

Guilt and Grace

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[0:00] If you would turn with me in your Bibles to 1st Timothy and the first chapter where Paul writes! in such a personal and passionate way setting forth the need to be clear about what the church of Christ is.

in verse 5 the aim of our charge is love that dishes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. And then we have Paul's own testimony as he shares with Timothy and with us how it is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ broke into his heart and life changing him guiding him and molding him.

Which leads to that glorious statement in verse 15 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.

We'll just bow in prayer for a moment. Lord what a privilege it is to meet together in this way with our Bibles open. And we pray in doing so Lord our hearts too would be open.

That our minds would be led by the Spirit to fix on the things that are above. To meditate on Jesus. We pray that the teaching we find in this letter would be of benefit to us Lord in our pilgrimage here on earth.

[1:26] And we pray tonight that it might add that extra depth and dimension to our singing of the new song that is put in our mouth. Our God to magnify.

Be with us we pray this evening. Bless your word above all Lord to our hearts in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. As I said the church of Christ is a very clear aim.

And that aim was driving the Apostle Paul to be clear in his instruction to Timothy. Reminding him in these words in verse 5. The aim of our charge. He says to young Timothy as he begins to step up to leadership.

Keep this as the focus Timothy. Don't swerve away as others do. As he says in verse 6. Certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussions.

To swerve is to miss the mark. It's to wander aimlessly. And it's the opposite of what he says in verse 5. The aim of our charge. And so when the world and the flesh and the devil come in.

[2:27] The contrast is stark. The Christian church has an aim that is fixed. To seek in the hearts of those around us. A pure heart. A good conscience.

And a sincere faith. And of course it's all of Christ. That's where he begins. He is an apostle of Christ Jesus. By command of God. Sent. Apostled.

To teach and declare the unsearchable riches of Christ. Everything that we do then must have this singular focus and determination.

That we would not swerve away from the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour. He speaks of a sincere doctrine.

He speaks of people who have begun to swerve from the language in verse 11. And is at the end of verse 10. Sound doctrine. Healthy doctrine.

[3:21] A gospel that is focused wholly on Jesus. In accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God. With which I have been entrusted. So Timothy. Here's the charge. Here's the focus. Here's our aim.

Make it all of Christ. Whatever you do. It's all of Christ. It's all of Jesus. And so we cannot. As Christians in our day and age. Allow the riptide.

Of secular culture. To interfere with anything that comes close to our achieving. And this aim. Making Jesus known.

Where he has set us down and raised us up. Where he has given you the opportunity to be witnesses to him. It is for us all. To maintain this clear aim. To seek in people around us. These wonderful words of verse 5. Love that issues from a pure heart. A good conscience. And a sincere faith.

[4:19] But to help us this evening. Grasp that. And take it away home with us. What we find in this letter. Is that Paul gives us a very personal example. Of the saving power of the gospel.

He shares his story. He gives us his testimony. And that's what we find here. From verse 12 onwards. I thank him. He has given me strength. Christ Jesus our Lord.

Because he judged me faithful. Appointing me to his service. Though formerly I was a blasphemer. Persecutor. An 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. So to think about that for a short time this evening. First of all. We find Paul.

As he turns to Timothy. And his personal. And shares his testimony. It begins with. An admission of guilt. That's where he is. Formerly. I was a blasphemer.

[5:16] Persecutor. And insolent opponent. He doesn't try and hide. Or dumb down. Just how bad things were in his heart. Even though. At the point of his conversion.

He was to all intents and purposes. One of the most religious men on earth. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was steeped in the Old Testament scriptures. He knew the traditions of the elders and the fathers.

He knew his way around a synagogue. And he knew his way around the Old Testament scriptures. That would put us to shame this evening. He could verbatim repeat. Many, many chapters. Off by heart. They were drilled from young ages. He had learned. He had a keen intellect. He knew his Bible. And yet. Here he is.

Admitting his guilt. Because he was a blasphemer. A persecutor. An insolent opponent. The Apostle Paul always stands to us as a reminder.

[6:11] A warning. That being religious. Saves no one. It's not about the outward condition. And outward adherence. To the rules and regulations.

And traditions and distinctives. That we create as we. Go together in pilgrimage. These things have their place. Of course they do. And they help us express our faith. And they help us in our worship. And they help us in our devotions. And in our disciplines. But they don't save us. They come secondary. It is from a heart. That has been shaped in love.

Issuing from a pure heart. And a good conscience. And a sincere faith. That everything else finds its place. But Paul had got it back to front. He was on a one man mission. To impress God.

