

Shepherds & Servants 2

Praise God For His Mercy

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Memory Verses: 1 Timothy 1:16

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

We often sing of God's mercy or proclaim God's mercy in our lives, but how often do we really meditate on it; ponder the depths of his mercy? Paul in writing to Timothy, takes a portion of his letter to make Timothy stop and think deeply about the mercy of God on sinners who have come to salvation in Christ. Look with me at **1 Timothy 1:12-17**. Timothy is a spiritual shepherd to the church at Ephesus. He is an elder, and as such, Paul feels that it is necessary that Timothy have a strong understanding of the mercy of God and respond to it accordingly in worship.

Last week we began a series in the book of 1 Timothy called Shepherds & Servants. The purpose of this letter is to draw the church at Ephesus back to sound doctrine and church order. In order to have sound doctrine and church order, the church must have spiritual shepherds called elders, and sacrificial servants called deacons. Last week we began by looking at the responsibility of shepherds and servants of the church to protect the Gospel from false teaching and false prophets. Today we will see the responsibility for shepherds and servants of the church to praise God for his mercy.

Why is an understanding of God's mercy so important to us as believers? Why should we not only be aware of it but deeply meditate upon it? **I think it is because as humans we have a sickness called desensitization. The more familiar we become with something, the less important it becomes. Where as the cross, the sacrifice of Christ, and the sin which he saved us from should always break us, we've heard about it so much in church that it is just the same old record. But when we are talking about something as important as the mercy of Christ to save us from our sins we should never ever allow ourselves to be desensitized to it. Instead we should determine to keep the same sober- mindedness about it that we had when we first realized it. And if we can do that, we will have no problem praising God and worshipping him as he deserves. A worship that extends beyond the weekly worship service and permeates our entire lives. We should be in a perpetual state of praising our God because of the mercy he has shown us in saving us from our sins.** Today I want us to leave with a sense of understanding that; **There is nothing that can keep us from praising God when we are constantly aware of the mercy Christ has shown us.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to be aware of is... **God's Mercy Doesn't Judge Us Based On Our Past.** Look again at **1 Timothy 1:12**. A spiritual shepherd in the church and a sacrificial servant in the church must have a clear understanding of what they have been shown mercy for and for what reason. Elders, Deacons, and all believers within the church should be acutely aware that they have been, beyond all reasonable evaluation, judged faithful for the service God has called them to. What service has he called us to? First, we are shown his mercy in that he has called us to be followers of Christ. We will touch on this more in a bit. Secondly, we are shown his mercy in that he has given each of us an individual calling. You may ask, what exactly is my calling? Well, my calling is clear, I am called, for such a time as this, to be an elder and pastor at Stone Creek Church. I'm also called to be the husband of Lisa Sloane and the father of Canaan, Pierson, Landon, Hudson, and Vera Sloane. I'm also called to be a citizen of Pittsylvania county and Danville, VA. And on and on. I truly feel these as callings, and not coincidental circumstances. So what are you called to? Are you called to a marriage? To raising your children? That is your first ministry! Accept it and be thankful that you were shown mercy and given that calling. Do you feel called to your job? To your city? To your neighborhood? God has you where he has you to promote the Gospel through you in each of those areas of your life. Embrace it and thank him that he has shown you the mercy he has to put you there. Your calling could have been to be born in Sudan, or Cambodia, or China. You could have been called to work in a sweat shop for pennies. Can you think of the mercy he has shown you to call you to such ministries? What about your calling to this church? What gifts has he given you to serve the body of Christ? What unique skills do you possess for the building of the kingdom? What mercy has he shown you in giving you these gifts for his glory! In all of these we find a reason to live; a purpose beyond ourselves. **What a privilege it is to be appointed to Christ's service and given a purpose for living.**

Now let's look at **verse 13** again. Jesus shows his mercy and blesses us with true purpose, yes? But he does all of that despite our sinful past. No matter how evil or sinful we have been, Christ will still accept us and place us into his service. Paul was clearly an example of a past life filled with hate and malice. He was a devout opponent of Christ and the Church. He persecuted Christians, he threw them into jail, he idly stood by as they were killed, and he would mock their God, Jesus Christ, as they died. Surely this man could never be redeemed. Surely this man could never be of service to the kingdom of Christ. Surely he would never be in consideration as an elder in the church. And yet here he is, an elder of elders, a shepherd of shepherds. As a pharisee, Paul was blind in his sin. His eyes had not yet been opened to the truth of who Christ really was. His sin, like most of our sin, was in ignorance. You may rebut, most sinners

know that they are sinning, especially if they are Christians. And to that I would agree. But what we are forgetting is that our minds are not yet enlightened to the full effect of sin or the depth of our sinfulness. We still see through a mirror dimly. In one sense, all of our sin, though in disobedience, is to some degree ignorant of the true nature of sin. Again, what a mercy Christ has shown us. He knows that we cannot stop sinning. He knows that we don't know how to stop sinning because we don't understand the weight of sin. And yet, he still saves us from our sin and allows us to be used for his glory in building his kingdom. Most people would call this insane, and yet this is Christ's plan. **Christ's plan for building his kingdom is using sinners who don't even understand the weight of their own sin.**

