

Putting the Past in Its Place  
By Jess Stanfield



**Bible Text:** 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Philippians 3:7-16  
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I ask that you remain standing for prayer and the reading of God's Word. So let's pray together.

*Blessed Father, we come now to the preaching of your Word and we do recognize our inability to effectually preach the Word. And we call upon the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ. We call upon the prophet, our great prophet. We call upon Christ to come and preach to the hearts of his people. We call upon the truth of your Word to be made known to us, that our eyes would be opened, that our mind and our lives, our hearts would be conformed to the truth of your Word, Lord, and the fruit would be holiness, the fruit of the truth this morning would be a life conformed to your Word, conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ, conformed, Lord, unto holiness. Oh Lord, we pray that you bless the name of Christ this morning in the Word. We pray that you bless us, Lord, in the streams of grace and mercy that flow from your everlasting throne. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Beloved, turn to the epistle of 1 Timothy this morning. Turn to 1 Timothy. We will begin reading at verse 12 down through verse 17. Hear now the Word of almighty God.

Paul says:

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 1:12-17.

You may be seated.

Beloved, one of the things that we all brought with us to worship this morning besides a readiness to worship the Lord Jesus Christ is a past. Everyone here brings with them a past. And that past has a great affect and influence upon who you are and how you behave this morning. Your past experiences, particularly that with sin and the grace of almighty God will shape the way you adore him now. You are in your seat either very complacent about the grace and mercy of almighty God or you it in your seat anxious and eager for the king of glory and the king of righteousness to feed you more grace, more mercy.

Beloved, this morning I want to address a particular problem that many Christians have and that is how to deal biblically with the past, referring to past sins, how a Christian should deal with past sins and failures. Whether before Christ or even after professing his name how we address and deal with our sins will have a dramatic impact upon our lives in the present. And it is important that we understand this from God's perspective and not be psychologized by our culture and even weak forms of Christianity that seek to include to synthesize the Bible with various other psychologies and ideas.

We are not opposed to psychology. In fact, we believe God invented it. We just believe the Bible addresses what our biblical psychology should be concerning our past, concerning our sins and concerning the present.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said in an article that one of the most common areas he dealt with among his congregation was Christians being paralyzed because of the past sins.

Now, beloved, the question that you need to be thinking about at this time is: How has your sins affected your present? Have they caused you to be faithful and extremely faithful? Or have they in some way paralyzed you from living the life that God has caused you to live and paralyzed you from moving forward with great excitement?

I mean, beloved, there is a biblical excitement. There is an excitement that every Christian ought to have and we are going to see it in our text this morning. We are going to let the apostle Paul guide us and teach us in how to deal biblically with our past. He was a man that had great sins in his past.

But before we get to the apostle Paul I want you to really understand how important the topic this morning is to you from the Bible's perspective. You see, what we are faced with today is various people—and I am speaking of Christians—approaching their past sins from their own fallen understanding and not from a biblical, sanctified, enlightened one. And most people feel like they... in order to deal, in order to be able to cope or handle with the present, they just have to forget about the past. They just totally erase the past. Let's not even think about it anymore. Let's not even discuss or talk about anymore. In fact, let's just act like it never ever happened. And is that biblical? Is that the right thing to do?

You see, Too many churches today preach a message more along the moral lines of these are the things you need to do to be faithful. And, beloved, I am not giving you a checklist this morning. I am not going to give you five things to check off and if you do those five things you are going to automatically be in line with what the Bible teaches. I am sorry, but the Christian life is not that easy. The Christian life is going to... it requires your whole being. It requires your whole mental aspect. It requires your whole intellect. It requires your whole heart, your whole body to conform and to give yourself over to the light of the Word of God and to the sanctification Jesus Christ brings to us in the Holy Spirit.

How we address these things and those... and how... a lot of modern, moral preaching address this as don't even admit sin, don't even preach on sin because sin is an ugly thing. Sin is a terrible thing. Sin brings people down. And that is not what church is all about and you can see the psychology involved there is, well, ok, the only way to bring people up is to tell them how good they are. That is, we must give them a gospel not sound, grounded in the Word of God. We must give them a gospel grounded in what human invention. That is, the Bible is going to teach us this morning that we can recognize the sins of our past and walk out of here with our heads held high, walk out of here with a determination to be more faithful than we have been before.

You see, beloved, we have got to forsake bringing our own interpretation to our lives, but we must commit ourselves to the Word of God. And I want to show you that in the Bible, nowhere in the Bible does it ever command us to forget our sins. In fact, what I am talking to you, this topic is so important that both the Old and the New Testaments teach what I am telling you this morning. It is both Old and New Testaments view the... how important it is to recognize sin and to let that move us to greater faithfulness and obedience, both the Old and the New.

Let me give you an example. We are not going to turn all over the Bible because I want you to remember what I am talking about this morning. It is going to be easy note taking. Easy now that I have simplified it all.

The Old Testament, I just want to give you three areas in which the Old Testament enforces what I am saying. Number one is the ceremonial law.

Now I want you to think about that, the ceremonial law. What was the ceremonial law? The ceremonial law were all of those... the priesthood, the sacrifices, the feasts. All of those things that brought great limitation and restriction upon the people of God teaching them, teaching us that, number one, we can't even go to God on our own. Why can we not go to God on our own? Because we are sinful. And we must have a high priest. We must have a mediator.

