardly a model of piety, rebuked him! He was often put in irons and whipped for his rebellion. He became a slave-trader, falling even further into sin. He narrowly escaped death a number of times.

Finally, after nearly perishing in a severe storm at sea, he turned to God and was saved. Even so, he remained in slave-trading for a few years. Eventually, by God's grace, he became a pastor.

You, no doubt, know him for writing the hymn, "Amazing Grace." He wrote **Deuteronomy 15:15** in bold letters and put it over the mantle of his study, where he could not fail to see it, "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt and the Lord thy God redeemed thee."

He also wrote his own epitaph which read, "John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy." (The above taken from Newton's autobiography, *Out of the Depths* [Moody Press] and from Barclay, p. 46.)

John Newton never forgot that he was a great sinner who had found even greater mercy and grace in Christ. Neither did Paul forget. Neither should we.