

**The Gospel**  
**The Mission of Christ**  
1 Timothy 1:15-17

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HDBC

**You've probably** never heard of Witold Pilecki. He did the unthinkable in September 1940. He purposefully snuck into Auschwitz camp. He was a captain in the Polish army. He knew something was terribly wrong there, and as a Christian and Polish patriot he couldn't sit by and watch. He wanted as much information on the horrors going on there as possible, but knew he could only do so from the inside.

**So his superiors** approved a daring plan. They provided a false identity card with a Jewish name, and then Pilecki allowed the Germans to arrest him during a routine Warsaw street roundup. He was sent to Auschwitz and assigned inmate number 4859.

**Pilecki**, a husband and father of two, later said, *I said farewell to everything I had known on this earth.* He became just like any other prisoner—despised, beaten, and threatened with death. From inside the camp he wrote, *The game I was now playing at Auschwitz was dangerous .... In fact, I had gone far beyond what people in the real world would consider dangerous.*

**In 1941**, he began organizing the inmates into resistance units. Pilecki used couriers to smuggle out detailed reports on the atrocities. By 1942, he had also helped organize a secret radio station using scrap parts. The information he supplied from inside the camp provided Western allies with key intelligence information about Auschwitz.

**In the spring of 1943**, he was able to escape. Once free, he finished his report, estimating that around 2 million souls had been killed at Auschwitz. When the reports reached London, officials thought he was exaggerating. Here's how a contemporary Jewish journal summarized his life:

***Once he set his mind to the good, he never wavered, never stopped. He crossed the great human divide that separates knowing the right thing from doing the right thing. His was*** a daring mission designed to rescue the oppressed and save the dying.

**Christmas** is the story of another daring mission to rescue the oppressed and the save the dying. In it, Jesus, also crossed a great divide, the one separating deity from humanity. In doing so he built a bridge from God to man,

**The story of Christmas** is the story of good news that is centered in the great liberator, Jesus. That is the story of the Bible. The Bible is the story of the great raid in which Jesus came to rescue fallen people. Sprinkled throughout the Bible are clear statements describing that mission.

**1 Timothy 1:15-17** is one such passage. Turn there now.

**In this passage** we have one of the most concise and compelling descriptions of the gospel found in the all the Bible. In one brief statement, just nine words in English, we have a powerful statement that captures the essence of the gospel.

***Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.***

This mission was unveiled to angels and humans at the birth of Christ. That is what we celebrate each Christmas.

**Four statements about the mission of Christ.**

### **1. The Mission is Incarnational and Undeniable (15a)**

***Christ Jesus came in to the world.***

**Jesus did** not come into existence at his birth in Bethlehem. He already existed as the son of God for all eternity. He did not ***begin***, he ***came***. The one who was with the Father in glory in Heaven put on the robe of humanity to become one of us. Isaiah wrote, *a child is born, a son is given*. He already had been a son, but became a child.

**The mission** involved Jesus becoming one of us. He did this, living the life we could never live, to die the death we deserved to die, and to rise in victory over the enemies we could never conquer . . . sin and death.

**There is no** greater wonder in all of human history than this. Yet Paul writes that it is absolutely true.

*It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance*

The truthfulness of the gospel has been verified in every generation since the time of Christ. One by one, people are saved and their lives are changed. Those changed lives provide undeniable evidence that the gospel is true.

## 2. **The Mission is Purposeful and Universal (15b)**

*To save sinners*

Jesus came with a very specific purpose in mind. Purpose is what directs us to specific actions. Without purpose there is only haphazard drifting, **like a small boat on a lake with no motor, oars or rudder. Just drifting along.** Not so, with Jesus. He had a particular **result in mind.**

**Jesus did** not come to teach, to heal, to reform. He came to save! In this context, it means to deliver from sin and its consequences.

**But it was also universal.** Who was it that Jesus came to save?

The initial answer . . . **sinners.** Think with me about the universal aspect of that little word. It includes every person who has ever lived, other than Jesus. No one is excluded. All are included. He came (incarnation) to save (purpose) sinners (everyone).

