

I Was Shown Mercy

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we are continuing this morning in our series through 1 Timothy. And we are listening to Christ's instructions through the Apostle Paul about how we are to live in the household of God, in the church.

So if you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to 1 Timothy. For the past two Sundays, we have been in chapter 2.

And this morning, we are actually going to go back and look at the section that we skipped over from chapter 1. So we are going to be in 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 9.

And look at the rest of chapter 1 this morning. Now let's remember how Paul started this letter to Timothy. Right after the introduction, Paul jumped right into giving instruction.

And these were his instructions. In verse 3, he said, As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus, so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer.

[1 : 1 1] So as we heard several weeks ago, there were people in the church teaching false doctrines. Down in verse 7, we heard a little bit more about these false doctrines.

Paul said, They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm. We know that the law is good if one uses it properly, said Paul.

So we noted a couple weeks ago that these people teaching false doctrines were pointing people back to the Old Testament. But the problem, according to Paul, is that they did not really understand the Old Testament.

They did not understand the law. And they were misapplying it to the people. So now Paul is going to tell Timothy about the purpose of the law in verses 9 to 11.

Then he's going to share a little bit of his own personal testimony in verses 12 to 17. And then verses 18 to 20, he's going to give Timothy some more encouragement and warning, especially in the backdrop of this instruction about false teachers.

[2 : 2 1] Let's look at that first one. The purpose of the law. I'm going to read again, starting in verse 8. Paul says, We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

We also know that the law is made not for the righteous, but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

Amen. So Paul makes it clear right out of the gate here that the law God gave long ago to the Israelites had a very specific purpose, or rather a specific group of people that it was given for.

He said, The law is made not for the righteous, but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, and he goes on.

So the purpose of the law is to convict us of our sins. It's to show us what's wrong, what's evil, what's impure, what's sinful.

[3 : 5 6] And if we think back to those Old Testament days, the law was not just an ethical code to live up to, or to aspire to, but it was actually in force. It was the governing law of the nation, or at least it was supposed to be.

Israel departed from it at various moments. So the law didn't just convict, but it also condemned the guilty.

For example, Exodus chapter 21 verse 12, Anyone who strikes a person with a fatal blow is to be put to death. However, if it's not done intentionally, but God lets it happen, they are to flee to a place I will designate.

So the law was made, in part, so that murderers, people who intentionally killed other people, might receive the punishment that they deserve. It was given by God so that there would be justice among his people.

And we might also argue that it was given to restrain or deter people from doing these kinds of things because it made the consequences of doing wrong costly.

[5 : 08] There was a penalty or punishment. So Paul goes on and he gives this big list of people that the law was made for.

And he uses all these different words to describe these people, various attitudes as well as behaviors. And we're just going to quickly go through this list.

It's quite the list. He starts by saying that it's for lawbreakers and rebels. Quite literally, for the lawless.

People who are generally insubordinate. Don't want to submit to authority of any kind. People who have the attitude of, I'm going to do whatever I want to do and ain't nobody going to tell me what to do.

Rebels kind of captures that same sort of idea. People who generally are just going to break the law. They're going to go off. They're going to do whatever they want. It's for the ungodly, says Paul.

[6 : 11] The opposite of that would be a godly person and a godly person is a person who is devoted to God. A person who obeys God. Who worships God. And so an ungodly person is the opposite.

It's a person who has no fear of God. A person who disobeys God. Who disregards God. It's for the sinful, says Paul.

A person who does things that are wrong. Things that fall short of what God has revealed is good and right. He says it's for the unholy.

Which refers to a person who is profane. Somebody who treats holy things or sacred things as if they were just common. A person who is irreverent.

It's for the irreligious. A person who cares more about this world than about God. Somebody who minimizes or marginalizes God.

[7 : 12] Cares more about the stuff around, the stuff of earth. It's for murderers, it's for murderers, says Paul. We talked about that one already. It's for the sexually immoral, says Paul.

The Greek word used there is pornois, from which we get our English word pornography. This word refers to people who engage in any kind of sexually immoral behavior, fornication, adultery, basically any kind of sexual relations or interactions with someone who you're not married to would be considered sexually immoral.

Paul then gives another specific kind of sexually immoral behavior. Those who practice homosexuality. And at this point, I want to hit the pause button and talk about some of this stuff as it relates today because, I mean, the way that they would have heard this back in Ephesus in those days is probably a little different than how we would hear it today in our culture.

We live in a culture and time where there are countless voices saying that when it comes to sexuality, anything is okay. If it feels good, do it.

Don't let anyone tell you that your sexual choices are wrong. And this attitude, this view of human sexuality is promoted everywhere. Probably many of you have heard this.

[8 : 42] It's on the TV shows and in the movies. It's promoted by journalists and news writers. It's promoted by those who identify as LGBTQ. It's promoted by governments and workplaces now.