Why do we need a bloody sacrifice? Because sin must be atoned for. Every lamb, every bullock, every goat, every dove, beloved, that was ever sacrificed in blood streaming out of that victim all represented sin brings death, misery and sorrow.

You see, it all pointed to sin, did it not? The outer courts of the temple, all of the courts of the temple. Of course, in the holy of holies, only the high priest could go and represent the people. What was that saying? That there is this void between a holy God and sinful people. That was a reminder. I mean, when you went to the temple, you were reminded of sin. God did not come to Adam and Eve and give Adam this grand promise in Genesis 3:15 and say, "But you know what? We are just going to forget about it. We are just going to... you know, let's wipe the slate clean. We are just going to move on from here, buddy. And I don't want to bring you down every Lord's Day. I don't want to bring you down on the sabbath and we are just going to, you know, preach a couple of moralisms, let you and Eve work everything out in your marriage, you know, three ways to be a better husband, three ways to be a better wife and you are going to be happy. We are all going to be happy. We are just all going to get along."

He didn't do that, did he?

No, he established a sacrifice.

I wonder what it was like for Adam to see that lamb slaughtered. Have you ever butchered an animal? Have you ever seen one butchered? I am not talking about men shooting a deer and it barely breathing and going off there and finishing him off. That is not what I am talking about. I am talking about taking a live animal, putting your hand on it and slitting its throat. That is what I am talking about. And holding him so he doesn't run off bleeding all over the place and you have got him making a mess.

Reminder of sin.

Another way the Old Testament enforces this reminder of sin is through prophetic admonition. The prophet often reminded the people that they were sinners and God was holy. I mean, you take a concordance, you look it up. But the whole purpose of this prophetic admonition from the apostles was one thing and one thing only and that was to get them to repent of their sin and to move forward in their sanctification.

Turn to Deuteronomy chapter nine. I just want to read a verse. Just pointing out and showing you how Moses the prophet did not tell the nation of Israel to forget their sins and to just act like they never happened. If you look at verse seven of Deuteronomy nine Moses says, "Remember."

Now that word just remember talking back to their parents yesterday. They weren't just to remember speaking unkind words to a husband or wife.

He says, "Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 9:7.

He is talking about some pretty big sins. He is talking about the kinds of sins that made Israel wander around in the desert for 40 years because God was not pleased with that generation. Why was God not pleased with that generation? Because they did not add faith to the Word preached. They did not progress in their salvation and sanctification. They stayed right where they were and God had them dwell in the desert until they died off, the next generation entered into the Promised Land. Prophetic admonition pointed to remembering sin.

Now there is another interesting thing about verse seven of Deuteronomy nine. And that is this generation hadn't committed those sins. Is the light coming on yet? That is, there is this connection of generational sins. Do you know what he is saying to the children? He says, "Don't you remember your sins, the sins of your fathers? Don't act like them. Don't participate in their rebellion. Don't be rebellious like your parents were rebellious."

And he says, "They were your sins." He says, "Remember these things."

Why was it important for them to remember those sins? So that they would not commit the same sins. And, again, beloved, turn over to Ezekiel chapter 36, Ezekiel 36. I want to show you, again, not only just prophetic admonition, but also concerning the great promises that God promised his people. And, of course, that promise is a promise of salvation. That promise is... and when you think about the promises of God you can sum up all those promises in one word, salvation. You sum up those promises because every one of the promises given in the Old Testament were connected to the salvation of God's people. I don't care if it was political, economical, ecclesiastical, whatever the promise was, God was bringing healing to his people, salvation to his people and every facet of their lives were to be affected by the gospel, by the promise, a promise of salvation. As far as the curse is found, God redeems that for his people.

In Ezekiel 36 look at verse 22. I am going to read down through verse 32.

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.<sup>3</sup>

What he is saying here is, "I am going to do such a great work in you, you who profaned my name, I am going to cause the nations to see your holiness." How? "Because I am going to work in you."

Great sin, great profanity, great blasphemy of God's name and God says, "But I am going to do such a great work in you, I am going to cause you to be holy among the people." He says, "That is how I am going to vindicate myself.

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<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 36:22-23.

He says:

For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.<sup>4</sup>

You see, providentially, the famine and all of the various plagues that would plague the prophets at that time was considered to be a cursing of God. Even among the pagans whenever something bad happened, whenever there was a long draught, they would sacrifice to their false gods in order to bring rain. And what God is saying is, “But I am going to make it where people don’t look at you like you have been cursed. I am going to bless you and multiply you. I am going to cause you to be faithful and rich in the sight of the nations, not for your sake, but for mine.”

Verse 31. “Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.”<sup>5</sup>

Do you know what? He says, “Listen, I am going to bless you in such a way that when you think about your past sins it is going to cause you to loathe sin, to hate sin even more. When you remember, when you have the abundance of God’s grace and mercy poured out and flowed into you, to your life, into blessing the work of your hands and providing for your family,” he says, “When you think about your past abominations and sins, you are going to hate them.”

Let’s keep reading.

And he says:

“I am not doing this for your sake,” declares the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!” ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places

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<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 36:23-30.

