

# Unbelievable Mercy

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[ 0 : 00 ]     1 Timothy 1, verses 12-17. I thank Him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to His service.

Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent, but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

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. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life.

To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. Christmas time in our country is, as you know, is full of gifts and good feelings. People watch classic films like *It's a Wonderful Life*, which I like as well, *A Christmas Carol*, that highlight kindness and generosity toward people, and they spend nearly \$700 billion for themselves and others during November and December.

[ 1 : 44 ]     That's just in the U.S. It's the two most profitable months of the year for retail businesses. And churches, likewise, are very busy during the season, putting on outreach events to reach their neighbors and friends, Christmas plays, candlelight services, drive-through nativities, and even live, I found out recently, live Christmas camels as attractions outside the church building.

Apparently that's the thing. But beneath all the sentimentality and pageantry of Christmas, the true message of Christmas can easily be lost. And in our passage today, we get an unornamented look at the meaning of Christmas.

And the heart of it is chapter 1, verse 15. 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.

That's what Christmas is all about. And that means we as people, we should entrust ourselves to Christ Jesus, who saves sinners by His mercy.

That's the main point of this passage. And I'll first talk about it, talk about the recipient of mercy, and then the reason for mercy, and then the response to mercy throughout this passage.

[ 3 : 05 ]     Paul begins this passage with thanksgiving in verse 12. I thank Him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to His service.

This verse is often misunderstood. Paul is thanking Jesus for appointing Him to His service, which is a continuation of the thought in verse 11, if you just look back one verse prior to this, where Paul spoke of how he has been entrusted with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God.

So he's thanking Jesus for appointing Him to be the minister of the gospel. But the reason for this appointment is often misunderstood from this verse. Some people understand the clause, because He judged me faithful, to mean that Jesus entrusted the gospel to Paul, because Paul was already faithful to God.

Or they think that it's because God foreknew that Paul would be faithful. God saw how hardworking Paul was, how upright he was, and how dependable he was.

And having judged him faithful, He entrusted the precious gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel, the goodness of salvation to Him. That's how people often understand it.

[ 4 : 19 ] But that's not what this clause means. If that's what is meant, it would contradict the rest of this passage, where Paul's talking about how he was not worthy of the service to which he was appointed.

And he highlights in the whole passage how undeserving he was of the mercy that he received from God. So what then does verse 12 mean? The word faithful in verse 12 is an adjectival form of the same Greek verb that was translated in verse 11 as entrusted.

So it can be translated as trustworthy. That's in fact how this word is, this exact same word is translated in verse 15. The saying is trustworthy.

And I think that's the way it should be translated here in verse 12 also. The New International Version, if you have the New International Version Bible, the NIV, it nails the translation of this verse. It says, I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that He considered me trustworthy, appointing me to His service.

So I hope you're following the meaning. Paul's filled with wonderment and thanksgiving toward God, that he considered Him to be trustworthy. And God expressed His trust in Him by appointing Him to His service.

[ 5 : 34 ] So Paul's not saying that God appointed him or chose him because he was trustworthy. He's marveling and thanking God that He considered him trustworthy.

You guys see the difference? I hope you're following. It's, he's saying, it's wonder that God considered me trustworthy. And I thank Him for that. And that's, this is all the more remarkable considering the rest of verse 13.

Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, an insolent opponent. Paul's full of thanksgiving because he is amazed that God regarded him as trustworthy of this entrustment of the gospel even after all the blasphemy against Christ that he spewed, all the persecution of Christians, God's people, and his insolent opposition to God.

These three words are very strong words of self-indictment and it becomes progressively worse. First, blasphemer, he says. A few verses later in chapter 1, verse 20, Paul mentions two men whom he had excommunicated from the church fellowship because they were blaspheming.

Same letter in chapter 6, Paul specifically says that Christians should behave in such a way so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. That's the exact same word or be blasphemed.

[ 7 : 02 ] He also warns of false teachers who have an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words which produce envy, dissension, slander, again, different translation, the same word, blasphemy, evil suspicions in chapter 6, verse 4.

