

**Title: A Mature Church Understands Why Jesus Came**

**Text: 1 Timothy 1:12–17**

Have you ever thought about what your life shows to those around you about Jesus?

Does your story reflect His mercy and grace? Paul's life certainly did.

As we will discuss, today, Paul was a persecutor of the church. He was a Pharisee who was zealous to stamp out this aberrant offshoot of Judaism, known as the Way (AKA - Christianity).

God not only stopped this man in his tracks (literally), but radically turned him around and used him in the substantial growth of Biblical Christianity. God used him powerfully and well. What a demonstration of God's mercy and grace in appointing Paul to His service.

Many of you might think that I was raised in a Baptist Church and grew up a good little Baptist boy. This could not be further from the truth.

I was raised in a religious home and went to parochial schools. While I lived around the concept of God, I never understood the gospel of Christ.

Even though I was raised in a good, religious home, I would categorize my state of mind in my pre-salvation days as hedonistic.

The term "hedonistic" refers to a philosophy or a way of life that emphasizes the pursuit of pleasure and self-indulgence as the primary or most important goal.

This boy just wanted to have fun.

Nothing wrong with fun, but it cannot be a way of life.

God stepped in and changed the trajectory of my life substantially.

As John Piper talks about, He took this hedonist, and changed him into a Christian hedonist whose desire now is to find true and real pleasure in the only place it resides and that is Christ.

And my hope has been that God would use my insignificant life for His significant glory.

This is Paul's hope in the passage we are studying today.

[1 Timothy 1:15](#), Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. This is why Jesus came to this world. To save sinners and transform them into Christlikeness.

**See this lamp on the screen?** A profound before and after? This is what God does with us.

**[Psalm 40:1–3 \(ESV\)](#)**

I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

God did not **will** to leave us to die...

**Main Idea: Jesus Came to this World to Save Sinners**

There are three reasons Christ came into this world to save sinners. And the first reason is this...

1. **God Puts Us into His Service (vs. 12)**

1 Timothy 1:12 (ESV)

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,

Friends, this verse is a mouthful.

Paul is thankful because it is God that gives Paul the strength to accomplish the ministry on His behalf.

It is God that searched the heart of Paul and “judged” him faithful. The Greek word means to “Reckon” or “Consider.”

God didn’t consider Paul flawless or perfect. God considered him “Faithful” placing him (Again, God’s work, not his own will) in His service.

Paul was not serving Himself, but the Lord.

It was Christ that appointed Paul to his service. And I think it's very important that we understand this was not Paul's will for his own life. This was Jesus' will for his life.

You can clearly see the divine/human cooperative in this passage between God and Paul. God called, strengthened, and appointed Paul to serve Him faithfully.

Christ not only calls us but also equips and strengthens us for the roles He has destined for us, just as He did with Paul. This can be both humbling and motivating for believers to accept and pursue God's purposes for them.

Remember this! It is so crucial that you understand what I am about to say.

*“God does not call the equipped, but equips the called.”*

This idea should remove any hesitation for people to pursue doing the work of the ministry.

2 Corinthians 3:5–6 (ESV)

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant...

How does God equip us? Friends, I have talked about this for ten years. Year in and year out.

Ephesians 4:11–13 (ESV)

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Myself, pastor Larry, and the Elder leadership of this church are called to equip you to do the work of His ministry.

It is our call to equip you and it is your call, by God, to be equipped so that you can accomplish his service in the area He has sovereignly placed you.

Look again at this text.

[1 Timothy 1:12 \(ESV\)](#)

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,

Paul recognized that his call to service was from God alone.

You too are called to serve him.

But I'm not a missionary, church planter, pastor, like Paul - Well you might not be, but that is beside the point.

You don't need to be any of those things to be called to the ministry.

I will argue that if you are a born-again Christian, you are automatically called to the ministry. A ministry to your CIRCLE of influence.

And just like Paul, God will give you strength to serve Him.

But the question you must grapple with is this - will he find you faithful?

[A faithful and good servant is a real godsend; but truly it is a rare bird in the land.](#)

**Martin Luther**

God knew the heart of Paul. Certainly God redeemed Paul's heart. And Paul's heart, as a result turned to be faithful.