<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel 36:31.

will be rebuilt. The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. They will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.’ Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it.”<sup>6</sup>

He says, “Listen, I am going to bless you mightily and the purpose of me blessing you mightily and you hating and despising your sin is so that I get the glory.”

Now you still want to forget your sins?

You see? The point is: We want to forget the sins because we don’t want to deal with them or we haven’t dealt with them biblically, you see. They may be reminders to you and to all of us that we haven’t dealt biblically in true repentance and made right those things we need to make right, beloved.

Well, you can see how the Old Testament points to these things. Now what about the New? Well, let me just help you out as far as the ceremonial law is fulfilled in the new covenant. Remember what John the Baptist said when he saw Jesus.

“Behold the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world.”

Now, he wasn’t referring to a cuddle, cuddly lamb. When John made that statement what would have come into the minds and the hearts of the people that heard that statement was the slit throat, was the blood gushing out. It would have been a sacrificial lamb. It would have been a lamb completely, providentially committed that God raised up to have his life taken, the victim, the victim.

“Behold,” John said, “The victim of man’s sin.”

That was a reminder, wasn’t it? That was a reminder to all of those there being baptized—and John baptized the baptism of repentance—that was a reminder to those people that Jesus Christ had to be the victim of their sins just as those sins were represented in those old covenant sacrifices. Jesus Christ was going to be that final, particular fulfillment of that sacrifice and never to need another one.

So we see we are reminded of it in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is called the Lamb of God and that refers to his sacrifice.

What about apostolic admonition?

Turn over to Romans with me, Romans chapter six. Apostolic admonition, just like the apostles of the old covenant, the apostles admonished and preached the salvation of Jesus

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<sup>6</sup> Ezekiel 36:32-36.

Christ pointing out sin and reminding of sin, even commanding the Church to remember sinful ways and practices so that they would not fall back into those habits.

Look at Romans six verse 21. The apostle Paul says, “Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed?”<sup>7</sup>

He asked a question. When you come to a question in the Bible, make sure you treat it like a question. Paul is asking a rhetorical question here. He says, “What about the benefit?”

“What benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed?”<sup>8</sup>

He is, by asking the question, what does he bring to their mind? Their sins that brought shame upon them when their eyes were opened.

Beloved, listen to me carefully. You are not ashamed of your sins unless you have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. You are not ashamed of your sin. You may act ashamed of it. You may temporarily show some embarrassment, but that is not shame. That is not biblical shame. When Ezekiel and Paul talks about this shame, it is the kind of shame that motivates us to move on in salvation. It is the kind of shame that we don’t just try to forget. It is the shame that causes the grace, the mercy, the salvation offered in Christ to even be greater to us, to be more beautiful to us. It doesn’t cause us to look back and just go, “Man, I was one bad person.” It makes us say, “What a glorious Savior,” ok?

That is the point.

Turn over to 1 Corinthians 10. I want to point out another passage to you just about the remembering of these things. And Paul in 1 Corinthians... now you have got to understand something. This is a Gentile church here. It is a church dominated with Gentiles and he is using Israel as an example.

And he says in verse one. All right, let’s see. Let’s back up. He says... let’s just... verse five. And he is talking about the nation of Israel in the desert with Moses. And he says, “Though they had passed through the Red Sea and though they had drank from that rock miraculously, the water flowing from it,” he says, “The rock was Jesus.”

He says in verse five, “Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things.”<sup>9</sup>

So, you see, beloved, that part of that shame is not just this in biblical... and, you know, it is not just this embarrassment, well, I am embarrassed because my child said something that I have been training them and... No, it is the kind of shame that magnifies the grace

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<sup>7</sup> Romans 6:21.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:5-6.

and mercy of God and that moves on in sanctification. It is not just this shame that is dominated with you.

“Oh, me, oh, my, oh, me, oh... you know...”

No, it has a different focus to it. That is the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. Worldly sorrow is completely focused on us, trying to make ourselves look better in the eyes of those around us. Godly sorrow leads to holiness. Godly shame, being shamed over our sins leads to holiness, ok?

And he said, “This was for your example.” That is, learn from their sins.

And, of course, they would be reminded in that context that they are sinners and that they, too, must be careful about the same sin that the others were guilty of. And, of course, in the new covenant you have these wonderful promises.

Turn over to Romans eight. The same thing here and you have Romans eight verse one.

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”<sup>10</sup>

There is no condemnation. What is condemnation? There is no judgment. Those who have been justified by Jesus Christ are not guilty, are not guilty. And you have got to recognize that. You have got to see that these are the promises of God, that that person, the man or the woman, the boy and the girl that is in Jesus, that has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is represented by him in the covenant of grace. There is no condemnation, no longer for that person.

This is from God’s perspective. He no longer sees you as condemned. Everybody outside of Jesus Christ is what? Under God’s holy, wrathful condemnation. And they should view their... and then they would view... and of course they don’t view their sins in light of God’s Word, but the way they deal with their sins, beloved, has to be completely different than the way we deal with our sins. Remember, you and I deal with sin every day and the question is: How do we move past those sins? How do we put the past in its place?

Look at verse 28 and 29 of Romans eight. Just most of us have this memorized, I am sure.

“And we know,” Paul says, “that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:1.