It's promoted by teachers and in schools. It's promoted by vocal organizations like Planned Parenthood and the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada. It's promoted by international organizations like the World Health Organization and the United Nations.

And I could go on but I think you know what I'm talking about. This message is coming on all channels all around us. When it comes to sex, almost anything is okay.

If it feels good, do it. Don't let anybody tell you that your sexual choices are wrong. But Paul says right here that long ago when God gave his law to the Israelites, one of its purposes was to show us that there is a sexual right and a sexual wrong.

There is a good design and plan of God for human sexuality and the Old Testament law lays out the ways that we corrupt that. The ways that we deviate from that.

[9 : 55] sex outside of marriage, adultery, cheating, sex with relatives and Paul explicitly in this list mentions homosexuality.

Sex with people of the same sex. Quite literally for men who go to bed with men. Now I know that even saying that in public is considered hateful today.

Bigoted intolerant but let's remember these are the words of God himself. These are the words of Jesus Christ himself speaking through his apostle.

He's saying just like the Old Testament law revealed all those years ago there is a sexual right and a sexual wrong. God's law laid it out long ago so that we could know it.

So that we could be convicted of it. so that we could turn to God and be washed and cleansed of it and be called back to that way that he designed us to be.

[11 : 04] To the goodness of human sexuality that he made us to enjoy. To what is right. To real intimacy. Real intimacy between a married man and a married woman who give themselves only to each other.

sadly many people in our world today simply reject the creator and what he has to say. They want to go their own way they want to do whatever they please when it comes to sexuality.

And so for many it has brought nothing but grief heartache broken relationships broken trust it has led to women feeling used it has led to children being conceived with no committed mother to carry the child no committed father to help raise the child it has led to cover ups scandals secrets and lies ignoring what God has to say about our sexuality has led to one of the deepest kinds of confusion that we can experience and rightly so because sex it's a thing that affects our bodies deeply there's hormones there's chemicals I'm not going to go into all the details there's synapses being formed in our brains pathways strengthened when we do God's design but when we take what he has designed and deviate from it we're affected in all those areas of our body as well our feelings and emotions are affected so deeply that it's no wonder that we see the kind of chaotic confusion that we see today around this issue we've got men who think that they can be women we've got women who think that they can be men we've got people out there today saying absolutely men can become pregnant and if you disagree they say you're transphobic the truth is that we live in a time of widespread sexual confusion some are somewhat innocent in that confusion maybe they've been the victim of abuse or bullying or maybe they've simply just accepted what they've been taught from the time they were young while others are more militant they know full well what they are doing what they are advocating and why nevertheless what God has said has been consistent from what he has said in

Genesis about how he created man and woman and what marriage is to be to what he said at Mount Sinai when he gave the law what is sexually right and what is sexually wrong up until this time when he speaks again through Paul to Timothy there is a sexual right and there is a sexual wrong and it hasn't changed over all that time the law was given by God in the first place to reveal that and to expose the wrongness of deviating from it and it does sexual sin does leave us guilty before God just as the other things in this list leave us guilty before God but there is good news which we are getting to but before we do let's just look at these last few things in the list Paul says the law was made for slave traders in the original language it's literally man stealers and it could be translated kidnapers in Bible times slavery was an established social construct and you could sell yourself into slavery to pay off a large debt in the time of financial ruin but this seems more aimed at those who would actually go and kidnap somebody who was a free man and then sell them into slavery and this is something that still happens today human trafficking of any sort would kind of be covered by this description

Paul says the law was made for liars I have to be honest when we get to that word I'm kind of surprised you know the other things mentioned they seem really some of them really bad or really obvious murder sexual immorality kidnapping but then liars lying is something that deviates from God's good design as well it's evil it's much worse than we think and it puts us in the same boat as all the other sins listed here guilty before God and his good law finally the law was made for perjurers perjury is a specific type of lying it means to lie in a courtroom while under oath giving a false testimony Paul then sums up this list by adding a catch all phrase at the end he says the law is made for people characterized by all these attitudes and behaviors and also for any others that I didn't list that are contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel it's a little bit of a tangled up sentence a long one let's just unpack it here little by little we'll start at the end which he entrusted to me so

[16 : 49] Paul has been entrusted with something by God and that something is the gospel the good news here Paul describes the good news as the good news about the glory of God that's one

way of describing what God has done in sending Jesus to save us it's a revealing of his glorious nature and closer to his main point there is a sound doctrine there is a true teaching that conforms to the gospel or we might say goes with the good news accompanies the good news Jesus died to save us yes but he also came teaching about kingdom righteousness for example he taught about money and greed Paul didn't say anything in this list about that but that would be an example of something else that is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the gospel and the main point he's making the law is helpful in convicting us about all these things even the things