**In his book *Ghost Soldiers*, Hampton Sides tells the story of a dramatic mission during World War II. On January 28th, 1945, 121 hand-selected Army Rangers slipped behind enemy lines in the Philippines in an attempt to rescue 513 American and British POW's who had spent three years in a hellish prison camp near the city of Cabanatuan.**

**One of their greatest** concerns was that they leave no one behind. If they went in, they were going in for them all. **The Rangers** searched all the barracks for additional prisoners, then shouted, "The Americans are leaving. Is there anybody here?" Hearing no answer, they left.

**But there** was one more POW—Edwin Rose. Edwin had been on latrine duty and somehow missed all the shooting and explosions. When he wandered back to his barracks, he failed to notice the room was empty and lay down on his straw mat and fell asleep. Edwin had missed the liberation. Why? Edwin was deaf.

**Four Americans died** in the rescue; two Rangers in the firefight and two prisoners who perished for reasons of poor health. The freed prisoners marched 25 miles and boarded their ship home. Even Edwin Rose made it. He finally woke up and realized liberation had come.

**Jesus** came for sinners . . . everyone! The mission was universal.

The mission is **incarnational and undeniable**.

The mission is **purposeful and universal**.

### 3. **The Mission is Personal and Patient (15b-16)**

Paul first wrote in general terms about the mission of Christ. But then he got personal. Note the end of verse 15 and verse 16. He had personally been rescued by Christ. The mission was not theoretical, it was personal.

**Note how** Paul describes himself. *Foremost of all*. Jesus came to save sinners and Paul just happened to consider himself to be the best example of them all. **Foremost** refers to a prototype, a model, a pattern. If one wanted to know what a sinner looked like, Paul would be the greatest example. God needed to look no further than him to find the worst of the worse.

**Yet, even as** bad as he was, he found mercy. The idea is that from his perspective, he stumbled upon it. He was certainly not looking for it.

However, his discovery of mercy was not an accident. It was the result of the purposeful action of the rescuer, Jesus.

**Paul points** out that in saving him, God showed his great patience. If there was a sinner that God could have given up on, it was Paul. He was horrible. He rejected Christ, persecuted and killed Christians and was on a personal mission to destroy Christianity. Yet, God showed mercy and saved him. God was patient with Paul and He is patient with us.

The mission is **incarnational and undeniable**.

The mission is **purposeful and universal**.

The mission is **personal and patient**.

#### **4. The Mission is Praise-worthy (17)**

The mission of Christ leads us to worship and praise God, as Paul does in verse 17. The proper response to being rescued is gratitude and praise to the rescuer by the one rescued. Note how he describes God.

***King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, Only God***

**All of these** were undisputed characteristics of the true God. They are descriptions that can only be used of God. Each one is taught throughout the Old Testament. It is as if Paul is breaking out in song, relying heavily on the truth about God revealed in the Scriptures.

**I thought about** the mission of Christ when I watched a video clip the other day. I've watched it a few more times since then and each time I'm struck by the hopelessness of the situation in the video that is suddenly dispelled by a rescuer.

**The video** shows a large male lion who wanders into an area controlled by a pack of hyenas. These are powerful, vicious and deadly animals. The lion is quickly surrounded by at least 20 hyenas who begin to harass and attack the lion. He moves back and forth, twisting from side to side and different hyenas attack. They refuse to attack his face, but there are too many for him to face at

all times. When one gets his attention the others quickly move in and attack him from behind.

**This goes** on for two to three minutes. One thing is clear, this lion is not going to win this battle. He has no way to escape and they will eventually wear him down. It is just a matter of time. I found myself feeling sad for this animal. In fact I almost turned off the video, not wanted to see what I assumed would happen.

**Then, suddenly**, a second male lion appeared in the distance. He saw what was happening, paused for a moment, then moved toward the scene. As soon as he got close the hyenas gave up their attacks and left the scene. They could take one lion, but they had no chance against two.

**Before** the video ends, the harassed lion is seen nuzzling his rescuer as if to say **thank you** again and again.

It is a touching video. And a great reminder of the importance of a rescuer. Like that pack of hyenas, we have an enemy who wants to drag us into the eternal hell. Alone, we are helpless and hopeless. But, like the second lion in the video, Jesus comes as a rescuer and all enemies are defeated.

Do you know Him? Have you invited Him into your battle?