<sup>11</sup> Romans 8:28-29.

What Paul is saying is, is that the doctrines that we are talking about on being able to put the past in its place, rests upon the theology of the Bible. It rests upon the doctrine that God has revealed to us in that in God's sovereign plan everything that happens in our lives happens for our good and his glory. That is even your sin, even your sin. Even your sin, God is going to get glory out of it. I don't know exactly how, but he is going to.

Remember what we said in Ezekiel 36. What did he say? He says, "I am going to cause the people that blasphemed my name among the nations and I am going to work in them in such a way that the people know that I am God." That is, listen. The nations surrounding nations, are going to witness the way those people live, the Israelites live, God's covenant people. The people around you are going to witness how you live every day of your life and they are going to go, "Something is happening. They are holy. Look at the difference." And God is glorifying his name what? Through all that sin.

Well, let's begin to exposit our text. Turn back over to 1 Timothy.

I am not going to introduce the epistle to you or the letter to you, but other than to say that Timothy, 1 Timothy along with 2 Timothy, was a letter that Paul wrote to a particular pastor named Timothy. Paul was writing to one of his protégés and Paul was writing, addressing various ecclesiastical, church government issues. Paul was giving this young pastor advice. But the text, the portion of the text that we are going to focus on is where Paul begins to give a personal testimony of himself as he writes the letter.

And when Paul wrote to Timothy in verses 12 through 16, Paul displays for us, I believe, four vital attitudes that every Christian needs to have in order to put the past in its place. Yes, Paul's past sins had great impact on who he was. When he wrote this letter, Paul's past sins had a great impact on who he was as a Christian man, on who he was as an apostle of Jesus Christ, who he was as a pastor. Paul's sins affected the way he performed all of his ministry. And, beloved, what we got to do this morning is we have got to address our past and make sure that our past—in order to deal with it biblically—we have got to make sure our past influences and affects our present in such a way that God receives the glory due to his name. That is the point.

Paul's sins, as they impacted the present, he was ready to declare openly that his sins did not make him a victim, but a victor.

Too many people are victimized by their past and memories. And that is not the way God has intended it. And I think we can use the apostle Paul here as an example.

The first attitude I want to bring to your attention is found in verse 12 and it is the attitude of thankfulness. It is the attitude of thankfulness. Look at verse 12 with me.

Paul says, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Timothy 1:12.

Paul here in verse 12 declares an attitude, a disposition of thankfulness. Now, what is important about being thankful? Well, it is not just an emotion. Paul is not saying, “I am emotionally moved because of what God has done.”

Now, we don’t preach... we are not against emotions. But we don’t want to attribute emotions to certain doctrines and words that don’t belong there. This is a noun and he is describing his disposition. Paul is saying, “I stand in the present thankful. The word used there for thankful is the same word used for grace throughout the New Testament. Paul was the theologian of grace. Over the 150 times the word “grace” is used in the Bible, Paul uses it over 100 times.

“What is so interesting about that fact, pastor Stanfield?”

Well, I can think of a few things, but I will give you one. I think the reason Paul was enamored of the grace of God and so thankful was Paul recognizes sin.

Do you recognize yours?

See, Paul... for Paul, ok, the grace of God was central in his theology. The grace of God was stood first and foremost when he thought about Jesus Christ. When Paul thought about Christ he thought about grace.

What about the covenant of grace, beloved, the covenant of grace? When was the covenant of grace bestowed upon mankind? Right after man sinned.

“Adam, where are you?” God said. “Come on out, Adam, and I am going to give you a promise.”

Paul was reminded constantly of the grace of God because Paul was constantly reminded of who he was. Paul did not wallow around in the sins of the past. Don’t get me wrong. Don’t misunderstand what I am saying here. Paul did not have some morbid introspection of his own personal sins that just caused him to sit around and wring his hands and cause him to bring upon him all of these psychological deficiencies and physical habits that are annoying to people. The people are guilty, carry a certain disposition about them. That is not what Paul had. Paul had a healthy remembrance of his sin in such a way he remembered his sin, it brought the grace of God first and foremost in his life. It brought it to the forefront.

All right, reformed people. How important is the grace of God in your theology? Where does the grace of God stand in your theology? Is... you see, Paul wasn’t opposed to law. Law didn’t conflict with grace. Paul understood it.

In fact, Paul said, “It was the law that opened my eyes and tormented my soul and pointed out Jesus to me. But having seen my sin, my eyes have now gazed upon the grace.”

See, Paul is now considered this theologian of grace because Paul's life is dominated by the grace of God. Now how so?

Well, I think in at least three ways he tells us in verse 12. He says, "First of all," he says, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me."<sup>13</sup>

Now that is a particular word here. What Paul is saying is, "I thank God because he has empowered me. He has enabled me."

Now that could mean in our context that Paul is referring to Timothy and he says, "Timothy, I thank God because God has strengthened me for... you know, to be a pastor."

Well, and I think that was... is very much a part of what Paul is saying. But I think particularly what Paul is saying is if you read all of Paul's works, one of the dominating themes that you see in there is sanctification. Sanctification is tremendously important to Paul's theology and Paul says, "I thank God because he has strengthened me. He has empowered me to live the Christian life. He has enabled me to confess my sins. He has given me the strength needed to be the Christian I need to be. Praise be to his name."

