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# Sermon Notes

January 31, 2021

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

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## Testimony Time

1 Timothy 1:12-16

### Amazing Grace

- ❖ The hymn, *Amazing Grace*, has been an enduring staple of Christian worship for over 250 years
  - worldwide fame
  - a favorite of Hollywood, politicians and causes of every kind
- ❖ Updated words?
  - God's grace does "save and strengthen", but that is not Newton's point!
  - when Newton writes: "That saved a wretch like me," Newton is identifying himself with the worst of sinners
    - a slave trader, blasphemer, rebel, immoral man, torturer who is as far from grace as anyone can be
    - "I sinned with a high hand, and I made it my study to tempt and seduce others."
    - because of God's amazing grace, the Lord broke through and changed Newton's life in 1748
- ❖ Newton realizes and confesses the desperate need sinners have for a Savior
- ❖ God's grace IS amazing BECAUSE it saves wretches

### Paul's Personal Testimony

- ❖ Paul's testimony is packed with wonder and gratitude for his personal experience of God's grace
  - 1 Timothy 1:15 is the gospel in miniature
  - ***Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost***
- ❖ Paul knows that those who serve the Lord need the Lord's enablement to do so
  - effective ministry is totally dependent on God's call and God's strength
  - the whole point of Paul's testimony is that he is UNWORTHY to receive God's grace
    - God makes Paul trustworthy
    - God makes Paul faithful
- ❖ How do you praise and thank God for the ministry opportunities He gives you within your family, the church, the world at large?
  - whatever role you have in life, it is a gift of God... a call from God
  - sometimes people grow ungrateful and tired of ministry

### Saving Grace

- ❖ Paul knows that before God could use him as an Apostle, God needed to SAVE him
  - Paul's wretched past: ***I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent***

- the murders for which Paul is responsible are all committed in the name of God, a fact that makes them all the more outrageous
- ❖ Christ came to Paul, and Paul came to Christ
  - Paul receives mercy and forgiveness
  - Ryken: “By the grace of God, the fiend became a friend.”
- ❖ **Ignorance and unbelief**
  - does not disqualify Paul from receiving mercy
  - does not make Paul less responsible for his sin
- ❖ God has mercy because God is merciful
- ❖ The overflow of God’s grace brings with it ***the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus***
  - every spiritual blessing there is comes WITH Jesus Christ
  - even our ability to believe comes from God

### This is MY Story

- ❖ Paul’s personal testimony of God’s amazing grace is the spiritual autobiography of every Christian
  - Paul is **not** in a class by himself
  - every true follower of Jesus Christ receives what Paul received: mercy, grace, faith and love
- ❖ 1 Timothy 1:15 is the testimony of every genuine Christian who has ever lived

- ***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.***
- Paul invites us to line up with him, to put ourselves in his sandals, and count ourselves as the chief of sinners
  - you cannot receive God’s grace until you admit that you are a sinner (not used to be!)
  - growing in grace means that we will continually come to a deeper awareness of how depraved we are
- ❖ You will never understand how much God loves you until you understand HOW MUCH LOVING you need
  - there is no accumulation of sin that grace cannot overcome
  - the worst of sinners finds the greatest mercy and the most abundant grace in Jesus Christ

### Personal Application

1. How do the words of the hymn, *Amazing Grace* connect with your personal journey to and experience of salvation?
2. How does Paul’s testimony in 1 Timothy 1:12-16 connect with your personal journey to and experience of salvation?
3. Can you say with Paul and mean it: “I am the foremost of sinners”? Why or why not?
4. In what ways do you express praise and thanksgiving to God for the ministry opportunities He gives you within your family, the church, the world at large?