To do God's business. To do God's work. In the land of Israel. He was going to stamp out. This sect. That was speaking of the Jesus. Of Nazareth. This false teacher.

[7:06] This man who claimed to be a prophet. And made himself equal with God. He was about the business of God. Or so he thought. And as he reflects back in this. He uses.

Very searching language. He doesn't spare himself. In his admission of guilt. I was a blasphemer. Persecutor. An insolent opponent. I think that.

That shows us. That Paul never. Really. In some sense. Forgave himself. For his involvement. In his persecution. Of the church of Christ.

On earth. He was up to his neck in it. He was the chief witness. At the stoning to death. Of Stephen. He had his letters. To throw more Christians. In jail. He was in the heart. Of the work.

That was being involved. That oppressed. The people of God. That split up. Parents. That took children away. From them. All the persecution. And imprisonment. And suffering. That he imposed. In the church.

[7:59] I think it. Marked his soul. There's a little wonder. As he reflects back. He speaks of his. Being a persecutor. An insolent opponent. You see.

He says here. This is how I used to be. I thought I was righteous. I thought God approved of me. I couldn't have been more wrong. And as he looks back.

This painful admission of guilt. Leaves him saying. I was a blaspheming. Persecuting. Ignorant. Insolent. Ignorant. Unbeliever. It's about as bad as it gets.

And this is for this religious zealot. This Pharisee. This man steeped in the scriptures. So we draw a line. We apply this to ourselves tonight. Of course we do.

In and of ourselves. The scripture makes clear. That all have sinned. And come short of the glory of God. We mustn't deny that. We mustn't avoid that. We mustn't dilute it.

[8:56] Or delete it. Many people will take the scripture. And there's a lot of cutting and pasting going on. In our lifetime. And in previous generations. When the gospel cuts. That little bit too close to the quick.

When it gets too close to the heart. When it suddenly gets too personal. What do people do? They close the book. They put it away. Or they cut and paste. And take out the bits they don't like. And they're left with a husk.

They're left with something. There's a pressure. That's permanent and constant. On the church of Christ. And the pressure is always. To conform. Dial it down a bit.

Don't talk about sin. Do you have to emphasize hell? God surely is not a God of judgment. And righteousness. And wrath. Surely God is love.

And light. And mercy. And peace. And so people take the bits they like. And the bits that sit comfortably with them. And reject the rest. And what they do of course is.

[9:51] They create another gospel. Certain persons by swerving from these. Have wandered away. Into vain discussion. Desiring to be teachers of the law. Without understanding.

Either what they're saying. Or the things about which they make confident assertions. It was happening 2,000 years ago. And it's happening tonight in Scotland. People are denying. And diluting the gospel.

And in Paul's letters. Particularly his early letters. To the Galatians and Thessalonians. We find him making the call. Stand firm. I am amazed. He said to the Galatians.

You are so soon turning. From the gospel you heard. To a different gospel. To another gospel. This gospel that's corrupt. This gospel that is leading you away. Into darkness. And indifference. And unbelief. And so Paul makes it very clear. To Timothy. As his time in leadership. Gets closer. That he needs to understand.

[10:46] And be dialed in. To what he's leading. And what he's saying. And what he believes. And what he's teaching. And we find that throughout. The pastoral epistles. And so we tonight are reminded.

Of the gravity of our situation. Out with Christ. Which makes the communion weekend. So special. In the hearts and lives. Of the Lord's people. Because we too.

Come into a communion weekend. Conscious. Consciousness. Of what once we were. Where we were. As Isaiah chapter 1 puts it. Utterly. Thoroughly. Estranged.

To God. Doing our own thing. Our own way. In our own time. Living for ourselves. Pressing on with life. Living life to the full. Filling our heads. And our minds.

With the things of the world. Darkness. And that's where Paul. Takes us. In the beginning. Few sentences. Of his. His personal story.

[11:42] His testimony. And we know tonight. That we need to. Reflect on this. Because God sees us. As we are. Sinners. Deserving of his eternal punishment.

Under his just. And holy judgment. There are. There is scene after scene. In the scripture. Particularly in Revelations. Chapter 20. Where we see. That it matters.

How we live. And it absolutely matters. How we respond. To the gospel. In this life. Because we will be. Held to account. In the life to come. Revelation. And chapter 20. Describes for us.

A scene. That is. Given to. John. It's the great white throne. Of judgment. And I saw a great white throne. And him. Who was seated on it. From his presence.

Earth and sky. Fled away. And no place. Was found for them. And I saw the dead. Great and small. Standing before the throne. And books are opened. Then another book was opened.

[12:36] Which is the book of life. And the dead were judged. By what was written in the books. According to what they'd done. It's a solemn.