So he says, first of all, "I am thankful for being enabled to see."

When did that come? When the Holy Spirit comes into your life. A man cannot see, a woman cannot see, a boy, a child, a girl cannot see or be enabled to live the Christian life apart from the Holy Spirit. That is why, beloved, don't ever tell anybody all they need is the Bible. For that is wrong. A man with the Bible in his hand without the Holy Spirit to give him the ability to interpret it, is throwing pearls to swine. You must have the Bible and you must have the Holy Spirit in order to change. The Holy Spirit must come to you and bring the enlightenment in your mind and heart to the Word of God. Paul is thankful he has been strengthened.

The second thing Paul is thankful for is his... that the Lord... now, listen. Here is what the text says, that Christ, because he—he is talking about Christ—"because Christ considered me faithful."

Now listen to me. This has profound impact upon the now. Paul is saying, "Yes, I am a chief of all sinners." But here Paul is saying that Jesus Christ esteemed me faithful.

You see here is... you know, too many reformed people fall into the idea that, well, I am a worm and all of these people trying to get all this... check all this sinful stuff out of the hymnals and the worm theology out of all we need. We need that stuff.

Yes, we do.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

But what Paul said was, Paul says, “I am thankful that Christ saw me faithful to do the work that he has called me to do.”

Now, beloved, listen. It is just like a child and a parent. If the child literally believes that, well, I can’t do anything right. I am a slug. I am a worm. There is nothing I can do to please my mom and dad. What do you think? How do you think that child is going to respond to commands? How do you think?

I think you are constantly going to have a defeated child. But if that child says, “My dad, my momma, they think I am faithful. They esteem me faithful. They consider me faithful and they have given me this task and I am going to prove them right.”

You see the... you can see the change here. Paul is saying this is from a human perspective. Paul is saying, “Yes, Christ esteemed me faithful and I want to be faithful.”

Do you want to be faithful?

And then in last he talks about his thankfulness for the ministry that Christ had called him to. I wish we could go and look at the ministry of Paul because the ministry of Paul... I mean, think about it. I mean this is profound. What Paul is saying is, “I am thankful for this ministry.”

Paul’s ministry was one of sorrow and great persecution. We lay eyes on the apostle Paul. I don’t know that we will be able to or not. I don’t know how exactly we are going to be clothed and everything else, but if you could pull the cloak off Paul’s back, do you know what you are going to see? Scars. He was whipped. He was stoned. He was left for dead. He was snake bitten. He was ship wrecked.

He says, “And I am thankful for my ministry.”

And, beloved, how can it be you and I get so side tracked over the smallest things in our home, over the smallest things in the office, over the smallest things that we encounter. We don’t even... I mean, we can barely say the words, “I am thankful.” Can we say like Paul, “I have been enabled, empowered, I have been esteemed faithful and I am thankful for being a momma? I am thankful for being the dad. I am thankful for being a pastor, elder, deacon. I stand thankful in these things.”

And, yes, it may absolutely be a ministry of hardship to you. But you must have a disposition of thankfulness.

The second thing you must have, beloved, is an attitude of honesty, honestly. Look at verse 13.

Paul says, “Even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Timothy 1:13.

Paul here is absolutely honest with his past. He doesn't try to minimize it. He doesn't try to sugar coat it. He doesn't try to ignore it. He doesn't try to make it look better than it really is. Paul uses three very ugly law breaking, covenant breaking terms in order to describe his past. And all of them are true.

He said, "I was a blasphemer."

You have got to understand that Paul had been a Pharisee and, of course, blaspheming was a capital crime. Paul was a blasphemer.

Persecutor. I mean, just think about the Commandments. First Commandment, the Sixth Commandment, the Seventh Commandment, the Eighth Commandment. I mean, many things here. Paul is honest with his past. Paul does not seek to sugar coat it. Paul doesn't seek to dramatize it. Paul doesn't seek to make it more than it really is. He just seeks to be honest with his past and it is so important, beloved, that we look to our past in earnest and sincerity and honesty because of verse 14.

Paul says this, "And the grace..."

Notice. "I was formally a blasphemer, persecutor and a violent aggressor."<sup>15</sup>

Let me just say this before I move on to verse 14 for those of you who may not even know this. Paul persecuted the Church of Jesus Christ. I mean, you children may not know this. The apostle Paul threw women, threw mommas in jail. The apostle Paul threw men in jail. The apostle Paul approved of having the Christians killed in his time. The apostle Paul was a very sinful man before coming to Christ. But the thing that I want you to really recognize when Paul says this is in the last half of verse 13 he says, "Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief."<sup>16</sup>

Now, let me make a comment here. Paul is not giving an excuse like we are good at. Paul is not justifying his sin. Paul is saying, "Oh, oh, but by the way, I was ignorant."

What you must realize here is Paul is setting up how glorious God is and how sinful he was because what Paul is saying, Paul has already testified throughout the Bible how he was a Pharisee of Pharisees. He was trained under Gamaliel. He lived in Jerusalem. He had all of the supreme benefits that any theologian of his day could hope for and be glad of. Paul is not saying he was ignorant. Paul is saying, "As it relates to the Lord Jesus Christ, though I thought I knew God, I was ignorant concerning Christ." That is what he is saying.

