

1 Timothy 1:15 "Jesus Saves!"

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

And bow your heads in prayer, please. Father, you know our hearts and still you love us. And we confess that doesn't fill us with as much gratitude as it should.

But make us, Father, bless us with hearts that are more and more filled with gratitude for your kindnesses and mercies to us. So Father, you know our hearts. You know how much we desire to be liked, how much we desire to be admired, and how much we hate being made fun of, or mocked, or thought of as stupid.

[1 : 45] And Father, you know how difficult it makes that just these processes within us to sometimes live for you, and to bear witness to you. So we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would bring the words of this scripture text deep into our hearts today, that it might form us, that we might live humble lives of courage for the good of others, the good of ourselves, and for your great glory. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. So today we're going to look at that third word primarily, which is, which says very, very simply, I better open up my Bible. I know it off by heart, you know, but I don't want to keep messing it up just when I'm in front of everybody like that. This is a, and it goes like this. It's 1 Timothy 1.15. It's a one-verse sermon. And Paul says this, This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And you'll see that in the Bible, it says, of whom I am the foremost. But the people putting the service together very wisely kept that out. It's not really part of the saying.

The saying is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Then Paul adds that extra thing, that he believes he might have been one of the worst sinners that's ever lived. But there's this very profound, short statement. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And this is last week when we looked at John 3.16. It was, I said, Jesus gives a one-verse summary of what his life and death and resurrection is all about, his whole ministry. And because the whole Bible is ultimately pointing to that and flowing from that, when you hear the words of John 3.16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to the end, that all that believe in him will not perish but have eternal life, you are hearing Jesus's summary of the whole Bible. And this is another summary which complements the other one. This is Paul giving a very, very simple summary. I'm going to give you a saying, he said, and this saying is trustworthy and it deserves your full acceptance. Not partial acceptance, but full. That's a big claim, isn't it? That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now, let's just be, you know, honest about this before we start to go into the text. It's a problematic text for us, isn't it, here in Canada. I don't know how many of you were listening to my prayer, but we all know that first and foremost in our culture, words like sinner and saved are easily and frequently mocked.

I mean, you can just picture any type of stand-up comedian, if they came out onto the stage and began by saying, by the way, folks, I'm a sinner, the crowd would laugh. Or if he came out and said, by the way, are you saved? The crowd would laugh. It's something that you can say with a raised eyebrow, with a shake of your head like this, like only completely uncool, unhip, completely unrealistic, weird, homophobic, all those extra things you don't like, say things like saved or say that things are like sinners.

And it's very, very easily mocked, very frequently mocked when it comes up. And because it's very frequently mocked, we often don't want to use such words. We often hide them and think of analogies or metaphors or other euphemisms to try to get around it. Now, it might very well be wise to not poke the bear and not use those words in a conversation, at least immediately. But it's very important that we don't let the mockery of the world seep into our thinking, that we lose these words, which are very, very important. And they're important because they talk about several types of human experiences that trouble us. And these words are beautiful, wise, and powerful medicine to different problems that we have that ruin relationships, ruin countries, ruin our lives. Well, before I get to that, just the very, very first part, listen to what it says again. This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. One of my hopes is at the end of the sermon is even if you don't, in fact, it would be vastly better if you, none of you remembered a single thing I said, but you'd memorize the text. If you remember what I say, but don't remember the text, in some ways I failed. If you remember the text, but don't remember what I'd say, I think I get an A plus. Because it's God's word you need to know, not my word, right? I'm just trying to,

I'm trying to be a little bit like a matchmaker. And here's what God's saying, and here's you, and I'd like the two of you to meet together and have this conversation and hear what God says. That's what, in a sense, part of my role is today. But here's that very, very big claim at the beginning, that the saying, and the saying is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, that that saying is trustworthy, and it's true, and it deserves full acceptance. Now, at the end of the sermon, I'm going to return to that after I've shared with you this, these psychological and emotional and spiritual and personal problems which this text is, is actually addressing in a very wise and beautiful way. But just, and I'm not going to defend this, it's, if you see this, now you understand a little bit when we were going through the book of Acts, why I kept mentioning to you why it is that we can believe that the book of Acts is accurate, why it's historically true. It's because I'm, in a sense, being formed by verses like this, that that's the claim which is being made.

