

**LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text Part twenty-five - Sunday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
**Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

**PAUL - MAKING OUR LIVES A DEMONSTRATION OF GOD'S GRACE -  
1 Timothy 1:12-17**

- 1) **SOME BACKGROUND ON THIS PASSAGE** - These verses about God's grace spring in *contrast* from Paul's thoughts about God's law in **1 Timothy 1:8-10** - “Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, [9] understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, [10] the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine....”

The law, according to Paul, is designed primarily for a fallen world of wicked people. It *holds sin in check*, restraining evil that would otherwise run rampant. Paul's point here is the law has some power to *restrain* sin, but is powerless to *regenerate* the sinner. It can build some form of *outward morality* (ie. discourage stealing, murdering, etc.) but cannot stop the *inward workings of our fallen nature* (ie. lust, covetousness, and selfishness).

Paul says more about this in **Romans 7:7-8** - “**What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."** [8] **But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead.”**

***A couple of important observations: First***, when Paul says that apart from the law he “**...would not have known sin**”(7), he doesn't mean he wouldn't have known **regret, uneasiness**, or **angst** when he did things he felt were unworthy. He **would** have experienced all of those emotions.

What he means is he would have had no **absolute measuring stick to recognizing sin as an absolute violation of a holy God's law** - even if he felt no **inward** remorse whatsoever.

**Second**, when Paul says he would not have known what it is to **covet** apart from the law (7), he doesn't mean he didn't know what it was to **desire** something inordinately. He **did**. But again, he didn't know that desire to be something more than impolite or self-destructive apart from God's law. The law of God revealed the **sin** of covetousness in a way mere desire or psychological states of mind never could.

So it's no wonder that as Paul reflects on the law of God his mind naturally turns to a fresh gush of marvel and wonder at the regenerating power of the Gospel of God's grace in Paul's own life, as expressed in personal testimony in **1 Timothy 1:12-17**.

- 2) **WHEN SIN CAN BECOME FATAL - 1 Timothy 1:12-13** - "I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, [13] though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief...."

It's important to note that in **verse 13** Paul states that God's grace has forgiven him of the very ***same*** sins the law condemned the wicked of in **1:9-10** - "...understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, [10] the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine...."

Grace can do what the law never could. Wicked as these sins were in Paul's own life, they were not out of God's cleansing reach at least partly because they were sins of ***ignorance*** rather than sins against the fuller light of knowledge. Terribly wicked deeds can be done in ignorance. See **Acts 3:14-21** - **“But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, [15] and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. [16] And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. [17] And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. [18] But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. [19] Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, [20] that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, [21] whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.”**

See also **Acts 26:9-11** - **“I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. [10] And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. [11] And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”**

But take note. The danger of sin *increases greatly* when it turns into *rebellion* against the clear direction of the Holy Spirit: **Psalm 19:11-14** - “Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. [12] Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.[13] Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. [14] Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

In fact, the New Testament is clear that some pass beyond the scope of repentance entirely:

**Matthew 12:31-32** - “Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. [32] And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”

**Hebrews 10:26-27** - “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, [27] but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.”

Probably the forgiveness is out of reach because the ***desire*** for forgiveness is also grown out of reach. The lesson here is that ***sinning against light is the surest way to close up the heart to true repentance.***

- 3) **BALANCING THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN WITH THE VASTNESS OF GOD'S GRACE - 1 Timothy 1:14** - “....and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.” We have already seen how seriously Paul viewed his past sins in 1:13 - “....though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief....”

The weight of that could have been unbearable had Paul not also have possessed an enormous view of how ***"overflowing"*** God's grace actually was. These are the two perspectives needed to ***appreciate the Cross of Jesus properly:***

- a) ***FIRST, sin must be taken seriously or we will not be pointed to Jesus Christ.***

We will tend to rely on our own shallow works of human goodness or choose some form of religious observance to ease our guilt. This will usually help us to feel as righteous as anybody else. This is why the Bible is so lovingly relentless in uncovering all my excuses for sin. Sin must be seen as my number one problem. I must come to understand that there is nothing I can do about it myself.

Notice how Paul the Apostle *still* refers to himself 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.”** Somehow genuine grace takes us both *up* and *down* at the same time. Paul’s deep love of grace and confidence in the liberating power of the cross grew out of his constantly renewed sense of unworthiness and repentance.

- b) ***SECOND, grace must be seen in all its grandeur or we will never feel sure of our salvation.***

The Cross of Jesus has already dealt sin and the Devil the decisive blow. But until Jesus comes we must stand in that victory by faith. **“We do not yet see all things put under Him” Hebrews 2:8b.**

- 4) **WHY DID GOD CHOOSE TO SAVE PAUL? - 1 Timothy 1:15-16 - “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. [16] But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.”**

In a quick wrap up on the life of Jesus, Paul says "He came into the world" (*incarnation*) "to save sinners" (*redemption*).

**Verse 16** is one of the most moving statements in the New Testament. Paul teaches that God chose someone with a past like his *so I wouldn't feel hopeless with a past like mine*. God saved Paul so I would have some idea (note the word "**example**" - literally an "**exhibit**" - like you would see in an art show) of how incredibly patient He is with sinners who are willing to bring the pieces of their lives to Him in faith. Paul says he himself is the model - a living "exhibit A" of what God does with hopeless sinners.

And that why He chose me and that why He chose you.