And, Paul, when he was confronted on that Damascus road Jesus said, "Paul, why dost thou persecute me?"

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

You see, Paul was ignorant to the grace and the mercy and the person of Jesus Christ. He deals with his past honestly.

The third attitude I want to bring to your attention is humility, humility.

I am going to read, well, verse 14 supporting what I have already said about the mercy being bestowed upon Paul.

Verse 14 says, “And the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.”<sup>17</sup>

The word that Paul uses there for abundant is super abundant. Paul says that the grace and the faith and the love provided to him by God was super abundant toward his sin. Where he was a blasphemer, where he was a violent persecutor, where he was ignorant, the grace of God took care of all of those things and caused him to be the Christian apostle and the preacher and the teacher that he now was when he wrote this epistle to Timothy. Paul is exclaiming the super abundance of the grace of God. And that is what we need to do.

Beloved, verse 15 and 16 the attitude of humility. We have thankfulness. We have honesty. And we have humility.

He says this in verse 15. He says, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”<sup>18</sup>

Humility. Paul does no longer see himself as the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised on the eighth day, a Hebrew of Hebrews, tutored under Gamaliel, a Pharisee of Pharisees. When Paul says a Pharisee of Pharisees what he was saying was, “Even among the Pharisees I was of that isolated group of the Pharisees that was above those Pharisees.”

Paul says, “All of that, all of that was nothing compared to the mercy that God has bestowed upon me.”

He said, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”<sup>19</sup>

Humility. I mean, Paul was so full of himself, Paul was so arrogant before coming to Christ, Paul literally believed he was doing the work of God when he was persecuting the Church. Paul literally believed he was going to stamp out those blasphemers for blaspheming God’s name. He was going to take... he saw his personal mission to put

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<sup>17</sup> 1 Timothy 1:14.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Timothy 1:15.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

these men and women in jail. He was going to have to see to it himself. He was so full of himself and God humbled him so lowly. God brought him so low. Humility.

Beloved, humility, do you know what that is? Humility is not being able... humility is not that false humility, that false pietism where you don't even want to comb your hair and I don't want to concern myself with the nice clothes of the world. That is false.

Paul says, "No, this kind of humility has brought me to a place that recognizes the super abundance of God's grace and mercy and I was so arrogant and proud in the past and now all I am is in Jesus. It is all about Jesus."

Humility.

What Paul thought he had without Jesus he recognized he had nothing and now he sees everything in Christ. Everything is in Christ.

Turn to Philippians three. I want to be... look at verse seven. All right, let's back up, verse four.

Although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.<sup>20</sup>

"I was blameless," Paul said, "according to the Pharisee law, interpretation of the law.

Verse seven:

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Philippians 3:4-6.

<sup>21</sup> Philippians 3:7-14.

Now, you see, Paul is saying it is just all consuming Jesus. And Paul, the verse I want to point out to you because many people will use this verse to say, “We just need to forget it. Don’t think about it again. You have got to move forward. Don’t even think about, dwell on those things anymore,” where Paul talks about... He says in verse seven, 15, “Let us therefore..”<sup>22</sup> ... oh, that is not it.

Where Paul says that he pressed... forgetting... verse 13. He says, “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead...”<sup>23</sup>

Paul is not saying, “Forget the past.” Paul is saying, “I have forgotten the righteousness taught by the old paradigm I used to hold.” Paul is saying, “I used to hold to a paradigm that taught a righteousness according to the law. I don’t hold to that. I have forgotten that theology and that doctrine. Now I press on in Christ. Christ is my righteousness, not my own personal works and efforts.”

That is what Paul is saying. Paul is saying, “I forgot. I am putting that way of salvation behind me and I am moving forward in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Beloved, humility, humility. Look at verse 16 back over at Timothy one.

“Yet for this reason,” Paul said, “I found mercy, so that in me...”<sup>24</sup> Now notice what he says. “In me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”<sup>25</sup>

Humility. You know what? Everything in your past, beloved, God is using for his glory and for an example to those around you.

You see what we try to do when we try to unbiblically forget the past and not dwell on it and not use it to our sanctification. What we do is we want to dress ourselves up in clothes that don’t fit us. We want to dress ourselves up in clothes that do not fit us. They do not make us look like we think they make us look so that we can be somebody we are not.

Paul was saying, “This is who I am. This is who I was. And now I am this in Jesus Christ.” And Paul says, “Jesus is using me as an example of grace.”

How many opportunities have you had to talk about maybe your past to people, that they could have benefited from it, but you, you didn’t want to talk about it? You could have been an example. You could have shown them I was this way and now I am this way and

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<sup>22</sup> Philippians 3:15.

<sup>23</sup> Philippians 3:13.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Timothy 1:16.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

here is why I am this way. This is the means of grace and the affect they have had on my life.

Paul shows great humility because he says, “I don’t mind being an example for Jesus. Paul says, “I was a blasphemer. I was a persecutor. I blasphemed God’s name. I persecuted the Church. I was a violent aggressor. I was a covetor.” Paul says, “That is who I was, but praise God I am not that anymore.”

He is not ashamed of his past. He glories in the name of Jesus and he uses his past to be an example of the grace and the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is just saying, “Look, these sins were great. But God’s grace is greater.”

