

1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17

INTRODUCTION

Last week: 1:1-11, looked at: i) Greeting, ii) Fruits of sound doctrine, iii) Purpose of law

This week: 1 Tim 1:12-17, one great theme: **Why God saved Paul.**

Mention of 'glorious gospel' - v11, takes him off into section where he speaks of his 'gratitude for grace.' Although written as a personal statement - awesome expression of magnitude of gospel we believe, stand for & preach. Key verse: v15 - 1st & perhaps greatest trustworthy saying - perfect summary of gospel - words memorised by millions, used for salvation of many.

Best way of structuring our thinking, turn theme into question: **Why did God save Paul?** - 3 ans:

Q1. In verse 13 Paul tells us the reason God was able to be merciful to him, what was it?

1. HE HAD ACTED IGNORANTLY IN UNBELIEF

1st answer to our question 'why did God save Paul?', because he had sinned in 'ignorance.'

v12-13 - Paul making contrast between what he is now: v12 & what he was: v13 - a tremendous change had taken place - God had been very merciful to him, particularly considering how he had behaved towards Christ and his church. Reason God could be merciful to him: 'acted in ignorance.'

What does Paul mean? Is he saying that there is a situation where mercy cannot be granted? (i.e. - opposite of 'ignorance') What is included in 'ignorance'?

Principle: Sin done in ignorance can be forgiven, sin done with full knowledge cannot.

Biblical proof: Numbers 15:22-30, Hebrews 10:26-31, In Leviticus - no sin offering for deliberate sin.

But: Paul is saying - despite what he did: 'blasphemer, persecutor, insolent opponent' - still mercy for him. Point: Amazing what is included in ignorance! Richness of God's mercy: Luke 23:34 - Jesus speaking from cross. Acts 3:17f - Peter preaching to Christ's killers - v15 - forgiveness available!

What do mean by 'full knowledge' that cannot be forgiven? Best definition: Hebrews 6:4-5 - these people have both intellectual & experimental knowledge - then make a final rejection of Christ. Such people have made a total conscious rejection of Christ with full knowledge - what means could God use to bring them back? Saul of Tarsus was never in this position, few people are, those who are, are not slightest bit worried. e.g. Judas Iscariot - Matt 26:24, John 17:12

Amazing truth: How merciful God is. What incredibly wicked people God forgives! Including us.

2. GRACE

v14 -15. Grace = God being kind to undeserving. Grace is driving force in God that underpins gospel.

Q2. What does verse 14 tell us about grace? (Way it comes, what it brings with it, who to be found in.)

Way it comes: 'overflowing' or 'exceedingly abundantly' (NKJV). God's grace is not mealy mouthed, but generous, lavish. There is no accumulation of sin that grace cannot overflow. "More to follow."

What it brings with it: 'faith & love' - this is what it instils in life of people it touches. They are given 'faith' - trust and dependence upon Christ. 'Love' - towards God, brothers & sisters in Christ, for lost. A heart like Paul's: previously filled with unbelief & hatred (v13) now filled with faith & love.

Who to be found in: 'Christ Jesus' - through him & in him all this grace becomes ours - tells us how: v15 - by great historical work Christ Jesus did by coming into world full of sin to die to save sinners.

Point: **Paul saying: 'Ultimate reason for my salvation is to be found in God & his grace.'** My acting in ignorance stopped me being disqualified, but my salvation (and all others too) is God's work. [Aside: this belief in Sovereign Grace, did not stop him calling on sinners to turn to Christ: 'deserving of full acceptance' - wants others to accept Christ like he has. We must preach & evangelise like this.]

Q3. Why did Paul view himself as the foremost (or worst) sinner ever? v15. He knew darkness of his own heart, how self-righteous he had been. This how he viewed himself. Point: it was personal, Paul is genuinely thankful for gospel - and for his own personal salvation. Apply: Are we this thankful?

Q4. According to verse 16, why was God merciful to Paul?

3. TO SHOW GOD'S PERFECT PATIENCE

v16: 'perfect' or 'unlimited', 'inexhaustible' patience. Paul's conversion was a prototype of all subsequent conversions (not the unique features of heavenly light or audible voice), but as demonstration of patience of God. As if God is saying through Paul to any sinner: 'Don't despair, God had mercy on even me, worst of sinners - he is willing and able to have mercy on you!' ⇒ *Example of Tokyo Tokichi Ichii, described himself as 'most desperate villain who ever lived' - but he was saved!*

Point: **God's grace can reach anybody.** Apply: Do we really believe that? Members of our families? people on estates around us in Thronhill? Muslims of Dewsbury & Batley? Are we driven by same passion & logic as Paul - if God has saved me - he can save anyone? or do we think we are a little bit superior, and that is why we are saved? Are we 100% convinced that 1 Tim 1:15 is true by his grace?

Paul's response: v17 - explodes into praise. Calvin: "*His enthusiasm breaks out into this exclamation, since he could find no words to express his gratitude. These sudden outbursts of Paul's come mainly when the vastness of the subject overpowers him and makes him break off what he is saying.*" Apply: Does gospel have that impact on us? When we consider our conversion do we break into praise?

CONCLUSION: What mercy! What grace! What patience! What a gospel and what a God - v17! It was this that gave Paul thankfulness and strength (v12). Does grace have a similar impact on us?

Questions for 1 Timothy 1:18-20

Wednesday 05 February 03

1. Why was Timothy's call to ministry such a significant event in gospel history? (Acts 16:1-10)
2. Paul wants Timothy to wage warfare v18. What do we need to make sure we fight right things? v19
3. Where may a rejection of a 'good conscience' end up? v19
4. What does it mean to 'hand someone over to Satan'? v20, 1 Corinthians 5:5