[7 : 50] Paul, not only does Paul say this, but Paul says this, and he ends up basing his entire life on it. He ends up dying. He's writing this to a young man by the name of Timothy, and it's just after he's gotten freed from his first imprisonment in Rome, and it's just before he's going to have his final imprisonment in Rome, and he's going to end up being beheaded. And he is beheaded precisely because he is going to maintain, even to the point of death, that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to save sinners. It's not just that the resurrection actually happened, that the crucifixion happened, the resurrection happened, but the meaning is that it's the means by which sinners are saved, and he was willing to die for that. It's not like dying for Marxism or the American flag or the Canadian flag or the Russian flag, not like dying for, you know, Palestinian causes or anything like that. People die for causes. Not many people die maintaining that this is actually true, that this actually happened. That's a bigger thing. That shows he really believes that this is true, and I've talked in other weeks about how the evidence is that it really did completely transform him, and it's the best explanation in the world to explain the changes in his life that he really did see the risen Jesus.

And so he's making these profound claims, and it's not proud or arrogant to make such claims.

You know, it's proud or arrogant to say that Canada is the greatest country in the world. It's funny, we don't often think of that as being a proud and arrogant country. You know, we see it if Americans say America is the greatest country in the world, and right now it bothers a lot of Canadians and Americans say that. We don't think that our own claim that we're the best country in the world is at all arrogant and might irritate others. And you could go all the way around the world. I can just imagine, you know, in Europe, if French said, French is the best country in Europe, it would bother all the other countries. You know, you can go on and on and on and on. We don't see pride often in ourselves. Those are proud statements. But to say that Jesus really died on the cross and rose from the dead, if you're making a claim about what actually happened in history, that's not proud. It's not proud to say that Ottawa is the capital of Canada, or that Toronto Maple Leafs are a hockey team. Those aren't proud things to say it. It's just true.

And one of the things we need to understand is that Christianity, the heart of Christianity, is that these are true and trustworthy sayings deserving of full acceptance, because it's news.

It's true news of actually happened. It's not just a religious or spiritual statement, which is about sort of an interior thing that we value. No, no, no. It's interior and we value it, but it's true.

[10 : 43] And it's not only true, it's trustworthy. And it's so trustworthy, your life will be vastly better for it if you accept it fully. It deserves to be accepted fully. Well, that's my little thing about that, getting into the problem parts of the text, at least in our culture.

Several years ago, my wife was bumped into somebody in a park, an older woman, and she got into a conversation with her. And over the weeks, it came out that the woman had a son which rarely visited her, an only son who rarely visited her. And they were a bit estranged. And one of the things about this son that bothered her was that he had become quite successful. And with his success, both professionally and financially, he looked down on poor people. He looked down on many people in Canada. He had the view that he was able to make much of himself. He was able to accomplish all of these things. And if he was able to accomplish all of these things, and the only reason that others don't accomplish such things is because they obviously are lazy, not very smart, don't work hard, aren't disciplined, and on and on and on and on. And the thing that bothered, I mean, there's several things that obviously bothered the older woman about it. But part of what bothered her is that his fundamental claim was false.

He grew up with loving parents. He grew up with loving parents who paid all of his university costs to go to a really good university. Like he wasn't quite born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but he was definitely born with lots and lots and lots of advantages. You know, there used to be a... It's not as if he struggled to get on the baseball team, made the baseball team, and then hit a home run.

No, he was actually almost born on home plate, maybe born on third base. And he only had to manage to get from third base to home. And in baseball, to get from third base to home is because somebody else hits the ball and allows you to get in. And he didn't realize that. Now, we all know that if Hollywood was to do a movie about that man, we would be disappointed if by the end of the movie, the man wasn't humbled in some way, wouldn't we? If we saw a man who was arrogant and full of himself, believing that he'd accomplished all of these great things, looking down his nose at others, if at the end of the movie, he's even richer and more powerful, we would all tell people, don't go see that movie. It sucks. But if in fact, it ends with him being humbled, maybe profoundly humbled, I mean, there might be other reasons why it's not a good movie. But we'd say that's a good movie. We like to see the proud humbled. But we don't like to have our own pride humbled. You know, here's a thing to try to get your minds around a little bit. Why is it that nobody can, virtually nobody, and I'm not saying this because I'm perfect and I'm pointing at you, and if you're listening to this, this isn't me saying all those people outside of this church, this is what you like, and we're the accomplished perfect ones. No, no, why is it that as human beings, every one of us included, it's very hard for us to actually acknowledge that we've done something wrong and take responsibility for it? Now, maybe you think, no, that's George, that's a bit extreme. But if you go back and you listen to supposed apologies. I was talking to a young man and a young woman about a year ago, and it turned out, I was asking a bit about how they got there, and one of them had come to this city because he was with a young woman that he hoped to marry, and they were living together, a young man, and she cheated on him, broke the relationship. The other woman who was his friend, but not his girlfriend, she had been in a five-year relationship with a person, and then her boyfriend cheated on her. And in both cases, as they were talking about it, one of the things that really irked them was how the, in one case a woman, in the other case a man, how they responded to it.