Searching scene. Of judgment. And accountability.

Before the Lord our God. And Paul. Is here acknowledging. That's where he was heading. And he was heading there. Because he was a sinner. And his sin.

Held him. And the only. Declaration. That would come. From the great white throne. Had he stood there. Out with Christ. Was guilty. Depart from me.

You workers. Of lawlessness. That's where his. Testimony begins. But. We praise God. Because his testimony. Goes on.

But I. Received. Mercy. And so. While his testimony. Begins. With the admission of guilt. Secondly. We find. An acknowledgement. Of grace.

[13:33] But I. Received. Mercy. And here. Is a forgiven sinner. Reflecting. With all his heart. And mind. His deep theological. Awareness. His personal. Encounter. With Christ. His apostleship.

His visions. His understanding. Of what he'd seen. In the seventh heavens. All these blessings. He had been given. Does not ever. Leave him. From forgetting. Where it all began.

I. Received. Mercy. And that's what he says. In verse 13. And if you read on. Down to verse 16.

Look what he says again. But I. Received.

Mercy. His. Admission. Of guilt. Is now. Overcome. With an acknowledgement. Of grace. I.

Received. Mercy. A book. I would always recommend. Is J. I. Packers. Knowing God. And in there. There's a chapter. On grace. And what grace is. And he answers. The question. Of why grace.

[14:29] Means so much. To the Christian man. And woman. And he says this. Surely. It is because. Once someone. Is convinced. That their need. Is as described. The New Testament.

Gospel of grace. Cannot. But sweep them. Off their feet. With wonder. And joy. Why? Because it. Tells us. How our judge.

Has become our saviour. There is the gospel. Of grace. This is the sound. Doctrine. In accordance. With the glorious. Gospel. Of the blessed God.

Our judge. Has become our saviour. And so. Paul immediately. Acknowledges. His guilt. And his. Self-righteousness. And sense of self-worth.

And his self-glorification. Convinced. He was doing God's work. All the time. He was an insolent opponent. And a blaspheming. Persecutor. But I received mercy. Because I had acted.

[15:25] Ignorantly. In unbelief. And the grace of our Lord. Overflowed for me. With the faith. And love. That are in Christ Jesus. This is a trustworthy saying. Deserving a full acceptance.

Christ Jesus. Came into the world. To save sinners. Of whom I am the foremost. We know he wasn't one of the original. Apostolic band.

Perhaps that also. Was in Paul's heart and mind. When he wrote these words. Knowing that he was the least of the apostles. For his. Persecuting past. It was there. In his heart.

And in his mind. But here. With these words. I received mercy. Were at the very heart. Of every testimony. We will ever hear. Because we are all. As was said in. Days of old.

Trophies of grace. We are saved by grace. And through faith. This is the heart. Of the testimony of Paul. And of every Christian here. This evening. This is the sound doctrine.

[16:20] Of the gospel. Of the glory of God. For we receive. What we need most. In Christ. The forgiveness. Of our sin. We don't deserve it. We can't earn it.

We simply receive it. In faith. There's a wonderful. Summary of this. In the shorter catechism. Faith. In Jesus Christ. Is a saving grace.

Whereby we receive. And rest upon him. Alone. For salvation. As he has offered. To us in the gospel. And so we reflect. In that wonderful reality. As Paul did.

Right at the start. I am an apostle. Of Christ Jesus. By command of God. Our saviour. And of Christ Jesus. Our hope. We might almost expect. To say Christ Jesus. Our Lord. But we notice in verse 1. That he immediately refers. To Christ Jesus. As our hope. Because it is in Christ alone. Our hope. Is found. And so we come to him.

[17:16] In repentance. And faith. And here we have the ultimate. Divine intervention. Words that contain. What we can describe. In verse 15. This wonderful combination.

Of the simple expression. Of faith. Being placed alongside. The deepest words. Of theology. Listen to them again. Christ Jesus. Came into the world.

To save. Sinners. This is the simplest. Expression of faith. As well as it being. The deepest words. Of theology. And speaking of deep theology.

When I mentioned to you. As we go through. Archibald Alexander. He was an American. Pastor. And very. A famous professor. Of theology. In Princeton. He was there.

Right at the beginning. And led Princeton. To become this great. English speaking. Theological center. Of excellence. And modern day leaders. Such as. St. Peter Ferguson. Highly commend.

[18:11] That we read his works. And we remind ourselves. Of who.

Archibald Alexander. Was. And what he achieved. One of his colleagues. Described him this way. He was the Shakespeare.