So all that to say that blasphemy is something that Paul is very concerned about throughout his letter to Timothy. Yet he describes himself as a blasphemer. He had spoken abusively and falsely about Christ and his church.

Not only a blasphemer against God, but Paul was also a persecutor of God's people. Describing his life before conversion in Acts 26, verses 10 to 11, Paul confesses this, I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme. And in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

Paul jailed Christians and he authorized their execution. He rabidly pursued Christians even outside of the Jewish jurisdiction, even to foreign cities.

[ 8 : 27 ] And not only was Paul a blasphemer of God and a persecutor of the church, he was, in general, an insolent opponent. This is the strongest term of the three. It can be translated alternatively as tyrant.

It refers to people who violently and presumptuously transgress other people's rights, trespass other people's fears to inflict injury and insult.

Paul was an insolent opponent of both Christ and the church. He pridefully transgressed against both God and people, presuming to know better than God, and violating the rights of Christians.

That was Paul. The man that God singled out to be an apostle, to be a minister of the gospel, was not formerly a worshiper of Christ, supporter of the church, and a humble servant of God.

No, he was instead a blasphemer, persecutor, and an insolent opponent. And this is why Paul calls his salvation and appointment to ministry a mercy.

[ 9 : 33 ] He continues in verse 13, But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

He repeats that phrase again in verse 16, But I received mercy. And note the strong contrast indicated by that conjunction, But.

Formerly, I was a blasphemer and persecutor and insolent opponent, but I received mercy. I am the foremost of sinners, but I received mercy.

Even though I consider myself to be the very worst of sinners, I received mercy. That's what Paul is talking about here. The very nature of mercy is that it's undeserved.

Those who believe that they are in the right don't ask for mercy. They ask for justice. People who believe that they are deserving or entitled to something, they don't ask for mercy.

[ 10 : 39 ] They ask for payment. They ask for their wage, their reward. People who cry for mercy are the people who recognize that they are undeserving, but because of their desperate need, they plead for it anyway.

And Paul understands his calling to Christ, his salvation and his ministry as God's act of mercy. He's a recipient of mercy.

As 4th century pastor and theologian Augustine writes, none he chooses is worthy, but choosing he makes them worthy.

That God not only would save him, but also entrust him the gospel to Paul, that was an undeniable evidence of God's forgiveness and grace.

19th century British pastor Charles Sargent expressed a similar sentiment this way. I've always felt in my own mind that it was one of the clearest proofs that I had God's forgiveness of my many sins when I was trusted to preach the gospel.

[ 11 : 53 ] I should think that if a prodigal came back to his father, the old gentleman would kiss him and receive him and rejoice greatly over him, but the next Saturday, the market day, the old gentleman would say, I cannot send young William to market that would be putting temptation in his way.

Here, John, you have always been with me. Go to market and buy and sell for me, for all that I have is thine. William, you stay at home with me.

He might not let him see all that he meant, but he would say to himself, dear boy, he's hardly fit for that great trust. I love him, but still, I hardly dare trust him as much as that.

But see what my Lord did with me. When I came home to him as a poor prodigal, he said, here is my gospel. I will entrust you with it.

Go and preach it. I bless his name that I have not preached anything else and I do not mean to begin to do so. That God would consider me trustworthy of stewarding the gospel of Jesus Christ, this precious, one-of-a-kind message of salvation for the world.

[ 13 : 13 ] After all that I had done against him, after all sins I had committed, what grace, what mercy. That's Paul's sentiment.

Though Paul was undeserving, God saved him and gave him strength to be an apostle of Jesus Christ to discharge his sacred duty of ministering the gospel. And that's why Paul thanks God for strengthening him in verse 12.

It's God's strengthening that enables Paul for the service that he is called to. And Paul is here speaking of his Damascus encounter with the spirit of Jesus on his road to Damascus.

Because for Paul, his conversion to Christianity and his call to ministry, his commission to Christian ministry happened simultaneously. And Paul speaks of this reality again in verse 14.

When he encountered Jesus, he says, the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. This is the content, the substance of the mercy that he received from Christ.

[ 14 : 20 ] Remember the triad of Paul's sins? This is, he described himself as a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. Now that triad of Paul's sins now meets the triad of God's mercy.