And, of course, the fourth thing is praise, praise. Thankfulness, honestly, humility and praise, beloved.

Verse 17. You can’t help, I mean, even in the Greek language, there is this transition in the tone of the language as Paul begins to praise God and he says, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”<sup>26</sup>

You see, Paul’s praise is based upon the person of God, theology, sound doctrine. Paul’s attitudes rest upon the foundation of the effectual salvation of Jesus Christ. The grace of Jesus Christ, beloved, is an effectual grace to move you past your sins to his glory.

Let me tell you something. I don’t care if you just committed a terrible sin yesterday, it is not more powerful than the grace of God.

Your sins in the past—I don’t care if they mount as high as Mount Everest—cannot consume and overtake the grace of God. God’s grace is effectual to change you, to cause you to repent, I mean, to bring you to a state of humility, of thankfulness, of honesty and praise, beloved, if you believe the text before you today. All of these attitudes are grounded upon the Word of God.

Well, let’s bring some application here. Let’s apply this, apply what we have talked about this morning. First of all, the first application I want to give you is this. Let your past sins have a positive influence in the present. Let your past sins demonstrate a positive influence unto faithfulness in the present. If you are thinking and dwelling and your memory is plaguing you about past sins, maybe you haven’t repented. Maybe you haven’t dealt with it accordingly. Maybe you haven’t been truly... godly sorrow over it.

Beloved, biblically repent of those sins and use those sins and use those past sins to influence you in a positive way for faithfulness.

Let me give you an example to our illustration. Turn to Luke seven.

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<sup>26</sup> 1 Timothy 1:17.

"Yes, pastor, but I have sinned greatly and my sins are big and I don't think God's grace is more sufficient than my sins."

Well, let's turn over to Luke seven.

The story here... look over at verse 36.

Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner [a great sinner]; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."

And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

And he replied, "Say it, Teacher."

"A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?"

Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more."

And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."

Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."

Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."<sup>27</sup>

Do you see why Paul could be the apostle he was and why you can be the Christian you are? Maybe your sins are mighty and powerful and big and large. Maybe you have sinned multiple and many times. But, beloved, this morning, will you respond to the

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<sup>27</sup> Luke 7:36-48.

grace of Jesus Christ? Will you demonstrate his forgiveness in your life this morning by demonstrating a greater faithfulness than those around you?

If you sinned greatly, be more faithful. Be more thankful. Be more honest. Show more humility. And praise God even more, beloved. Let your sins have a positive influence in the present.

Let me quote John Newton, a slave captain, a man that had sent thousands of black slaves go to their death. God converted him. And one of his famous sayings is, "I am a great sinner, but Jesus is a great Savior."

You see that? And what did John Newton do? Did he continue to be a slave captain? No, he continued to give his... he changed and gave his life to Jesus Christ.

You see, beloved, you may be here with a pile of sins, but God's grace is way greater than your sin.

Secondly, let your past sins remain in the past. Let them remain in the past. Don't seek to bring them back up in such a way that they influence you to do those deeds again. Don't meditate on them in a way that you begin to lust over those previous lusts. Keep the sins in the past and keep the grace in the present.

Thirdly, let your past influence you unto holiness and don't be a victim. Do not let your past victimize you, but recognize the Bible says in numerous places that you are a victor in the name of Jesus Christ. And, beloved, if you have a pile of sins and you have asked God to forgive you of your sin, for you to wallow in those sins, for you to be paralyzed and unable to move forward in sanctification and holiness, for you to be just unable to do what Christ has called you to do, I want you to know today, know this morning that is a terrible sin in and of itself.

Christ has saved you, Paul says, to move you to be an example of grace and mercy, not an example of past sins and misery.

You are a victor, not a victim.

Fourthly, let your past sins to move you to greater repentance. Yes, you may have sinned greatly in the past. Who hasn't? But we should improve on our repentance. We should let the sins of the past motivate us to make sure we are really repentant, truly repentant according to Scripture.

Let's move on to greater love. Paul had such a love for his own countrymen. He was so influenced by the... you know, his own salvation and the grace and the streams of mercy from Jesus Christ. Paul says in Romans nine, he says, "I wish I was afflicted and cut off for the sake of my countrymen to see Jesus."

Greater love. Does your past sins motivate you to love God more and to love your brethren more? Greater service. Yes, the sins in the past should motivate me to serve him more, greater joy.

And I don't care what the sin is. I am not going to give you a list of sins. I am not going to give them to you. You know what they are. Your heart, your mind is racing right now. The point is, has the forgiveness that you have received in Jesus Christ and the grace and the mercy that you have received in Jesus, has it caused you to greater repentance, greater love, greater service, greater joy? Has it caused you to be a greater example in the name of Jesus? Has it caused you, beloved, to a greater responsibility? Yes, you were a great sinner, but now you should be a great Christian for Jesus' sake.

And you had that opportunity this morning. Will you take it? Are you going to take it? Will you take the mantel I am giving to you this morning and be faithful? Will you take the mantel given to you this morning to recognize how your sins no matter how numerous or how great they may be, will you use it to bring glory to the name of Jesus Christ?

And, beloved, I must close with one warning, one warning. That warning is found in Romans chapter six verse one.

