

THE RELIGION OF THE GOSPEL

1 TIMOTHY 1:15 • TV135A

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1 Timothy 1:15

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

I want to speak to you today on the subject: **“THE RELIGION OF THE GOSPEL.”** We are going to turn to the book of **1st Timothy, chapter 1:15.**

Paul says; in **1 Timothy 1:15:** *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief.”*

We believe the apostle Paul wrote 14 of the 27 Books of the New Testament, and in his writings and in his preaching: the apostle said, *“I have not shunned to declare unto you all (to all the people, the whole council) the council of God.”* That’s what he said: *“I have not shunned to declare unto you all the council of God.”*

He said: *“I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you.”* In other words, the apostle could rise eloquently with the doctrine of election as recorded in **Ephesians chapter 1** in which he said:

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“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus according as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him. In love he predestinated us unto the adoption of children.”

The apostle could rise high, eloquently, presenting the great doctrines of redemption in Christ from the foundation of the world. In the latter part of this same book he could tell a husband to love his wife and a wife to be in submission and obedience unto her husband.

He could rebuke the legalist’s and he could hold the line on salvation by grace alone. He said: *“For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it’s the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

“We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” He could rebuke the legalist. He could say: *“If any man preach any other gospel than the gospel that I preached unto you; let him be accursed.”*

And, in the same book, he could say to the servant to do a good day’s work, to be obedient to his master, and then tell the master to treat his servant’s and his workman fairly and pay them a good salary and a good wage.

Then, the apostle Paul could preach the good news of the Gospel. In **1 Corinthians 15**, he said: *“I declare unto you the gospel by which you are saved if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you believed in vain:*

“How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: that he was buried and rose again according to the scriptures.” And then turn around exhort believer’s *“to be kind one to another and tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God for Christ’s sake forgave us.”*

Paul preached the whole council of God; his ministry was a balanced ministry. He talked about the things that happened before the foundation of the world and God’s eternal council and God’s eternal purpose.

He talked about the things that go on within the Christian’s heart, within his life, and in his home and in the church. He had a balanced ministry: *“I’m not shunned to declare unto you all (the whole) the council of God, keeping back nothing that was profitable unto you.”*

In his writings and in his preaching Paul did not seek the praise of men. He said: *“If I please men I am not the servant of Christ.”* Nor, did he seek the possessions of men. He said: *“I know how to abound and I know how to be abased: I have learned through whatever state I am, therewith to be content.”* He didn’t seek their praise or their possessions or their popularity whether he was preaching in Caesar’s Palace or on the streets of Corinth. His message was the testimony of God almighty.

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But like every true messenger of God, every true minister of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul majored on two points. There were two points that he constantly, constantly preached, that he insisted upon, that he declared every time he rose to preach. Those two points are these:

First of all: He constantly set forth the redemptive work of Christ!

Secondly: He constantly thanked God for His grace and mercy to him personally!

He said: *“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”* He talked about the redemptive work of Christ, *“to save sinners of whom I am the chief.”* He said: *“I thank God that he put me in the ministry. I thank God that he saw fit to redeem me: I was a blasphemer, injurious, a persecutor but I obtained mercy for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief.”*

I do believe my friend that you can recognize a true messenger of Christ by this two-fold theme.

I believe every true messenger of Christ will come declaring this two-fold theme, the redemptive work of Christ and the grace of God to him personally: As Richard Baxter once said: “I preach as one that may never preach again; I preach as a dying man to dying men.”

The apostle Paul clearly defines this two-fold theme. He says: *“I’m determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.”*

He was preaching at that time to the ancient city of Corinth, the capital of learning, the capital of philosophy and oratory and all of these things, these arguments between human wisdom and things of logic and things of this nature. He said: *“I’m determined to know nothing among you save Christ. God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ.”* He said to them again: *“Christ sent me not to baptize (or to organize or to promote) but to preach the gospel. Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.”* That’s was Paul’s theme!