He says, the grace and faith and love that are in Christ Jesus overflowed for him. And that word overflowed is emphasized here in the Greek.

It's actually the first word. It's intentionally fronted for emphasis. And I love that word. It's an unusual, rare word that it's likely actually Paul probably coined this word.

He made it up to express just how super abundant God's mercy is. It's the same kind of word that Paul uses in Romans 5 verse 20 where he says, where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ along with the faith and love that are in him, it didn't drip down to us. It doesn't trickle down to us.

[ 15 : 29 ] It overflowed. It spilled over. It was poured out on us lavishly, generously, and unsparingly.

Whatever Paul's sins were, they were overmatched by God's mercy. Wherever Paul had multiplied blasphemies, persecutions, and insolent opposition, the grace, faith, and love that are found in Jesus Christ abounded all the more.

And so Paul had formerly acted ignorantly in unbelief as he said in verse 13, but now that unbelief is counteracted by this faith that he receives from Jesus. Paul was formerly a persecutor of the church, but now through Jesus he receives love for Christ and his church.

And Paul was formerly a blasphemer and an insolent opponent of God, but now through Christ Jesus he becomes a humble recipient of grace. Grace means unmerited favor, a gift from God.

And if you're a Christian, this is true for you too. Notice that Paul doesn't say in verse 14, the grace of my Lord overflowed for me.

[ 16 : 45 ] He says the grace of our Lord overflowed for me, our Lord, because Paul is addressing his letter to Timothy, his disciple. And by extension, this statement applies to all who confess Jesus Christ as their Lord.

His grace, along with faith and love, has overflowed for you. And Christ himself is the fountainhead of all this overflowing grace, faith, and love.

Christ Jesus is mentioned four times in this passage alone. And Paul says in verse 14 that all these things overflowed for him in Christ Jesus.

That's one of the most important phrases in the entire Bible. It's used nearly 90 times in the New Testament that we are in Christ Jesus. It speaks of our union with Christ, that we participate in Christ, that we are identified with Christ, that we are incorporated into Christ.

And what this means, when Jesus was born in human likeness, he was born to identify with us so that he can represent us, so that he can bear our sins and iniquities and die on the cross in our place, and so that he can be raised from the dead, so that we can be united with him by faith and be restored to God and to spend eternity with him.

[ 18 : 11 ] That's the sweetest thing you could hear as a Christian, that we are in Christ Jesus. We are not in Adam anymore, our forefather who sinned against God and plunged us into our current state of brokenness and fallenness.

We are now in Christ. We're in Christ. That means we are not on our own anymore. We don't stand on our own to bear the punishment for our sins all to ourselves. No, we are now in Christ because he paid for all our sins.

That's what Christmas is all about. It's about the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news of salvation. And verse 15 is as good a summary of the gospel as you will find in the entire Bible.

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.

This is the focal point of this entire passage. This passage also has a mirroring structure that we've seen throughout the gospel of Luke.

[ 19 : 22 ] Verse 12 and verse 17, they match each other, they mirror each other. He began with thanksgiving to God, he ends with praise to God, and he gives a contrasting statement about how sinful he was and how merciful God was toward him in verses 13 to 14 and verse 16.

Those two verses match each other. And the only verse that stands by itself without a matching element is verse 15 because that's the center, the crux that he's trying to bring our attention to.

And that's this, 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. In his letters to Timothy and Titus, five times Paul introduces a statement with this phrase, the saying is trustworthy.

That's a signal that Paul is about to quote something, some piece of church creed, a traditional dogma that's been handed down that his audience would already be familiar with.

This is a truth that is trustworthy that you already know and believe because this is what Christians of all, all Christians in all places at all times have believed. It's trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

[ 20 : 42 ] And remember the word trustworthy is emphatic because he's repeated different forms of this word six times already in mere seven verses. He's emphasizing the importance of faith.

That's why Christians are called believers. And this is what you must believe above everything else. The saying is trustworthy, deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it's good news because Jesus said earlier in Luke 5, 31 and 32, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Salvation is not a tryout.

It's a bailout. It's not for the righteous. It's for sinners. It's not help for those who help themselves.