Of the Christian heart. What a testimony that is. The Shakespeare. Of the Christian heart. Well this is what. Alexander said. Of. His.

Teaching. His theological acumen. His deep understanding. And. His. His developed. Sense. Of the Christian faith. This is what he said. All my theology.

Is reduced. To this narrow compass. Christ Jesus. Came into the world. To save sinners. And we rejoice. In that hope.

For it is. The glorious gospel. Of the blessed God. It is healthy. Gospel. Doctrine. This is the greatest sound. We'll ever hear. These words.

[19:08] Sum up. The message of. God. To the world. To storm away. The nation. Tonight. Christ Jesus. Came into the world. To save sinners. And the wonder of the gospel.

Tonight. We all know. Is that through faith in Jesus. We receive. Grace. Mercy. And peace. Instead of the eternal banishment. We have earned.

We receive grace. And as he says in verse 16. What does belief lead us to? It leads to eternal life. Life. Eternity beckons. Eternity with Christ.

When there be no. Preparatory services. No communion weekends. No bread and wine. Pointing us to the Savior. For we'll see him. Face to face.

Eternity beckons. To all who love and trust. The Lord Jesus Christ. Eternity beckons. To all who can be defined. By these words. Love that issues from a pure heart.

[20:06] A good conscience. And sincere faith. Again. Quoting the Catechism. Saving faith. Or faith in Jesus. Is a saving grace. Whereby we receive. And rest upon him.

Alone. For salvation. As he has offered to us. In the gospel. We offer one and all. This great message. And this wonderful Savior. Who gave himself. For the sin.

That banished us from God. The reality then of God's grace. Fills Paul's heart. It's the foundation of his testimony. His letter. And his entire ministry. We notice the words there in verse 14.

The grace of our Lord. Overflowed. For me. With the faith and love. That are in Christ Jesus. It absolutely. Turned him inside out. And his transformation.

Began. And that's where we'll go to. Close this evening. As well as his entire ministry. Being shaped by grace. And his focus. And his focus. Being God our Savior.

[21:02] And the Lord Jesus. Our hope. And it's interesting just to note. In the passing. That hope. In the New Testament letters. Appears nearly 60 times. The apostles were driven.

Again and again. Back to the hope. That shaped them. That moulded them. That held them. The hope that we have. In Jesus Christ. And here it is. In 1 Timothy 1 verse 1.

Christ Jesus. Our hope. So we have. An awareness of guilt. And an acknowledgement of grace. Just briefly this. We have a life transformed.

I received. Mercy. We notice that. There's a phrase that he uses. Toward the end of the chapter. And his encouragement toward Timothy. But he calls him to wage the good warfare.

Holding faith. And a good conscience. That takes a transformation. By grace. And through faith. That requires. Someone to know the Lord Jesus.

[21:58] For themselves. To wage. The good warfare. That's what a preparatory. Service is all about. To remind us. And call us to. To stand in the good warfare. To remind ourselves. Who we are in Christ.

That we have become children. Of the living God. Not because we've earned it. But because we've received. The forgiveness of sin. This is grace. And as with every testimony.

The impact of grace. Leads to this transformation. This charge. I entrust to you Timothy. In accordance to the prophecies. Previously made. Wage the good warfare. Rely on the Lord Jesus. Who is your hope. Timothy. My true child. In the faith. Grace. Mercy. And peace. From God the Father. In Christ Jesus. Our Lord. It's grace.

That explains this transformation. In the apostles life. And in every Christian's life. Here this evening. For Paul. His unbelief. Becomes belief.

[22:56] His persecution. Becomes praise. His anger. Becomes adoration. His works. Become worship. He's no longer. Trying to save himself. He's no longer thinking.

His efforts. Will impress God. He's no longer thinking. That by imposing. His convictions. On others. God will give him. A big tick. And reserve.

A place. In the new Jerusalem. For him. To go back to Packer. In that chapter. On grace. He says this. Religion. The religion. Of the Bible.

Is a religion. Of grace. Or it is nothing. It is a religion. Of grace. That brings us here. Tonight. It is a table. Of grace. That you can anticipate.

This coming. Lord's day. His fellowship. In grace. The preaching. Of the word. Brings us to grace. Because all these things. Bring us to Christ. Our hope. And he is our hope.

[23:50] Because of the love. And grace. Which overflows. From him. Into the hearts. Of all those. Who come to him. In repentance. And faith. We've sung about it.

Already tonight. He took me. From a fearful pit. And from the. Miry clay. And on a rocky. Set my feet. Establishing. My way. Even a new song.

In my mouth. Our God. To magnify. Many shall see it. And shall fear. And on the Lord. We lie. Oh blessed. Is the man. Whose trust. Upon the Lord.

