

## The Grace-Driven Gospel – 1 Timothy 1:12-20

**Our goal is NOT to talk about politics or other churches.**

**Main Idea:** Before calling you to do anything, God calls you to be His.

### **I. The Source of Grace | 1 Timothy 1:12-14**

At the end of the previous section (v.9-11), Paul lays out the importance and perfection of the law. He provided a catalog of sinful vices that the law exposes, and now he concludes the first chapter in his letter to Timothy by sharing his testimony as a man reached by the grace of God. Grace is defined as God's loving forgiveness. He grants exemption from judgment and promises both temporal and eternal blessing to sinners freely, without any worthiness or action on their part. At the beginning of this section in chapter one, Paul directs his thanks to "Christ Jesus our Lord" (v.12). Scripture repeatedly affirms Jesus Christ to be the source of all grace, as the apostle John wrote in his Gospel, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Paul, writing to the Romans, said, "We were justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

In 1 Timothy 1:12-29, Paul expresses thankfulness for God's saving grace (which reached out to him) and for God's enabling grace. Through God's enabling grace, Paul was strengthened and equipped to fulfill the ministry God had called him to carry out. **Paul uses himself and his inability to serve God to point Timothy to the reality of God's saving and strengthening grace as the only way to enable and equip those who are called to the ministry.** What sinners need for salvation is God's saving grace; what believers need to serve God is God's enabling grace. Paul's effectiveness as a missionary did not depend on his natural talents or his first-rate education. Rather, Paul was spiritually empowered by God through His enabling grace to be the kind of spiritual leader the church needs. The grace of God can enable a former blasphemer, arrogant, spiritually ignorant, persecutor, and insolent man into the greatest preacher, teacher, and church planter the world has ever seen. **Without knowing God's grace, people will not submit to Him or his will.**

#### **To Ponder:**

1. In what capacity do you see God leading you to serve Him within the local church?
2. Is there anything holding you back from serving God?

### **II. The Effect of Grace | 1 Timothy 1:15-16**

The trustworthy statement in verse 15 acts as a condensed articulation of the gospel, "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 (v.15)." The *world* here refers to the *world of humanity*, blind, lost, and condemned. Into that world of sinners, darkness, and unbelief, Jesus came with the sole purpose of saving sinners. And in the realm of sinners, Paul saw himself as "the foremost" of all (v.15-16).

Paul had no intent to minimize his former sinful life. Paul knew it took a miracle to save his life. It takes a miracle to save a sinner. The fundamental effect of grace is the redemption of sinners. **The glory of God shines brighter when sinners acknowledge how much they owe Him for their salvation.** Whenever the Pharisees wanted to insult Jesus, they would often call him a "friend of sinners" (Matthew 9:11). The incredulous religious leaders of Israel could not believe that the Messiah would come and not be just like them (Matthew 11:16-19). The Pharisees failed to see what many still fail to

see in our generation. **Sinners are the mission of the church and the target of the Gospel!** The last person saved by Jesus before His ascension into heaven was a justly condemned thief.

**To Ponder:**

1. Is it important to be reminded and aware of your sinful condition before God? Why?
2. How can a church become a social club rather than remain on mission?
3. How does Christ's example as a "friend of sinners" impact the way we treat people?

**III. The Duty of Grace | 1 Timothy 1:17-20**

Having begun the passage with thanksgiving, Paul now closes it with a doxology (praise to God), and a set of instructions to Timothy. *Eternal* literally means "of the ages." It refers to the present age and the age to come. God has no beginning and will have no end. He is immortal, invisible, the only God. Ephesus was one of the most important commercial centers (silver trade) in the Greco-Roman world. Most of the silver was used to craft images of the most popular pagan god in the Greco-Roman world, a goddess known by the Greeks as Artemis and by the Romans as Diana. The temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The temple was entirely of marble, and it took roughly two centuries to build the structure of the temple. Inside the temple stood the ancient and enormous silver statue of Artemis. The coming of Christ meant the death of Artemis in Ephesus. **The growth of Christianity meant the defeat of idolatry in that region, and a decline in the idol-driven culture of that time.** As more people left the pagan faith in Artemis, they also stopped spending their money on worshipping an idol. Paul now contrasts the one true God with the most popular pagan idol in the Greco-Roman world. **The coming of Christ into the life of a sinner means the death of pagan worship! The moment the grace of God reaches a sinner, anything that the sinner used to worship (other than God) must die.**

Paul was very much aware of the reality of paganism and spiritual warfare in Ephesus. In the same way, Timothy was called to unceasing spiritual warfare. That fight demands spiritually equipped, trained, and devoted soldiers. **Paul wrote this letter to help Timothy prepare for current battles and oppose the enemies invading the Ephesian church.** Timothy was set in the forefront of the battle, and Paul wanted him to acquit himself well. At its highest level, spiritual conflict is a war between God and Satan. Satan's specific target is Christ and His redemptive work and final glory. Satan and his angels, in battling God, also wage war against God's children (Dan.10:12-13; Jude 9; Rev.12:17). Satan now attacks the church, both personally and through evil men (Eph.6:12). In light of that, Paul urged Timothy to "wage the good warfare holding faith and good conscience" (v.18b-19). The Ephesian situation had become so severe that Paul had delivered two of his opponents to Satan, hoping they would learn not to blaspheme. **Satan's main goal is to attempt to devastate those who are already believers seeking to destroy the credibility of their witness.**

**To Ponder:**

1. When a sinner receives Christ, what are some things that need to die in his/her life?
2. Is church discipline important? If yes, why?
3. How can/does Satan attack the church? And what "weapons" of warfare do we possess to help us fight off these attacks?