

**Introduction:** When the covenant making and covenant keeping God revealed Himself to Moses just before He gave His ten words of commandment to Moses a second time on Mt. Sinai (after the golden calf disaster) the first words out of His mouth were: Yahweh, Yahweh, the merciful and gracious God. (*Exodus 34:1-6*) The qualities of mercy and grace describe what God did through His only Son, who was 'hidden' for another fifteen centuries after this event. \*\*\* Mercy is forgiveness of deserved judgment given to those who repent. Grace is the gift of God that brings people to the point of repentance. Both are necessary because all people are born spiritually dead so they do not know they need to repent until God's Holy Spirit convinces them of their need for His mercy and grace. God's Son came proclaiming: 'The time is fulfilled, and The Kingdom of God is near; repent and believe in The Gospel'. (*Mark 1:15, ESV*) \*\*\* In his first letter to his genuine (legitimately born) child in the faith (*1:1-2*) Timothy (who had been appointed bishop in Ephesus) the apostle Paul brings together mercy and grace with faith in The Lord and Messiah Jesus that leads to salvation for sinners. \*\*\* The passage we heard this morning tells how The Lord gave Paul mercy and grace even though in ignorance he was the first (worst) of sinners in his prideful violence against God's people in Christ Jesus. \*\*\* As a Jew advancing in training under Gamaliel ahead of all his peers (*Acts 22:3-4; Galatians 1:13-14*) he was certainly familiar with Yahweh's self-revelation as merciful and gracious. Perhaps he wrote this testimony with God's Word to Moses about His character influencing him. \*\*\* Let us now take a deeper look at Paul's testimony that concludes with worship.

**I. Paul thanks The Lord who strengthened him, considered him faithful to serve, and showed him (a persecutor) mercy:**

**The Lord's grace overflowed.** (*Verses 12-14*)

A. Paul tells Timothy he has thanks to The Lord who strengthened him, because He considered him faithful to serve: he formerly being a violent persecutor. (*Verses 12-13a*)

1. I am having thanks to The One who strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Verse 12a*)

**Strengthened:** Paul is rightly thanking The ONLY One who can give people strength to do God's will. He was strengthened at his conversion in Damascus. (*Acts 9:1-39*)

2. Because He considered me faithful. (*Verse 12b*)

**Faith:** This is the first of five different aspects of faith in this passage that comes soon after Paul addressed Timothy as his child in faith. Here Paul talks about his faithful obedience to Jesus' commands that made him fit for service to God.

3. Having put me into service. (*Verse 12c*)

**Serve:** All who would serve God need to have both faith in The Messiah and be strengthened by Him.

4. The one formerly being blasphemous, persecutor and proudly violent. (*Verse 13a*)

**Evil triad:** Each of these evil qualities violates God's Torah of instruction for right living. Paul gives them in ascending order of wickedness. Nothing is worse than pride that leads to harming another person created in God's image.

B. He received mercy because he acted in ignorance; but, grace overflowed, with faith and love, IN Christ Jesus. (*Verses 13b-14*)

1. But I received mercy because, being ignorant, I acted in unbelief. (*Verse 13b*)

**Mercy:** Mercy is what every sinner needs from God. We can thank God with Paul that whenever we turn from ourselves and our ways to God in faith, He will forgive us of the judgment we deserve so we may live in the joy of His salvation.

**High hand:** Notice Paul received mercy because of his ignorance and unbelief. The second use of faith is negative.

The Torah allowed for sacrifices for those who sinned unintentionally or through ignorance. (*Leviticus 4-5; Numbers 15:22-29*). But, whoever sins defiantly ('with a high hand' RSV) must be cut off, stoned to death. (*Numbers 15:30-36*) Here we have both Yahweh's word to Moses and an illustrative incident about a willful Sabbath breaker being given the death penalty by Yahweh.

2. And overflowed the grace of our Lord. (*Verse 14a*)

**Grace:** Here is the second great character quality of Yahweh overflowing to Paul along with mercy.

3. With faith and love IN Christ Jesus. (*Verse 14b*)

**Faith and love:** Faith and love are gracious gifts that Paul received. The third use of faith is what all need to please God and receive salvation and life. Let us all thank God for His grace IN Christ Jesus.

**IN Savior King:** Christ is the Greek translation of the word 'anointed'. God anoints both kings and priests to serve Him. Jesus is the Greek translation of the word 'savior'. Putting it together, Paul is talking about God's King who IS Salvation. God's mercy, grace, faith and love are only for those who are in a continuous reconciled relationship with Him IN The Savior King by The Holy Spirit who are always enjoying God's Mercy and LOVE.