[ 21 : 52 ] It's help for those who can't help themselves. It's not the survival of the fittest or the holiest. It is the salvation of those who humble themselves and acknowledge their sinfulness and unworthiness before God.

There will be no saint in heaven that pats himself on the back and says, oh, I got here because of my many good deeds. Not a single one. There will be no saint in heaven who does not think himself to be a sinner saved by God's mercy.

If you think you're a good person, if you think you deserve to go to heaven, surely if anyone gets in, I'll qualify. If that's you, you are part of the most at-risk population for falling into the fires of hell.

Because you're self-righteous. Because you're prideful. Because you think you are self-sufficient and have no need for God's salvation.

Jesus is not saying that there are actually people who are not sick and therefore don't need help. There's no one righteous. Everyone is sick with sin.

[ 23 : 18 ] And only those who acknowledge that fact and come to Jesus, the great physician for healing, will be saved. Yes, the church is a hospital for the sick.

But it's not a hospital for people who refuse treatment insisting that they're not sick. Church is for those who acknowledge their sinfulness.

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 considers himself to be the foremost sinner.

Can you believe that? And it almost sounds like he's proud of it. Why is that? It's because the worse sinner that he is, the more sins that he admits do, the greater the grace that overflowed from Christ Jesus to him.

Highlighting his own sinfulness, Paul understands, magnifies the mercy of God. That's why as Christians, we don't have to hide our sins and wear masks and pretend that everything is okay.

[ 24 : 34 ] We don't have to be defensive. We should freely confess our sins to one another in order to magnify the grace of God in our lives. And it's by confessing our sins to one another that we receive God's mercy and find healing, as it says in James 5, 16.

A Christian should live with an ever-present awareness that he is a forgiven sinner. That's who we are. That's what Paul did. That's why he uses the present tense when he says, I am the foremost.

Not because he's currently blaspheming God and persecuting the church. No, he is living a holy life now. But still he says, I am the foremost because he is ever-presently aware of what a sinner he once was and how much he has been forgiven by God.

John Stott, a British theologian puts it this way. Paul was so vividly aware of his own sins that he could not conceive that anybody could be worse.

Are you more aware of your own sins or of the sins of others? We're not responsible for other people's sins.

[ 25 : 57 ] We're not going to be held accountable for them by God. But you will be held accountable for all of your own sins. Now that doesn't mean as a church we keep each other accountable.

That is, we're called to that as brothers and sisters in Christ. What I'm speaking about is payment for sin. You're not going to have to pay for someone else's sin in the end. But you will have to pay for all of your own sins.

So are you aware of your own sins? Remember your sins. Remember what you were formerly like so that you can remember the mercy of Christ and so that you don't lose your sense of wonder at God's mercy.

17th century. I don't know. I didn't realize I was quoting all these English pastors and theologians. It's like the third one.

The 17th century English pastor, they produce some good theologians, I guess. Yeah. John Bunyan in his autobiography, which is so aptly titled, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

[ 27 : 12 ] He writes this, Oh, the remembrance of my great sins, of my great temptations, and of my great fears of perishing forever. They bring afresh into my mind the remembrance of my great help, my great support from heaven, and the great grace that God extended to such a wretch as I.

Christian brothers and sisters, it is our daily duty to remember our sins so that we can remember Christ's mercy because only then we will be filled with joy and gratitude.

Only then will our hearts delight in Christ rather than in the relatively trivial and fleeting pleasures of this world. Only then will your heart be fortified against pride and self-righteousness.

And if you're not yet a follower of Christ, this is what the good news means for you. Maybe you are a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent.

Maybe you're a thief, a domestic abuser, and a murderer. Maybe you're a gossip, a liar, a slanderer.

[ 28 : 35 ] Maybe you're a porn addict, alcoholic, or a drug addict. Maybe you're a fornicator, a homosexual, or an adulterer.

Maybe you're a sexist, a Jewish, and a racist. Whatever your past is like, whoever you might be, if you would only repent of your sins and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, if you would only renounce yourself, your own sovereignty and independence, and pledge allegiance to Jesus Christ, then from the fountainhead of Jesus will flow, overflow for you, grace, love, faith sufficient to meet all of your needs.