They basically said something like this, well, I'm really sad that you're upset. I'm really sad that you're, I'm really sad for what happened, as if it just sort of happened, you know, like a lottery ticket floating out of the sky into your hands that's worth like a million dollars. Like, I'm really sorry that this has happened, right? But that's not an apology, is it?

[15 : 31] What, I mean, it would have probably broken the relationship period, but what they really ultimately wanted was to say, I should not have done that. This is wrong, and it hurt you, and I am sorry.

Well, why is it that we want to just make it about the other person's feeling, or why is it that when we are supposed to be making apologies, what we really end up doing is justifying ourselves, and making ourselves look better than we really are? Why is it that we, we say things like, well, you know, the reason I did that is actually partially your fault, because of the way you treat me?

You know, like we're both sort of the blame at this, or I didn't understand, or I, you know, I didn't really mean to, or you're taking it the wrong way, that a lot of times when we have conversations, it's all about you're feeling upset, which is the problem, not the wrong that I did, and it's always an attempt to make it look like what I did wasn't quite as bad, or quite as wrong, or anything like that. Why is it that that's a very, very common human problem? And it's a common human problem when you see very powerful and important people get caught out for doing naughty things, and they have professional image managers, and it's also just the sort of thing that you hear by the average person on the street. Why is it that we human beings have a profound desire to justify ourselves, to make ourselves look better than we are, and to not accept responsibility for the wrongdoing we've done? And why is it that we human beings love to watch movies where the pride of other people is punctured, but we hate it if in some way we are revealed to be not as perfect as we want others to think, and we don't see that that's our pride being punctured?

And why is it that those experiences of having our pride punctured often mean we need things like therapy and counseling? What is it about human beings that that's the way we are?

Well, that brings us to the statement that we're looking at today, the true statement, worthy of full acceptance, that this saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now, usually in our culture, when we think of the word sin and sinners, we think of it in connection to sexual sins. That would probably be the common way of people, you know, people might say, well, it's an old-fashioned word, I don't really know what it means. I think when people talk about it, it's because they have a hang-up about sex or something. Christians have a hang-up about sex, and so they use this word sinners, but it's not really a good word. But that's not what sinner means at all.

[18 : 36] Sin is a proud rejection of the triune God. A sinner is one who proudly rejects the triune God, rejects his claims, rejects his authority, rejects his words.

Now, it doesn't mean that they do everything the opposite of what God wants, but a sinner is one who rejects with pride the triune God, and we accept those things that the triune of the triune God that we happen to agree with, that we think are good, or that we want to do.

But even if we do things that God seems to want us to do, we don't do it because of God. We do it because, well, I think this is wise. I, my, me and my tribe think this is wise, and that's why we do it. But we, at the end of the day, reject the presence, unless we ask for them, of the triune God.

Now, I'm going to show you a slide. If you could put up the first slide, that would be very, very helpful. When we hear the phrase, this saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, it doesn't really make sense to the average Canadian, because the average Canadian, and I think the average person throughout the world, ultimately has a view like this about what the spiritual, the obvious religious or spiritual path is.

And I think this is what you would find if you go in the Muslim community, if you go in large parts of Christianity that's forgotten the gospel, I think it would be what you would find in the Jewish community, the Hindu community, the Buddhist community. The spiritual, but not religious, the boutique spirituality world would all have this basic understanding that this is the real way, that if you are going to be a spiritual or religious person, this is the way it works. First, you'd be a little bit of a better person.

[20 : 39] So you maybe, you decide you're going to cut down on your drinking, you're going to maybe cut down on your smoking, you're going to try to lose a couple of pounds, and you're going to start to maybe make a bit of a dent in your credit card thing.

And then after you've done something like that, you sort of feel like you have some credentials to join some type of a holy group, whether it's a synagogue or a mosque or a temple or a coven or some other little group that's involved in some types of spiritual activities connecting to the divine. Because you couldn't just walk into that group if you smell of cigarette smoke and you're drunk, and your credit card balance is absolutely horrific, and you're doing terrible things.

You can't just join some type of holy group like that if that's the type of person you are. So you need to get a little bit better first. And once you've gotten a little bit better, because good grief, how on earth would your church view it if you came to church drunk and completely broken? Like good grief, they'd kick you right out of the building, wouldn't we? That's what we people think.

That's not what we would do, but that's what people would think. And you join a holy group and you start to take a couple of their holy practices. Maybe you start to pray in the mosque, or you make the five times of prayers a day with all the appropriate washings, or you meditate, or you practice mindfulness, or you say the rosary, or you, you know, do some Bible memorization, or whatever it is, if you're understanding this in a spiritual path.

