**The Pastoral Epistles: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus**

***Lesson 3: Paul, the worst of sinners!***

**Series principal Bible verses:**  ***1 Timothy 1:15-17****: Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.  But for that very reason 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.  Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

**Bible passages for Lesson 4**:

**1 Timothy 1:12-17**. 12I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. 13Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. 14The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

15Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. 16But for that very reason 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. 17Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

**2 Timothy 2:8-10**. 8Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, 9for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. 10Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

**Titus 2:11-14**. 11For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

**Lesson Objective**: God’s grace is sufficient to redeem all of us, regardless of the magnitude of our sins. Our response to such grace should be to spread the Good News to others and to let our light shine in our community, being eager to do what is good.

**Introduction:** After Paul’s initial greeting, Timothy is reminded of his primary reason for being there – “to confront false teachers who were dividing the church”. Chapter 1:3-11 suggests that the false teachers were Jews who wanted to impose the Law on believers. Paul reminds Timothy that he understands these false teachers because he was once just like them – until Jesus rescued him.

**Major Point 1**: Paul declares that he is the “worst of sinners”. **1 Timothy 1:15**

1. Why did Paul believe he was the “worst of sinners”? Examine the story of Paul’s early life. **Acts 8:1-3, Acts 26:4-11.** How were his previous actions like those of these false teachers?
2. Are we responsible for our sins if we behave in ignorance with a good conscience (**Acts 23:1**)?
3. How did Jesus bring about a change in Paul? Why was Paul shown mercy? (vs. 13).
4. Was Paul really the “worst of sinners”? Think of other Bible characters who committed serious sins but were still considered faithful followers.
5. What mission did Jesus have for Paul? How did his redemption motivate him to spread the Good News?

**Major Point 2**: Life Application I.

1. Do we believe that some individuals are so deeply immersed in sin that they cannot be reached by the Gospel? Would we consider them as being “candidates for conversion”? Could the sins of Jeffrey Dahmer or Judas Iscariot be forgiven?
2. Jesus said “therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” (**Luke 7:47)**. Is this a warning for those of us who have “grown up in the church” and lived a relatively “good life”?
3. If an individual who has committed crimes such as murder, drug dealing, sex crimes, etc., comes to Christ, they may be “on fire for Christ”. How would you treat them? Would you be cautious? (**Acts 9:19-30**).

**Major Point 3**: Life Application II.

1. Since we have all been saved by grace through faith, what should be our response to God’s grace? **Ephesians 2:8-9**
2. We are saved by grace, not by the works we do. So why should we “do good works”? **Ephesians 2:10** **10**For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
3. As redeemed people, how are we to live in this world? **Titus 2:11-14**

**Call to Action**: Reflect on the sins in your life for which you have received forgiveness. Is my manner of life a reflection of gratitude for this forgiveness?