Then, he talked about the grace of God, to him personally, he said: *“I am what I am by the grace of God. Though I am not one wit behind the chief apostle, but I be nothing.”*

Then, he said to those people at Corinth: *“Who maketh thee to differ? What do you have that you did not receive?”* He keeps calling attention to the fact that we obtained mercy. We don’t deserve it, we are not worthy of it, we have not earned it, *“but it is the gift of God, the unspeakable gift of God:”*

“The wages of sin is death; (that we’ve earned) but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

**“I once was lost
But now I’m found
And by God’s grace
I’m heaven bound.
My only plea
My only hope and only plea**

**Is that when Christ died
He died for me.”**

The song writer said:

**“In my hands no price I bring
Simply to the cross of Jesus Christ I cling
Could my tears forever flow?
Could my zeal no respite know
These for sin could never atone
Christ must save and Christ alone.”**

Charles Wesley wrote these words:

**“And can it be
That I should gain
An interest in
The Saviour’s blood.
Died he for me
Who him to death pursued
Amazing love, how can it be?
That thou my God should die for me.”**

Then, the old hymn writer said:

**“Depths of mercy can there be
Mercy still reserved for me
Can my God his wrath forbear?
And me the chief of sinners spare.”**

So, I say: this is a two-fold message of every true minister of Jesus Christ, a two-fold topic. He preaches as a dying man to dying men the unsearchable riches of God’s grace in Jesus Christ.

He preaches as one who may never preach again who doesn’t deserve to preach again but he preaches as one who is what he is by the grace of God. That’s the two-fold theme, the mercy of God in Christ Jesus and the mercy of God for the chief of sinners.

Now, there is a lot of religion today; there’s much religion today. Nearly everybody today is religious to some extent. I suppose there are more religious TV programs on the air now than in the history of the world.

I suppose there are more religious radio programs on the air today than in the history of the world. Much good is done in the name of religion and much evil is done in the name of religion. Even Iran and Ireland and other nations are killing in the name of religion, spreading hate in the name of religion.

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Men today, in the name of religion, worship idols and they abuse their bodies and they compete with one another for glory in the name of religion. But, there is a true religion, there's a true religion amid all the false religion there is a true religion; it's the religion of the Gospel. It's the religion of Jesus Christ.

It's as much a mystery as it ever has been. The Bible talks about the mystery of the Gospel. Our Lord said: *"Broad is the road that leads to destruction and many there be that go in thereat. Narrow is the road that leads to life and few there be that find it."*

Have you found the religion of the Gospel? Have you found this two-fold message, this ministry that Paul declared? *"This is a faithful saying; (it's a true saying; it's as true as the promise of God. It's as certain as the oath and council of God) it's worthy of acceptance by all men that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."* That's His redemptive work, to save sinners, and He saves sinners just like you and me, He saves sinners *"of whom I am the chief."*

Now, I want to point out to you seven things about the religion of the Gospel. I think these are very important. I think it would be wise for you to jot them down that you might remember them, seven facts about the religion of the Gospel. Let me give them to you briefly:

First of all: The religion of the Gospel, this message that Paul is preaching, this message that I'm trying to preach and want very much to preach; this Gospel of Jesus Christ, the religion of the Gospel, arises out of a right knowledge of God and of ourselves.

David said: *"When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, the sun, the moon, and the stars which thou has ordained and appointed. What is man that thou art mindful of him?"*

David had the right understanding of God's glory and God's majesty and God's sovereignty and God's power. He had the right understanding of himself.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: *"Eternal life is to know thee the living God,"* not to know about God or there is a God, but to know God.

Christ said to the Pharisees: *"You neither know me nor my Father."* This religion of the Gospel begins with a right understanding of the glory of God.

Our Lord taught us to pray: *"Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name (Holy and reverend is His name) Thy kingdom come Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

Extolling the attributes and the greatness of God is the beginning of prayers, it's the beginning of worship, and it's the beginning of any kind of understanding of what salvation is, who God is and what I am.

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You find this throughout the Bible. You will find Isaiah declaring: when king Uzziah died, *“I saw the Lord high and lifted up.”* How did he see the Lord?

“He saw the Lord high and lifted up, (mighty), and his glory filled the temple. And the cherubim’s and seraphim’s cried, holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty.” Then he said: *“I cried woe is me.”*

When a man sees God in His greatness, he sees himself in his weakness. When a man sees God in His holiness, he sees himself in his sinfulness. When a man sees God in His majesty and power, he sees himself in his inability and corruption.