Relies. That is your focus. Going forward. Into the communion season. Your hope. Is Christ Jesus. Your Lord. Your saviour. And your friend.

And he is all of these. To all of those. Who love him. And trust him. Who have repented of their sin. With sincerity of heart. And have come to him. With a sincere faith.

[24:46] Praying. Lord be merciful to me. A sinner. What then? Wage. The good warfare. Fight the good fight. Run the race. That is set before you. Endure. Persevere.

And rely in the presence. Of your friend. And Lord. To be with you. This. Transformation. That leads Paul. To encourage us. To wage a good warfare.

Will be expressed. By yourselves. When you gather. At the table. On Sunday. Because at the table. You are pointing. Not to yourself. None of us point. To ourselves.

At the table. And I know. There are times. Where we probably. Have all felt. Going to the table. A test. Where we felt. Do I belong there?

Do I deserve. To be there? Can I receive. Grace. There? And we struggle. With that. Because. The best of men. Are men at best. Because we're flesh.

[25:42] And blood. Because. We can say. Often as Paul did. O wretched man. That I am. Who will deliver me. From this body of death. We feel. Don't we. Through our tender conscience. The weight.

Of sinfulness. And weakness. And unrighteousness. And slips. And fails. And faults. And we cry. Lord be merciful. To me a sinner. The table cuts through all that.

Christ knows you. Christian friend. He knows the struggles. That you have. He knows the weight. Upon you. He knows. The difficulties. That we all face. In this world.

As we pilgrimage. Together. Together. That's why. There's a table. To encourage us. And nourish us. And feed us. As we wage this good warfare.

Looking unto Jesus. We don't go there. Because we're perfect. We don't go there. To be saved. We certainly don't take the communion. In the hope it will make us Christian. We go there.

[26:40] Because we have been saved. And because the Lord Jesus. Our Lord and Savior. Says and commands. Do this. In remembrance of me. Do what?

Remember me. By taking part in this supper. Pass the bread. And take the wine. And remember the cost. Of your redemption. Your Lord and Savior.

And friend. He loved us. And gave himself for us. And he has prepared a feast for you. This coming Lord's day. And so we pray that.

He would be there. In his grace. And mercy. And peace. Blessing that meal. To your hearts. And that you might say. As Paul did. I received mercy.

That's why we go to the table. We go there. Having received. The grace. And mercy. Of Christ. We receive. From him. What we do not deserve.

[27:36] We receive forgiveness. For sin. That we cannot earn. God in his mercy. Did not give Paul. What he deserved. Instead. God in his grace. Gave Paul. What he did not deserve.

I received. Mercy. Christ Jesus. Came into the world. To save sinners. May he bless you. As you remember him.

In that special way. At his table. This coming Lord's day. Let's bow in prayer. Let's bow in prayer for a moment. Our Lord and our God. We thank you. That we can spend this time together.

Around your word. We bless and praise you. For the wonder of the gospel. Words perhaps Lord.

That are so familiar. To many of us. And yet we will never plumb.

The depths of these things. And we see here Lord. The simplicity of faith. The deep things of theology. In a sentence. And we pray that that sentence.

[28:35] Would bind up your people. In these days to come. That they might feed. Feed deeply. At the table. That they might be fed. Richly by your word.

In the preparatory services. And that Lord. They would be a real harvest. And growth among your people. And that the gospel of grace. Would take root in hearts. And lives. Up and down.

And across the congregation. Hear us Lord. In all these things we pray. Draw near to us. And forgive our sin. And everything we ask. Is in the name of Jesus. Our Lord.

And our hope. Amen. We'll return to sing psalms this evening. And we'll sing from Psalm 36.

Psalm 36. Singing from verse 5. To verse 9. To the tune Huddersfield. Your steadfast love is great. Oh Lord.

[29:28] It reaches heaven high. Your faithfulness is wonderful. Extending to the sky. Your righteousness is very great. Like mountains high and steep. Your justice is like ocean depths.

Both man and beast. You keep. Verses 5 to 9. We'll stand together. Amen. Amen. Your steadfast love is great.

Oh Lord. It reaches heaven high. Your faithfulness is wonderful.

And standing to the sky. Your righteousness is very great.

Like mountains high and steep. Your justice is like ocean depths.

[30:45] Both man and beast you keep. How precious is your steadfast love.

What confidence it brings. For night and night. For night and night. For night and night.

For night and night. I sheltered in the shadow of your wings.

They feast within your hearts and drink. From streams of pure delight.

For with you is the source of light. In your light we see light.

[31:59] May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. Amen.