In order to be put in service by God, our hearts must be faithful and true to Christ. Paul understood his condition before he was a Christian. He knew what a wretch He was. But that was now in the past.

[2 Corinthians 5:17 \(ESV\)](#)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Paul was made new and thus determined to faithfully serve the one who saved him.

Christian, maybe your heart has grown cold to the idea of serving the Lord with your life.

Maybe you've been burnt or even hurt by the church and you say, why would I bother putting myself out there again? Valid point!

Or maybe you've served Christ publically by speaking about Him to others only to be met with mocking and ridicule. And you are thinking, this is not worth it.

It is interesting when you study the life and ministry of Paul, he was persecuted by those who claimed to be Christians - Paul experienced first hand "church hurt." It is real and it is painful.

He also experienced persecution from outside the church. This too is real and painful.

#### **2 Corinthians 11:21-28 (ESV)**

To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

So how did Paul not only survive, but actually thrive and accomplish amazing things for the Lord?

Well, a couple ways...

**One** - You'll notice in verse 12 that Paul refers to Christ Jesus as LORD. Lord means King of one's life. Jesus was the King of Paul's life and he got to the place in his mindset that there was only one person Paul needed to please and that is Jesus Christ, His LORD and Savior.

#### **2 Corinthians 5:9 (ESV)**

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

**Secondly**, a powerful way to become faithful to Christ is to spend time with Christ.

**The faithful person lives constantly with God.**

#### **Clement of Alexandria**

Listen friends, it is God's desire to put YOU into SERVICE for HIM!

But you must obey what He says in His Word!

And - you must abide or live constantly with God in prayer, His Word, and with His people.

**Review** - Jesus Came to this World to Save Sinners

- God Puts Us into His Service

## **2. God Uses Us Regardless of Our Past (vs. 13-14)**

You might be here this morning and you may think, there is no way God could ever use the likes of me.

I have done way too much wrong - I'm a mess! God could NEVER use me.

Well, lets take a look at a guy who could use the same argument, yet was used powerfully by God nonetheless.

### **1 Timothy 1:13 (ESV)**

though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent...

Paul openly acknowledges his past as a blasphemer, persecutor, and violent man. Listen to what the book of Acts has to say about this guy.

### **Acts 8:3 (ESV)**

But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

### **Acts 9:1-2 (ESV)**

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Okay, so Paul says of himself that he openly spoke words against God (blasphemy)

And he was a persecutor and violent.

Paul's zealousness led him to do some pretty terrible things. I mean awful stuff.

*Imagine "Saul" breaking into your home with the help of his henchmen, grabbing your father or mother or maybe your sister or brother and hauling them off to succumb to capital punishment. He literally was having people killed/put down for their belief in Christ. What if that were you or one you loved? Wow!*

With that kind of past, I wonder if a church today would allow a murderer like Paul to join membership??

You can understand why the original apostles were a bit nervous when Saul, now Paul, purported to be a Christian. They were rightly nervous about the motives of this new guy who was a Christian killer.

And it wasn't until Barnabas vouched for him that they trusted Paul.

But look again at how Paul describes himself to Timothy...

1 Timothy 1:13–14 (ESV)

though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Folks, I've told you this before, some of my favorite words in the Bible are conjunctions.

Do you see what I am talking about?

“BUT”

Paul received “MERCY.” Mercy is an unbelievable gift from God. Mercy is withholding just punishment.

Paul says that he received “MERCY”

The mercy Paul received was, according to this verse, predicated on him acting ignorantly and in unbelief.

But let me be clear about something. God needs no predication for dispensing His mercy. He can have mercy on whomever He wants for whatever reason he wants and doesn't need to explain Himself to anyone.

Romans 9:15 (ESV)

For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

And for Paul, God's mercy leads to an overflowed heart with faith in Christ Jesus and self-sacrificial love that is rooted in none other than Jesus. All of this, Paul says in verse 14 is because of God's amazing Grace.