Isaiah cried: *“Woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”*

When Job saw the Lord, he put his hand over his mouth and said: *“I have spoken once, twice, things too wonderful for me. I will never speak again. I have heard of you Lord by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes seeth thee and I hate myself, I repent in sackcloth and ashes.”*

John saw the Lord on the Isle of Patmos and he said: *“he fell at his feet as a dead man.”*

The Publican in the temple had some understanding of the holiness of God because he wouldn’t even go down to the front of the temple. He wouldn’t even approach the altar. *“He stood, (the Scripture said), afar off: he wouldn’t lift so much as his eyes to heaven, (let alone his hand), and he smote upon his breast, (for he knew that was the source of his trouble, his sinful heart and he cried out and bowed his head) Lord, be merciful to me the sinner.”*

So, I am saying that this religion of the Gospel does not produce or promote a strange familiarity with God like we have in this day when men so flippantly and carelessly talk about God being their “next door neighbor,” their “co-pilot” and “business partner” and things like this you know.

These Old Testament saints were said to be men who feared the Lord, who were awed at His presence, who were filled with reverence at His presence. They understood something of the holiness of God, of the majesty and power and glory of God.

And, they understood something of themselves, in their sinfulness. They remembered the pit from which they were hewn, the rock from which they were hewn. They didn’t forget that.

They remembered their state of evil from which God delivered them by His grace. You will get a hold of that to some extent if you ever come to know the living God.

Secondly: Then, the religion of the Gospel arises from a sense of the great things that God has done for fallen men!

“Salvation is of the Lord.” That’s the theme of the Bible! *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”* Jonah said, *“Salvation is of the Lord.”* David wrote again and again: *“The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.”*

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God didn't pass us by, He could have. He passed by the angels that fell. Yes, they are reserved in everlasting chains of darkness unto the Day of Judgment. God passed them by. *"He took not on himself the nature of angels but he took upon himself the seed of Abraham."*

When Adam and Eve fell and they were crouched and hiding in the bushes trying to cover their sins and nakedness with fig leaf aprons, God came walking in the cool of the day, down that path, and He could have walked right on by and condemned man and all of his children to eternal condemnation but He stopped and showed mercy.

Yes sir! God chose to save a people and to make them sons from all eternity. The apostle wrote: *"We are bound to give thanks to God always for you brethren, beloved of the Lord: because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."*

Not only did the Lord not pass us by, not only did He determine to have a people and gave them to His Son, but He made Christ their surety. He made Christ our representative:

And in the fullness of time he sent His Son, His beloved Son, His only begotten son, into this world. Christ took upon Himself our nature in likeness of sinful flesh and was made of a woman, made under the law, and met the holy law of God and obeyed it in every jot and tittle that we might have that righteousness that God requires, that righteousness that God demands, that righteousness with which God is satisfied, the righteousness of Christ.

Then, our Lord Jesus Christ was buried and rose again. He died on the cross, was buried and rose again. Even now He intercedes for us at the right hand of God.

Paul said, *"Who is he that condemneth; Christ died: Yea rather is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."*

But, the Lord didn't stop there. He sent His Holy Spirit to convince us of sin. He sent His Holy Spirit to convict us of our inability, to reveal Christ to our hearts, and to give us repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He called us by His grace. He called us by His Spirit.

Oh, the religion of Jesus Christ of the Gospel arises from a sense of the great things that God has done for fallen men.

Thirdly: Then, the religion of the Gospel produces a well-grounded hope of our interest in God's mercy and grace! Paul said, *"He hath given us a good hope through grace."* I like that word hope!

**"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness."**

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“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the Sons of God. It doth not yet appear what we shall be but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him and he that hath this hope purifieth himself even as he is pure.”

What is this hope? If you will listen to those men who wrote the Scriptures and what they taught, you will find that they speak of a blessed hope and being more than a wish and being more than a desire, but it is a hope based on the Word of God, a hope based on the promise of God.

“Abraham believed God that he was able to do all that he promised.” That’s our hope. Our hope is in the Word of God and in the person of Christ.

Listen to David: *“The Lord is my shepherd.”* That’s more than a wish or desire; that’s a blessed hope based upon expectation; *“the Lord is my shepherd; I shalt not want.”*

Listen to Job: *“I know that my redeemer liveth.”* Listen to Paul: *“Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Listen to John: *“We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.”*

Listen to Jude; he said: *“He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before his presence with exceeding glory.”* That’s assurance; that’s a hope, a blessed hope that is built upon expectation.