Where sin increased, his grace will abound all the more.

And not only that, he will empower you and entrust to you the precious gospel of Jesus Christ. He will make you his ambassador, his representative to relay his message of salvation to the world.

Not everybody is called to proclaim the gospel as a vocation, as his job. But if you are a Christian, it is your calling to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

[ 30 : 21 ] That is the calling of every single Christian. It is amazing grace that God would entrust to us the precious gospel of Jesus to sinners like us.

And having given his profile as a recipient of mercy, Paul proceeds to talk about the reasons for mercy, and he gives two reasons. One is in verse 13, and another in verse 16.

He says in verse 13, It's the first reason. Paul's not saying that he deserved mercy because he has sinned ignorantly in unbelief.

As I've explained, deserved mercy is a contradiction in terms. Now, think of it this way. If you're pulled over by a police officer for going 80 on a 60-mile-per-hour highway, it's no use for you to tell him, I didn't know the speed limit was 60.

You're still going to get your ticket because ignorance does not erase your guilt. You're still guilty of the misdemeanor or infraction. However, if you tell the police officer that you are speeding because you got a phone call, that your wife is giving birth, he will probably still give you a ticket.

[ 31 : 46 ] But he might be more gracious to you because that's a mitigating factor. What Paul's saying here is similar to that. He's not saying that ignorance and unbelief makes him deserving of mercy.

He's saying that ignorance and unbelief were a mitigating factor that God took into consideration. Ignorance does not diminish your guilt, but it does make pardon and forgiveness easier.

The Bible consistently makes the distinction between unintentional sins and defiant sins, or between ignorant sins and willful sins.

For example, Numbers 15, 22-31 prescribes various sin offerings for unintentional sins. But at the end of that passage in verse 30, it says, In other words, all kinds of unintentional sins may be forgiven, but there is no forgiveness for willful, knowing, presumptuous, defiant, high-handed sins against God.

That's what Bible calls elsewhere the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. To know God, to have experienced something of His presence, and yet to defy Him, to turn against Him, and with a high hand sin against Him.

[ 33 : 24 ] Luke also makes this distinction later in Luke 23, verse 34, when Jesus is hanging on the cross, He prays for the people that are crucifying Him. He says, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

On the basis that people who are crucifying Jesus don't know what they're actually doing, Jesus prays on their behalf that God might mercifully forgive them. So what Paul's saying here is similar.

He's saying that God mercifully took into account the fact that Paul was formerly acting ignorantly in unbelief. That's the first reason. And the second reason for mercy is given in verse 16.

But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life.

This is so remarkable to me. This is Apostle Paul giving the reason why he thinks he was saved.

[ 34 : 34 ] Remember that this is arguably, and in my mind pretty clearly, the best theologian to ever live on earth.

Not counting Jesus, of course. He's the object of theology. He's God. This is Apostle Paul who wrote most of the New Testament, inspired the authoritative word of God.

This is Apostle Paul who planted churches in most of the known world at the time. This is the Apostle Paul probably because of his preaching of the gospel. Tens of thousands of people are now in the presence of the Lord.

And he says, what's the reason why God saved me? He does not say, God gave me mercy so that I might become the greatest theologian in the world and write most of the New Testament.



He doesn't say, God gave me mercy because he knew that I would plant churches in most of the known world and share the gospel with tens of thousands of people. Paul says, this is why he thinks he was saved.

- [ 35 : 42 ] He received mercy. No, God gave me mercy so that he could use me as an example of how gracious and patient he is.

Because I'm such a wretched sinner. Because I'm so undeserving of his salvation. That's why God saved me. So that when people look at me, they will say, well, if God could save him, he could surely save me.

If God would have mercy on me, he would surely have mercy on me. On him, he would surely have mercy on me. That's why Paul thinks God had mercy on him. Jesus didn't save us because we're great.

He saves us because he's great. Jesus didn't save us because he saw great potential in us.

He saves us because he sees in us a potential to reveal God's mercy and grace in. brothers and sisters, we're in trouble if we start to be more impressed with ourselves than with God.