**Sing** - *“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.*

*I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see.”*

*In the dark heart of a violent storm on the treacherous waters of the Atlantic, as massive waves threatened to engulf his ship, John Newton faced his reckoning. The year was 1748, and Newton, a hardened slave ship captain, had scoffed at faith and lived a life steeped in the brutalities of the slave trade. But in this moment, staring death in the face, the mocking and disbelief that had once filled his heart turned to desperate cries for mercy. “Lord, have mercy upon us,” he pleaded, a plea that marked the first step on his path to redemption.*

*This near-death experience was the catalyst for Newton's profound transformation. Although he did not abandon the slave trade immediately, the seeds of change had been sown in his soul.*

*Over the following years, as he continued his maritime career, the grip of divine grace tightened around his conscience.*

*By 1755, afflicted by illness and the piercing conviction of his sins, Newton's resistance crumbled. He left behind the sea and the slave trade of human misery, turning instead towards the harbor of faith.*

*Settling as a tide surveyor in Liverpool, Newton's spiritual voyage deepened. He devoured scripture and theology, his mind and heart wrestling with the doctrines of grace and redemption. His relentless pursuit of divine understanding led him to ordination in 1764, and he took up the mantle of Pastor in Olney, Buckinghamshire.*

*It was here, in the quiet reflection of his new life, that Newton penned the words to "Amazing Grace." The hymn was a raw outpouring of his personal journey from darkness to light, an ode to the transformative power of grace that had plucked him from despair and altered his course forever.*

*In his later years, as an elder voice of wisdom, Newton condemned the vile trade he once epitomized. His influence reached the ears of William Wilberforce, a young politician with the fervor to challenge the slave trade in the heart of the British Empire. Newton's insights and testimony fortified Wilberforce's resolve, contributing to the eventual abolition of the trade.*

*John Newton's life stands as a towering testament to the power of conversion and the profound mercy of God. From a defiant blasphemer and slave trader to a beloved preacher and hymn writer, his journey reminds us that no one is beyond the reach of redemption. His story, woven into the lyrics of "Amazing Grace," continues to resonate, a melodious beacon of hope for the lost and the found alike.*

**Sing** this again with greater understanding...

*"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.*

*I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see."*

Aren't you thankful that God gave John Newton his AMAZING Grace? And because of that amazing grace, mercy, love, and faith, God used John Newton to touch the lives of millions of people over the centuries?

Aren't you thankful that God gave Saul of Tarsus his AMAZING Grace? And that because of that amazing grace, mercy, love, and faith God used Saul/Paul to transform the lives of countless billions of people since he walked this earth through the God inspired letter he penned?

Friends, this can and should be true for you as well.

I want to encourage you this morning with this profound truth. No matter how awful your past, God can and will save you and use you in ways you never thought possible if you humble yourself before Him.

If you offer your life as a sacrifice. If you, by faith turn from your sin and turn to Christ as your only hope for rescue from the wrath of God.

John Newton's past was awful and yet God used him powerfully!

Paul's past was terrible and yet God used Him mightily!

Your past doesn't matter one lick to God. But He does desire to use you in amazing ways.

Will you surrender your life to Him and beg Him to use you however He sees fit?

Do you understand what God can accomplish through you?

*"The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him. By God's help, I aim to be that man." - D.L. Moody*

That's a good goal for any Christian - And your past shouldn't keep you from His service!

**Review** - Jesus Came to this World to Save Sinners

- God Puts Us into His Service
- God Uses Us Regardless of Our Past

### **3. God Uses Us for His Glory (vs. 15-17)**

#### 1 Timothy 1:15-17 (ESV)

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Now, when you see Paul say the words, *"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance"* you should sit up and take notice. He actually says it in five places.

[1 Timothy 1:15](#); [3:1](#); [4:9](#); [2 Timothy 2:11](#); [Titus 3:8](#).

It's Paul's way of saying, "Hey, listen up! This is important!"

In verse 15 what is so important? It's very important that the church of Jesus Christ, our church understands the reason Jesus came into this world.

And Paul gives the "why" - Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners!

Why would God send Jesus to do this?

Because all of humanity is desperately lost and in need of rescue. We are in need of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Why?



Because we have broken God's Law an infinite amount of times since we were created and there is no chance that we can rescue ourselves any more than a drowning man can pull himself out of the water by the back of the neck and place himself in a boat.

We are helpless and need someone outside of our circumstances to bring us to safety.

This is what Jesus accomplished for us at the cross!