**II. The King came to save sinners of whom Paul is first, SO he received mercy to indicate The Savior is patient to those who believe on Him, to Life: Glory to God!** (*Verses 15-17*)

A. A faithful word: Christ Jesus came to save sinners of whom I am first; but, this is why I received mercy: that He might show His patience as an example of those about to believe ON Him. (*Verses 15-16*)

1. A faithful word: and, of all acceptance, worthy. (*Verse 15a*)

**Faithful word:** This fourth use of faith is the first of five times Paul uses this phrase in his letters to Timothy and Titus, two young bishops he was mentoring. He uses it nowhere else. All five have to do with different aspects of saving faith and Christ's Church. Here the word is Christ came to save sinners. The next word says elders must not be recent converts, and they will gain assurance of faith. (*1 Timothy 3:1-11*) The third word is a command to exercise godliness because of hope in The Living God who saves those who believe. (*1 Timothy 4:7-10*) A difficult word says those who die with Christ have life, but those who disown Him will be severely disciplined by Christ who is faithful to Himself. (*2 Timothy 2:11-13*, this is similar to all of *Numbers 15*) The final word says God gives rebirth in His mercy and love to the hope of a life of devotion to doing what is good. (*Titus 3:4-8*)

2. Christ Jesus came into the world, sinners to save. (*Verse 15b*)  
**Salvation:** This is full salvation of spirit, soul and body. When a person's dead spirit comes to life by The Holy Spirit the soul is healed as The Holy Spirit applies The Word He inspired in that person's life.
3. Of whom, foremost (first), I am, I (me)! (*Verse 15c*)  
**Emphatic:** His former life triad supports Paul saying emphatically he is the foremost (first) sinner.

**Jesus came to save sinners**

4. For this reason I received mercy, so that in me the foremost (sinner) He might show the whole patience. (*Verse 16a*)  
**Mercy:** This is the second time Paul says he received mercy. The first time was forgiveness and strengthening for service to God. This time he applies mercy to salvation and life. Some would say Paul is applying mercy in reverse order by beginning with strength to do good works that come after receiving salvation and life; but, because he is writing to a young man who has assumed a new ministry with much responsibility, it is appropriate to begin by saying The Lord will supply him out of mercy for this new chapter in Timothy's life, and then remind him of what he first received by mercy, namely patience leading to salvation.  
**Patience:** The Holy Spirit also inspired Peter to write of the patience of The Lord to delay His second coming so scoffers (sinners) can come to repentance leading to salvation. (*2 Peter 3:8-15*)

**Jesus came to save sinners**

5. To (be) an example (type) of those about to believe on Him into life (eternal). (*Verse 16b*)  
**Extreme example:** If God can save a sinner acting in extreme ignorance, as Paul did, then He can save any sinner who acted in ignorance and then repents and believes.  
**Life:** This life is forever (eternal, *John 3:1-18*), abundant (*John 10:1-10*) and with purpose (to bear fruit that will remain to the glory of Father God, *John 15:8-17*).  
**Faith:** This fifth, and final, use of faith is the continuous obedience of faith that enables a person to receive God's three-fold life IN Christ by believing in Him as the Savior King sent by God.

**Christ gives mercy so those in unbelief can believe IN Him**

- B. To The King of eternal ages: imperishable, unseen, only God, (be) glory and honor forever. (*Verse 17*)
  1. But The King of the eternal ages: imperishable, unseen, only God. (*Verses 17a*)  
**King:** God is THE Eternal Sovereign King. In *Psalms 2* God's Son is the king to be feared, the one who will rule the entire earth. In *Psalms 96-99* Yahweh is described as the king or the one who reigns.  
**Triad:** God is immortal, unseen and unique (THE only God).  
**Torah:** Hear, O Israel! Yahweh is ONE. (*Deuteronomy 6:1-7*)  
**Trinity:** This triad of qualities hints at God as ONE being of three persons – The Trinity.
  2. (Be) honor and glory to the eternities of the eternities. It is TRUE! (*Verse 17b*)  
**Honor and glory:** This pair of words of worship for God occurs four other times: Genuine faith, refined by fire, results in praise, glory and honor at the return of Jesus (*1 Peter 1:5-8*); Jesus received honor and glory when His Father spoke at His baptism (*2 Peter 1:16-18*); the multitude of angels say The Lamb who was slain is worthy of honor and glory (and five other things, *Revelation 5:12*); and, every creature sings: 'To Him who is sitting on The Throne and The Lamb: blessing and honor and glory and power to the eternities of the eternities' (*Revelation 5:13*).  
**Eternity:** God is eternal, and the figure of speech used in Paul's doxology is the same figure of speech used by all creatures before God's Throne in heaven!  
**Truth:** All of these amazing qualities of God (and more) are true. However, it is difficult to put these qualities in English prose. They are better left to poets. So sing *Wonderful Merciful Savior* today, and dwell in the praise songs of *Revelation*. Know God sent Jesus to save sinners who repent in faith.

**Jesus came to save sinners**

**Conclusion:** Christ Jesus The Lord strengthens those with faith IN Him in order to serve Him by His mercy, even great sinners who oppose Him due to ignorance, all because His grace is overflowing. He came to save sinners, and His mercy shows His patience to those who believe on Him into Life. Eternal honor and glory are due to the ONLY sovereign God.

**Jesus came to save sinners**