You see, in our human depravity we gravitate to always... we are always willing to gravitate to the least effort. You know, I mean, Christians get saved today and they go, "What is the least? What is the least required of my by the church? What is the least required of me, pastor? What is the minimum I can do to serve Jesus?"

Does that reflect what we have learned this morning by the apostle Paul? Is that what the apostle Paul said?

"Ok, now I know now Jesus. My eyes have been opened. Now what is the least I can do and still be a Christian?"

No, that wasn't in the apostle Paul's mind. It shouldn't be in our mind, too. But since that is the case, since we do struggle with that, I want to close with Romans six verse one.

We should not presume upon God's super abundant grace and mercy and that is what Paul says in verse one. He says, "What shall we say then?"<sup>28</sup>

If God is the one who justifies, if God is the one who does these things, "Are we to continue in so that grace may increase?"<sup>29</sup>

"Well, if my sins bring glory to God, let me just keep on sinning and bring more glory to God."

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<sup>28</sup> Romans 6:1.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Paul says, “May it never be!”<sup>30</sup>

May it never be, beloved. Use the opportunity you have this morning to further your sanctification, grow in holiness and faithfulness, to grow in thankfulness, in honesty, in humility and praise. And may God bless you.

Let's pray.

*Heavenly Father, do bless us this morning. We call upon you in the name of Jesus the Lord and we pray that we would be moved and stirred and, Lord, brought to greater conformity to the teaching of Scripture. And, Lord, we do pray that these traits would be true of us, that we would be thankful, Lord, that we would be honest and we would show great humility and praise toward our God. Lord, from the least to the greatest, bless us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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<sup>30</sup> Romans 6:2.



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January 17th, 2010  
Morning Service

Jess Stanfield  
Teaching Elder

## Putting the Past in its Place

### Abstract:

There are many ways we can be paralyzed in the way we live. One of the most common and overlooked ways is living under the guilt of our sins of the past. We know Christ's sacrifice has sanctified us of our sins, yet we as humans can still remember them. How can sinners such as us bring any glory to God?

This sermon looks at how Paul's past sins made him the man he was, how he addressed them, and how the Lord ultimately was glorified in them.

### Notes

*Commonalities we all share: a past with sin in it. Do you find yourself dwelling in the past? Are your past sins paralyzing how you live in the present? Should we just forget the past as some advocate today? Should we act as if the past never happened? What does scripture teach concerning our past sins whether before Christ or after becoming one?*

#### **This topic is important to both Old and New Testament theology.**

##### O.T.

- Ceremonial law-High Priest, sacrifices, feasts. Pointing to sin
- Prophetic admonition to greater sanctification- Deu 9:7-remember how you provoked the Lord!
- Promises of a better Covenant- Eze 36:22-31

##### N.T.

- Sacraments- Baptism-cleansing of YOUR sin. And you are called to remember and improve your baptism. Lord's Supper- Jesus was crucified for YOUR sins, "do this in remembrance of Me."
- Apostolic admonition to greater sanctification- Rom 6:21
- Promises- Rom 8:1 and 28-29.

As Paul wrote to Timothy, he clearly displays 4 vital attitudes that helped him put his past in its place. Paul's sins did influence the present, but he wasn't a victim but a victor in Christ.

- Thankfulness, verse 12. Strength, esteemed faithful, ministry
- Honesty, verse 13, 14. Blasphemy, persecutor, violent aggressor, ignorant. God's grace proved superabundant in Christ Jesus.
- Sincerity, verse 15. No false piety or humility here just a sincere expression of truth as Paul found it in Christ. I am an example to those who are in sin. I trophy of grace and mercy to the praise of God in Christ.
- Praise, verse 17. Doxology, for Paul to reflect upon the past with praising God was impossible. Thoughts of the superabundant grace and mercy of God in His Son Jesus causes Paul to praise Him for BEING GOD. God's personal attributes.

## **Application**

- Let your past sins have a positive influence in the present unto faithfulness, Luke 7:41-43. Quote John Newton, slave Capitan to Christian- “this I know I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior!”
- Let your sins past remain in the past, but know that God is using it all for His glory, Gen 50:20 Joseph’s brothers.
- Let your past sins influence your future for godliness, determine not to be a victim. You are not a victim! But a victor if you are in Christ.
- Let your past sins move you to greatness! Greater repentance- Greater love (Paul had so much affection for those countrymen left in their ignorance of Christ that he wished he be cut off for their sake- Greater Service- Greater joy- Greater example and Greater responsibility!
- Let it not move to presume upon God’s superabundant grace and mercy, Roman 6:1- “mat we continue to sin so grace may abound? May it NEVER BE!

## Scripture References:

**1 Timothy 1:12-17** I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, (13) even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; (14) and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus. (15) It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*. (16) Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. (17) Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

**Philippians 3:7-16** But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, (9) and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, (10) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; (11) in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (12) Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. (13) Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (15) Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; (16) however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

**Genesis 50:20** "As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

We are glad you have chosen to listen to this sermon and pray that it gives you strength, the desire for obedience, and a desire to have God's abundant Grace mortify sin in your life. If you have any questions or comments please email [chuck\\_ezell@yahoo.com](mailto:chuck_ezell@yahoo.com).