And then at the end of the day, as you become a better person, and as you master being a part of this holy group, you attain union with God. And that's how most people think that it works.

[22 : 27] It's like the natural way that we would just assume that people who were involved in some type of a religious quest would go about it. People who are burned by religion and spirituality, they reject this.

They think it's a complete and utter waste of time hanging around with a group of self-righteous people, thinking they're holier than others and better than others in the little coven, or in the mosque, or in the church, or in the synagogue, or in the temple, or in the meditation group, or whatever it is.

As they sip their Johnny Walker, or as they sit doing something else, or exercising, or whatever, they think, why would I want to hang around with a group of people like that to supposedly attain some type of union with an imaginary God?

And they are completely and utterly dismissive of it, but they just assume that that's the way that religion and spirituality goes. But if you look at that, and the way I've worded it, you'll see the problem.

If you follow that practice, you have become that self-made man that I told you about earlier in the sermon, that we all want to see fail, because you've attained it.

[23 : 42] And that's why religion and spirituality don't solve the problem of self-righteousness and self-justification and pride.

The entire process is designed to appeal to your pride, and it's designed to fail, all the while blindly believing that it's succeeding.

Interestingly enough, if people reject that because it seems unwise, and they choose to live a completely and utterly unspiritual and unreligious life, maybe a very good life still, they actually still are still caught in the same dilemma of pride and self-justification and self-righteousness.

What did Paul say? What did he say again? He said, The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

He came into the world to save human beings who proudly reject Christ, proudly reject God, and will only have God on their own terms, and those are whom Jesus came to save.

[25 : 10] He came to save me. I am that proud person, self-justifying and self-righteous, that he came to save.

And so are you. Well, George, now that you've completely and utterly depressed us, why is that statement there? The statement is there, if you could put up the next slide, is because the gospel tells you something wonderfully, beautifully, radically different.

You see, the gospel path isn't be a better person, join a holy group, and attain union with God. The gospel path says, George, I have come to save you.

I ask that you realize there's absolutely nothing you can do. You cannot leave yourself, George, to save yourself. You cannot practice some type of mindfulness whereby you can leave yourself and observe yourself, and that where you leave to is some type of holy and pure spark connected to me.

You cannot stop your pride. You cannot stop your self-justification. You cannot stop your self-righteousness. You cannot stop excluding me.

[26 : 35] And Jesus says to me, George, George, come to me, you who are laboring and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Lay down your sword and shield. Take off the armor that you depend upon. Take away your crown, your supposed crown, and turn to me.

And let me make you right with God. Let my grace come into your life. Because there's absolutely nothing you can do and absolutely nothing that I need.

What can you give? Love itself. What can you give? Goodness himself. Love himself. What can you give? To generosity himself.

What can you give? To the God who created all things and sustains all things. What can you possibly ever give him that he did not already give you?

[27 : 53] See, the gospel begins with grace. I don't know if I wrote the word of it right. Grace is given, and you get union with the triune God.

I didn't write it very well. I apologize. Maybe I just want my notes. I can't see the screen. Grace given union with the triune God. That's why it says that it's a trustworthy saying and worthy of full, complete acceptance.

That you just accept that you can never save yourself. You can never leave your pride and self-justification. All you can do is receive with empty hands what Christ has done for you in his life and death and resurrection and ascension and coming again.

all you can do is receive. And after God has made you right with himself through the person of Christ which you receive by faith, then you get, now all of a sudden being part of a local church means all the difference in the world.

You know, even something like communion isn't about God. I'm coming to communion. I am thinking spectacular thoughts. I am thinking holy thoughts.

[29 : 10] I have had a spectacular week. Look at me, A1. Look at my devotion. Look at my emotion. No, no, no, no, no, no. You know, I miss not having an Anglican church where we can kneel to have communion.

I miss it. It's profoundly spiritually wise. We come to communion not to show off our memories and our imaginations and our emotions around Christ but to receive from him again.

to be fed by him. Communion is not something I attain but a gift. A gift he wants to give to you.

That's why, you see, I am, every Christian is a herald for Christ. All I can tell you is, hey guys, I'm a beggar, desperately need a free food.

I can tell you where free food is. I can tell you where eternal life is. I can tell you this is what Jesus said. He's saying it to you. Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

[30 : 23] I can tell you that's what Jesus says. That's what Jesus says. You receive grace. You join then and be part of a local church where the gospel is believed and proclaimed.

And then the gospel helps you to live a holier life. When it says here in this statement, I'm just bringing the sermon to a close.