And why are we given this mercy? Is it because we deserve it? I think we've covered that. We don't deserve it, that's the point! We don't deserve to serve him in his kingdom. We don't deserve to be forgiven of our ignorant sinfulness. We don't deserve to have our past basically ignored. And yet that's what Jesus does in through his mercy. If not because we've earned it, then why does he do it? Simple. Look at **verse 14**. Because of the grace and love of Christ Jesus who has given us faith in Him. We aren't forgiven our sins because of our ignorance. We are forgiven our sins in spite of our ignorance because by his mercy and grace we have been given faith in Him. We may be ignorant of our sin, and we may be ignorant of theology and doctrines, and we may be ignorant of a lot of things. But we are not ignorant of the salvation of Christ which cleanses us of all of our sins. **I want you to understand the mercy of Christ here. We are sinners and cannot escape our own sin. We are ignorant of the weight of our sin and who Jesus really is. We have done nothing to be enlightened to the truth of the mystery of Christ. And yet Jesus opens our eyes and gives us the faith we lack so that we will believe in him. Even our own faith is a mercy of God.** And what is our response, it can only be one thing. Jesus, thank you. Thank you for appointing me to your service, regardless of my past and my sin and my ignorance. Thank you for giving me faith in you when I would've never put my faith in you on my own. **There is nothing that can keep us from praising God when we are constantly aware of the mercy Christ has shown us.**

The second thing we need to be aware of today is... **God's Mercy Displays Uncanny Patience For Our Sin.** Look again at **1 Timothy 1:15-16**. So not only has God shown mercy to us in Christ for our past sins, and present ignorance. He has also shown his mercy towards us through his patience of our sin. You would have to imagine that Jesus' patience is running thin with us. I know I think that about me. How often can I go on sinning and yet he loves me and cares for me and will never

reject me. My salvation will never be revoked. That's crazy. Not only does he have patience for those who are his own, but he even has patience for those who are not. Get this, every single person on the planet who has rejected Christ, ignored him, blasphemed him, mocked him, killed his followers, or has yet to hear of him... Jesus is patiently waiting on them to come around. What gives him this patience, his mercy! Without the mercy of God it would be one strike and your out. With the mercy of God we have seemingly endless strikes. Paul had seemingly endless strikes. Though he considered himself the foremost sinner; the chief sinner, Christ was patient with him. He gave him chance after chance until Paul finally stopped kicking against the pricks. **Romans 5:8** says, "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Look also at **1 Peter 1:3**. And why was Christ patient in his mercy with Paul? Why is he patient in his mercy with us? To show the world that he is patient with them. To show the world that Christ is waiting for them to believe on him for eternal life. **Jesus' mercy patiently waited for us, to show the world that he will patiently wait for them.** You, me, we are all examples of the patient mercy of Christ, who didn't not kill us and send us to hell in our sin, yet waited for us to accept him as our Lord and Savior. Listen, if you have yet to give your life to Christ and put your faith in him. You haven't run out of chances yet. Today is the day of salvation. Accept him before his patience runs out. If you have been given faith to believe in him, praise God for his patience to wait for you! **There is nothing that can keep us from praising God when we are constantly aware of the mercy Christ has shown us.**

And lastly we need to be aware that... **God's Mercy Deserves Unending Praise.** Look once more at **1 Timothy 1:17**. As we have said over and over in this service already; the mercy of God leads us to worship. When we really know what Jesus has done for us, saved us from, given us, and appointed us to do, our hearts will be transformed into eternal worshipers who consistently give him the praise he deserves. Just think for a moment where you would be if it weren't for the mercy of Christ in your life. How can you not be thankful? How can you not worship him for what he has done for you? Though our God is invisible, he is the immortal King of our lives and the universe. So we worship him with honor and glory forever. **How are you honoring God and giving him glory with your life in the light of his mercy? There is nothing that can keep us from praising God when we are constantly aware of the mercy Christ has shown us.**

Application

So our response as believers today should simply be, thank you Lord for your mercy. Let me be ever mindful of your goodness. But again, let us relate this to our main theme of Shepherds and Servants. Spiritual shepherds, elders, should be acutely aware of the mercy of God and it

should be apparent in their lives. An awareness of the mercy of God will keep them from arrogance, from pride, from quarreling, and from self-righteousness. Sacrificial servants, deacons, should be mindful of the mercy of Jesus and it should reflect in the way they live. It will keep them from giving up or burning out. It will keep them from falling into sin and away from the calling. Every believer here this morning should be ever aware of the great mercy of God, because without it we will fall victim to a life without worship.

Conclusion

Going back to what we said earlier in the message. We often lose our desire to worship God with our lives because we have been desensitized to his mercy. Here is the challenge today. Keep his mercy forefront in your life. When you sin, think, thank you Jesus for your mercy on me a sinner. We should repeat **Titus 3:5**. When we are bogged down with the troubles of this world we should think, thank you Jesus for your mercy on me to appoint me a servant in your house and bless me with purpose in this life. We should repeat **Lamentations 3:22-23**. When satan reminds us of our sinful past we should remember the mercies of Jesus on us to forget our past and we should repeat **Psalm 25:6-7**.

There is nothing that can keep us from praising God when we are constantly aware of the mercy Christ has shown us