*Because the sinless Savior died,  
My sinful soul is counted free;  
For God, the Just, is satisfied  
To look on Him and pardon me.*

God looked on Him! He who knew no sin...

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God looked on Him and saw your sin! He looked on Him as the payment for your sin. God looked on Him so you could go free.

Paul understood what a wretched sinner he was.

Paul understood His overwhelming need for salvation from the wrath of God.

Paul knew what He deserved because of His past, which only made him appreciate God's gift of redemption all the more.

But do you see Paul's understanding of why God saved him? Look again at verse 16...

1 Timothy 1:16 (ESV)

But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Paul understood that his salvation was more than just about him. His salvation put on display God's "perfect" or complete "patience." Paul was an example to those YET to believe in Christ for eternal life.

God could have thrown Paul into the bowls of Hell the first time he sinned. But He didn't. He had patience with Paul in his sinful state because He knew how He would use him after He became a follower of Jesus.

What Paul is telling Timothy is that his radical salvation story and life transformation will serve as a powerful testimony of hope to those outside of Christianity.

Remember what people say in the membership videos we produce? *"Jesus Changes Everything!"*

He does! Paul's life wasn't just about salvation, but radical, uncompromised, passionate, gospel transformation.

And his powerful example of genuine salvation and transformation demonstrated to all who saw it that God still changes lives.

And, by the way, He is still changing lives even today.

In October of 1991, God radically changed my life and set it on an entirely new trajectory.

If you are a Christian, there was a point in your life that He stepped in and gave you a new heart, a new mind, a new direction, and a new love.

God doesn't save you to sit and wait for His return, God saves you to accomplish great things for His GLORY!

Why? Because He is worthy to serve. He is worthy to love. He is worthy to give your life to!

The greatest honor for the follower of Christ is to live their life in such a way that God gets all the credit.

We want the God of the Bible to have more renown!

We want the God of the Bible to become more famous!

We want the God of the Bible to change more lives so He gets more glory!

Each personal story of transformation and redemption can inspire others to seek God, knowing that He is patient and that His timing in our lives is geared towards maximizing both our growth and His glory.

So after Paul's confession that there is only one way to heaven for a sinner like him or anyone, He extols God in a beautiful doxological fashion.

Look at verse 17...

[1 Timothy 1:17 \(ESV\)](#)

To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

There have been many Kings and those in political power throughout the millennia, but there is only ONE King of the ages and that is God very God.

He is beyond mortality - eternal.

He is Spirit

He is the ONLY true God!

And He deserves all glory in all time!

What is Paul trying to get across in these verses?

God saves lives through Jesus Christ for their good and for His Glory!

“AMEN” - Truly this is so!

Although He Himself is sufficient unto Himself in an infinity of glory, yet He seeks glory also in His saints, not that His own may be increased, but that He may partake it with them.

**Bernard of Clairvaux**

Don't let anything stand in your way to serve your King. Especially your past!

**Review** - Jesus Came to this World to Save Sinners

- God Puts Us into His Service
- God Uses Us Regardless of Our Past
- God Uses Us for His Glory

### **Conclusion**

I have a challenge for you this morning. Try asking several people this question, **“Why do you think Jesus Christ was born?”** You will probably get many different answers. Answers will no doubt vary. Some might say, “He was born to be a good example.” Others might say He was born to teach us how to treat each other. Some might even argue that He wasn't born at all and is just a figment of our imagination.

What would **you** say to this question? Paul answers this question in [1 Timothy 1:12-17](#). Paul says in verse 15, **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”** Friends, we, as followers of Jesus, must get this right. Jesus was a good teacher and an amazing example, but if we fail to see our need for salvation and Jesus' ability to accomplish this for us, we will be eternally lost. Jesus came to rescue us from the wrath of God. His wrath is very real, yet so is His salvation!

What should you do with this information?

Well, if you haven't repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for your eternal salvation, then today is a good day to do so.

Secondly, if you are a follower of Jesus, spend some time worshipping Him for his inexpressible gift.

Thirdly, be a conduit for His message of salvation. What a privilege it is to make disciples for the Lord by sharing this truth!

Why did Jesus come? To save sinners from the wrath of God. As a sinner saved by grace, I can think of no better reason to give Him glory today!