Fourthly: The religion of the Gospel produces a principle of love to Christ, and to one another; it produces this; *“We love him because he first loved us.”*

Our Lord sat down with the apostle Peter by the fire in that early morning hour and He said to him: *“Peter do you love me?”* Peter said: *“Yea, Lord; thou knowest I love thee.”* Three times he asked him. The third time Peter said: *“Lord, you know all things. You know I love you.”*

I am telling you this: the religion of the Gospel produces a strong, sincere love for the Lord Jesus Christ, not only for Christ but for other believer’s and even for unbelievers.

“If any man loves not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.” But, the Scripture also says: *“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another:*

“He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? If any man loveth not he knoweth not God for God is love.”

This religion of the Gospel produces a genuine, sincere, benevolent, brotherly love for all men, chiefly for Christ. He said: *“If any man love father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, more than me, he’s not fit to be my disciple.”* Christ is first!

Fifthly: The religion of the Gospel consists of a total surrender, a total surrender of us to the Lord Jesus Christ, a complete commitment! That’s right! Paul said: *“I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him.”*

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This thing of salvation; it's a whole lot more than giving a mental agreement to some facts stated by a preacher. It's a whole lot more than signing your name on a dotted line with some sort of decision that you send into a church or a denomination.

It's a whole lot more than having water either sprinkled on your brow or being put beneath water. It's a whole lot more than attending a sacrament or a Eucharist or a communion table. This thing of salvation is a commitment to Christ, surrender to the Saviour.

Our Lord has no unwilling disciples. He has no secret followers. He has no part-time soldiers. He said: *"He that putteth his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God."*

That's right! God almighty does not demand just my time, talent, and tithe; He demands me, myself. That's what the Scripture says. Job says: *"Though he slay me; I trust him,"* committed, surrendered, absolute unconditional surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A true union with Christ involves a surrender of me and my will to the Son of God. Christ is first. He will be Lord of all or he won't be Lord at all.

Sixthly: The religion of the Gospel makes the goodness and grace of God to us our model and motive. God's goodness and grace to me will be the motive and the model of my conduct toward you!

That is what we are saying that the goodness and grace of God to me will be the model and the motive of my conduct toward you. *"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another."*

Everything that God commands us to do is based toward other people and is based upon what He has done for us. He says: *"Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*

He says: *"Be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful."* He says: *"to forgive people their trespasses as your heavenly Father forgives your trespasses."* You see, that's the motive and model of our conduct and conversation and behavior toward other people. It is God's mercy and grace to us.

One of my friends said recently: "there's no way, there's no way that you claim any promise of God unless you, to some degree, fit the character described in the promise." There is no way that you can claim a promise of God, a promise written in the Bible unless you can to some extent, to some degree, fit the character described in that promise.

For example: Christ said, *"Ye are my friends, if you do what I command you. I command you to love one another. Now, you are my friends if you do what I command you."*

Listen to this promise: *"You are my disciple; (that's good news isn't it), if you love one another."* Listen to this: *"You are of the household of Christ, if you hold fast the profession of your faith firm unto the end."*

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You see; every promise of God; *“all things work together for good; (you hear that quoted all the time but there is a character described, there is a condition there), to them who love God, who are the called according to his purpose.”*

All things do not work together for good to all men, *“only to those who love Christ and who are called according to his purpose.”* That is what the Scripture says.

You can't lay claim to any promise in the Word of God if you don't, to some degree, fit the character described in that promise. But, the religion of the Gospel makes the goodness of God to me, the motive of my behavior toward you.

Last of all, the Gospel presses upon men three goals; I know they are unattainable, (that is in perfection in this life), but the seed is planted and the blood is there and the bloom begins to develop.

These three goals:

First of all: The goal of every believer is total commitment to Christ, total commitment:

**“My life, my love
I give to thee
Thy son of God
Who died for me.”**

That's what every believer wants; he wants a total commitment to Christ, of everything he is and everything he has.

Secondly: Total communion with Christ; he wants to walk with Christ and talk with Christ. He wants Christ to fill his very being, his heart, mind, and soul and strength.

Thirdly: Total conformity to Christ; he wants to be just like the Lord.

David said, *“I'll be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness!”*