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. That word save here has three different tenses that we need to understand and grasp.

It means, first of all, that when we put our faith, when we say to Jesus, and this is the wonderful thing, you don't have to have full and complete acceptance of the statement to become a Christian. You don't have to say, God isn't saying, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, George.

Until you can explain the mutual indwelling of the three persons of the Trinity, you can't come to me. Like, no, he doesn't give us a theology quiz.

[31 : 31] There's this longing in our heart that we need to be made right with God and accepted by him. That we know the burden of pride and the burden of self-righteousness and the burden of self-justification and the lies that we tell to make ourselves righteous and to justify ourselves and to bolster our pride.

And as we tell these lies and gaslight people all around us, the center of our lives becomes more and more hollow and more and more empty. And we become more terrified that if someone was to actually prick that gaslighting that all they would see within us is just an emptiness and a void.

And we get so tired and burdened of that and hear these words of the gospel and say, Jesus, unworthy as I am, would you take me and never let me go?

And Jesus says, my dear child, before you said that, I said to you, come unto me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

There is no rest in pride. There is no rest in self-justification. There is no rest in self-righteousness. There is no rest in lies.

[32 : 49] But God has made us for himself and our hearts are restless till they rest in him. Through the gospel. So the first sense of saved is that we're made right with God.

The second sense of saved. So in other words, we can say, I have been saved by Christ, made right with God by my faith in Christ. Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling.

And then he saves us. He is saving us. That means it's the process by which we become more like Christ. See, here's the wonderful thing. Do I have problems always wanting to tell the truth?

Yes, I have problems with that. Is it very tempting? Why is it that when I do something wrong that the first things that go into my mind are to self-justify or to belittle or to put down or to minimize or all of those other things?

Yes, that is the case. But you see, here's this profound comfort of the gospel is that when the gospel becomes more real to our heart, when it becomes more real to your heart, there is this fundamental sense of security and being held by which you can say, you see, people are so fragile and ourselves are so splintered that to let people know that we've done something wrong, we fear that it would, and apart from Christ, maybe it would just make us more splintered, but it'll only make us splintered to that point of brokenness whereby we can hear the word of the gospel and realize we need the gospel, we need Christ.

[34 : 29] And when we put our faith and trust in Christ, we have union with him, all that he accomplished for us on the cross. And that becomes the ground on which we can stand to acknowledge the wrong that we've done without unmaking us.

It is the ground upon which we stand that can give us a new identity in Christ to start to do that which is right and avoiding that which is wrong and to be generous and to be giving and to be forgiving.

So this wonderful statement of Paul's, the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I can say amen by my faith in Christ and what he did for me on the cross.

That is what made me right with God. And as my faith with Christ is what he did for me on the cross becomes more real to me, that is the ground that I stand on, the air that I breathe, the lens by which I see myself in the world so that I can deal with my pride and self-righteousness and self-justification and gaslighting and lies and be honest and to speak the truth and to become more like Christ.

And when Paul says this saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, it isn't just meaning that I have been saved, I'm being saved, that it means that I will be saved.

[35 : 53] And the end of my story in Christ and the end of your story, sinner, in Christ, is you will stand in the new heaven and the new earth in the presence of the triune God and you will see Jesus as he is in the new heaven and the new earth and you will be like him and you will be welcomed and you will live with him forever.

And in Christ, that is the end of your story. And the end of your story changes everything in the story.

Invite you to stand. Bow our heads in prayer.

Father, we give you thanks and praise that your word is true, the Bible is true, that it's not just true that Jesus did these things that the biographies tell us that he did and it's not just true, Father, that he in fact did die upon the cross and it's not just true that he tasted all there is to taste of death and it's not just true that he rose from the dead and the grave is empty and that people saw him resurrected and that he's coming again but it's also true, Father, that his death upon the cross was for us the means by which you save us, you make us right with you, that he lived the life we could not live and died the death that we deserved and in union with him we get the benefit of his life and death and resurrection.

And it's not only then true factually and historically and imminently but, Father, that this saying is true and worthy of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and it's true, Father, aesthetically and emotionally and it's true in beauty and it's true eternally as well as factually and historically and so, Father, we ask that this true saying would become more and more that we would accept not just this wonderful news but who the news is about that we would accept and know Christ and we would rest upon his finished work that we would allow him through the gentle moving of the Holy Spirit in our lives to be more holy to be more generous to be more giving to leave behind the fears and the foolishness and the idols and the lies of this present age to stand grateful and strong and wise and unbowed and we ask these things in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior and all God's people said,

[38 : 42] Amen. Amen. Thank you.