I didn't mention in this list and so let's apply this list today as you look down this list are you anywhere in this list do any of these sinful attitudes or behaviors describe how you have been at one time or another in your life most of us can look through this and say well I haven't murdered anyone or kidnapped anyone or lied under oath in court but all of us have told a lie if not many likely some of us have engaged in some kind of sexually immoral behavior probably all of us have shown disregard for the law of our land at one time or another probably all of us have acted in a way that's sacrilegious or profane even if it's just with a comment or words that we said the law was made for the sinful in

Paul's letter to the Roman church he says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God in case we get to the very bottom of this list and somehow feel like well it's not talking about me I haven't been anything like any of this there's that catch all phrase at the end have you done anything that is contrary to the true teaching that fits with the good news of Jesus where does Paul see himself in relation to this list does he see himself as the righteous a man for whom the law wasn't made or does he see himself as being among the guilty one for whom this law was made it's at this point that Paul now begins to share honestly his own story about himself he says

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength that he considered me trustworthy appointing me to his service even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief so as Paul brings this big list of sinful attitudes and behaviors what does it do does it bolster Paul's self righteousness no it's as if as he's giving this list he's reminded of his own sinfulness his own unworthiness to be an apostle entrusted with this good news of Jesus he starts by thanking Christ Jesus that he was even selected in the first place to serve as an apostle and he acknowledges that it has been Christ Jesus who has given him strength to do the job and then he goes on to confess his own sins here in verse 13 even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man the word blaspheme as it applied to Jesus as he was accused it kind of meant claiming to be God but it had a more general meaning just of slander Paul's confessing here I was once a blasphemer I was once a person who slandered the people of Jesus Christ I was a person who demeaned the name of Christ Paul says I was a persecutor I was a man who went after the followers of [22 : 23] Jesus to round them up and bring harm to them even to see them killed I was a violent man I saw to it that people were beaten that they were killed for following Jesus and yet I was shown mercy says Paul God Christ was compassionate towards me he took pity on me he didn't treat me the way I deserve now Paul brings in one factor here he says he was shown mercy because he acted in ignorance and in unbelief and I think we need to be careful how we read that statement I don't think Paul is making an excuse here he's not saying because I was ignorant I wasn't guilty no he's saying I was shown mercy in other words I know that I deserved punishment for my sins the things

I did against Christ so he's not using it as an excuse second I don't think he's saying that Jesus was obligated to show me mercy because I was ignorant or because I had unbelief as if somehow Paul earned the mercy of Christ by being ignorant I think what he's getting at here is there was a difference between Paul it seems and many of the other religious leaders the Pharisees for them they weren't acting in ignorance they saw with their own eyes the signs that Jesus did the miracles and they knew deep down inside they knew what those miracles pointed to and yet they knowingly and willfully rejected him persecuted him and put Jesus to death Paul seems to be a step removed from that still spiritually blind and unbelieving yet also somewhat ignorant to the truth of who Jesus really is until that moment came on the road to

Damascus but listen to this Paul says even though I was once a blasphemer a persecutor a violent man I was shown mercy the grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus I love that metaphor poured out abundantly all the scholars will tell you there's one word here it's like super abound or something like that a word Paul made up

because they can't find it anywhere else but the picture is clear the Lord didn't just give me a second chance he didn't just wipe the slate clean and then leave me to myself to figure this out he poured his grace out on me abundantly his favor his blessing his kindness came at me into my life like a waterfall flowing all over me all over my life and not just his grace says

Paul but along with his grace came faith and love he poured these out on me abundantly as well yes even our faith is a gift from God if we look just back to the previous verse Paul was in a state of unbelief now he's in a state of belief and came the same way that the grace came it was poured out on him Paul was a violent man in the previous verse he says now a man of love it was poured out on him he was transformed Paul goes on in verse 15 he says here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners this is the gospel this is the good news of

Jesus in a nutshell look back up at that list in verses 9 and 10 look at all these sinful attitudes and behaviors that we might be guilty of and remember that catch all phrase at the end which reminds us that if our sin is not listed here we're not off the hook because this list isn't exhaustive and yet Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners he came into the world to save people on the list Paul was on the list the law's purpose was to expose the truth about each one of us that yes we are sinners we are guilty we are rebels we're not holy as we ought to be we have acted wrongly before God in one way or another but there is good news God is a blessed and glorious

[27 : 39] God he has mercy towards us he pours out his grace and love abundantly on us and that's why he came to save sinners like us this is a trustworthy saying says Paul you can bet your life on this Christ came into the world to save sinners that's you that's me and then Paul confesses he shares based on these things that he's already said his own view of himself he says sinners of whom I am the worst so we look at that list Paul says I'm among the worst and we don't need to worry about whether Paul thought he was the worst possible sinner or just among the worst I mean case in point most of us can't say that we hunted down Christians and are responsible for their bodily harm suffering and death now all sin is evil all of it makes us guilty and yet some sins are especially grievous

Paul says I did those things that are especially grievous but for that very reason he says I was shown mercy so that in me the worst of sinners Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life Paul saying God showed me mercy he was patient with me because he wanted to show he wanted to give an example he wanted everyone to know that yes even those worst of sins on the list can be forgiven it doesn't matter how badly you have sinned murder the worst forms of sexual immorality Jesus wants you to know through Paul that yes you can be forgiven my grace is enough my mercy is enough to cleanse you and forgive you and save you from what you deserve and for our part what do we need to do Paul kind of throws it in at the end he says for those who would believe in him believe put our trust put our faith in Jesus and we will receive eternal life so I want to ask you do you believe in Jesus have you surrendered your heart to Jesus this news is so good that we could be forgiven that we could be saved despite what we have done that Paul burst into praise now to the king eternal immortal invisible the only God be honor and glory forever and ever amen I love this he is so touched deeply by the mercy of

God in his own life by the grace of God that he says King Jesus you are worthy of all glory and honor for the rest of eternity because you're the only God you're the true king who lives forever and will never die and though we cannot see you now you are worthy of that praise for unending days forever and forever let's just quickly look at the last paragraph here verse 18 to 20 Timothy my son I'm giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well holding on to faith and a good conscience which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard faith among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme now there's lots here we could discuss but the gist of it is that

Paul is encouraging Timothy there were prophecies made about Timothy and Paul says that this command that he's now giving Timothy about silencing the false teachers will in some sense fulfill those prophecies as Timothy fights the battle in this difficult situation here in Ephesus remembering those prophecies is going to help him to fight well Paul's talking about the spiritual battle here and he's urging Timothy to hold on to his faith to hold on to his good conscience this harkens back to what we read in verse five and six the false teachers the problem with them was that they were

departing from a pure heart and a let go of their sincere faith they let go of their good conscience and it proved utterly disastrous for them

[33 : 27] I'm not going to speculate on what their final outcome was we don't really know but it doesn't sound good whatever Paul means by whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme and Paul's going to have more encouragement and more warnings like this later on in a little bit of a different focus I want to come back to this testimony of Paul to the gospel and as we do we want to be reminded of what the Lord has done for each one of us we're going to celebrate the Lord's table again this morning and for those who are new or visiting I just want to take a few moments to explain what it's all about why that we do it's kind of a reenactment of the last supper that Jesus had with his disciples before his crucifixion that evening before he was arrested in the garden of

Gethsemane Jesus sat down with his disciples and had the Passover meal and while he was around the table he took bread and he broke it and he gave thanks he also took a cup and he passed it around to each of them and he urged them to eat of the bread and drink of the cup the cup contained in Jesus words the fruit of the wine either wine or grape juice and Jesus encouraged them to drink from the cup and there was a special significance to this Jesus told them in metaphorical language that the bread represented his body and that the contents of the cup represented his blood Jesus knew that he was about to die and he wanted his disciples to know why and so he explained something of the metaphor that night he said this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins so

Jesus knew exactly why he had come and why he was about to die it wasn't just because the religious leaders didn't like him or were angry with him God was doing something far greater than anyone realized there was going to be a new covenant there was going to be a new arrangement between God and man not like the Old Testament law which was also a covenant but a better covenant a covenant that would not require animal sacrifices anymore but a covenant that would secure permanent once for all forgiveness of sins for God's people and Jesus would be the sacrifice offered to bring this about his blood his death rather than the blood of a lamb or a goat or a bull his blood would atone for the sins of his people of all who would believe in him thus securing forgiveness from God and removing permanently the guilt of sinners forever so

Jesus is the one that told us to do this regularly or customarily when we're gathered as his people to eat and to drink of the bread and the cup in remembrance of him and so that's what we're going to do in just a moment here Bible says that we ought to examine ourselves before we partake we says that we shouldn't partake in an unworthy manner meaning irreverently or insincerely and so if you don't believe in Jesus then I would encourage you just to refrain or abstain when these are passed around you can just signal with your hand but for the rest of us this table is precious it's here that we remember how we just like Paul were all sinners guilty and how Christ Jesus came into the world to save us we remember how his mercy was shown us his grace was poured out abundantly on us and so if you believe that

Jesus died to save you that he is your savior your messiah your lord please join with us remember with us in the next minutes here we'll just have a few moments of quiet and I encourage you to pray in these moments to confess to God to talk to God to pour out your heart to him and then after a few minutes of that we'll have Dave and Rod come up and pass out the elements we'll wait until everybody has been served and then I'll pray and we'll eat and drink all together before Kind And need a two let impl them heads out

[39 : 11] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[41 : 41] Thank you.

Thank you.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you. Thank you for your gift. Thank you.

Thank you. Amen. Amen.