- [ 37 : 01 ] If we start to be more impressed with our own righteousness than with God's mercy. Salvation is not primarily about us.

the primary purpose of our salvation is to display the glory of God, to display the mercy of God. That's why Paul concludes, fittingly, this passage with praise to God.

And that brings me to my final point, the response to mercy. Paul began this passage with thanksgiving to Christ in verse 12. I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus, our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service.

And he also ends this passage with praise to God in verse 17. To the king of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. And in this concluding verse, Paul describes God with the triad again of attributes. Remember Christ's grace, faith, and love overflow to meet Paul's blasphemy, persecution, and insolence.

- [ 38 : 17 ] Now all honor and glory is due to God because he is the king of the ages, immortal, invisible. These three words, the word ages is the exact same Greek word that's translated in verse 16 as eternal.

So it's saying that God is the king of the ages, meaning king of all ages, king of eternity. And in the Greek, the word ages, immortal, invisible, they all start with the exact same letter.

So it's alliterative. So to capture that in English, we might say something like this, to the king of infinity, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Because salvation is entirely of God. Only God deserves the honor and glory. We can't take an ounce of credit for our own salvation.

God deserves all the honor and glory because the basis of our salvation is not our merit, but God's mercy. Only God deserves the honor and glory forever.

- [ 39 : 23 ] Think about this. God is infinite. We are bound to time, temporal, perishing, finite beings. God's immortal and incorruptible. We are decaying and dying. God dwells in unapproachable light.

He's transcendent. He's untouchable. He's invisible. But we are visible. We're touchable. We're flesh and bones. And yet, this God deigns to send His Son in the form of man to save us.

this makes God's mercy all the more staggering. This is not dispassionate, you know, abstract theology for Paul.

That's why he spontaneously breaks out into praise in verse 17. This is for him very practical and very personal. For him, theology, which is the study of God, always leads to doxology, which is the worship of God.

[ 40 : 42 ] That's how theology should be. It should be steeped in gratitude. It should be impassioned with love for God. It should be bubbling over at all times with praise and worship to God.

That's true theology. And that's why Paul uses so many personal pronouns in this passage. He uses the personal pronoun I six times and the pronoun me twice.

The mercy of Christ is personal to Paul and likewise we ought to personally entrust ourselves to Christ Jesus who saves sinners by his mercy.

Brothers and sisters, I know that you understand the gospel of Jesus Christ in your head and that you believe that it's true. But I want to ask you this morning, is the gospel of Jesus Christ real in your heart this morning?

or is it just theoretical to you? Is the mercy of Jesus Christ personal to you?

[ 41 : 48 ] Can you speak of it with I's and me's? Or can you only speak of it in terms of they's and them's? Is this your faith or is this your parents' faith?

Is this your friends' faith? Is this your spouse's faith? Is this your other church members' faith?

Can you say this is my faith? Jesus is my Lord, my Savior, that I have received mercy. Can you say that? are you excited to worship God along with your brothers and sisters?

Are you eager to share the gospel with your friends and your family and your neighbors? Or are you just going through the motions? this saying is trustworthy and worthy of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

I hope you can say amen to that. That's how Paul concludes this passage by saying amen. And this is an invitation to his readers to join him in affirming what he has just said.

[ 43 : 13 ] It was common practice among the Jews in the Old Testament to respond to the praise of God with this declaration of affirmation. Amen. It means I believe.

So be it. It affirms that what has been said is valid and binding. And this practice has been continued by Christians over the last two millennia.

Because the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. We should say amen. This is true.

It's not hypothetical. It's actual. It's real. So we don't respond with this quizzical maybe. We say amen.

I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. I was the foremost of sinners, but I, but I received mercy. Amen. I believe it.

[ 44 : 16 ] To the king of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, the honor and glory forever and ever, because it is the deepest desire of our own hearts to see this merciful God praised and honored and glorified, so we don't respond with the lukewarm men.

But with a hearty amen, so be it. I pray all of you this morning will one day be able to say from the very bottom of your hearts, amen to that.

please take a moment not to reflect on this truth.

If you want to, you can close your eyes. I received mercy. Think about that reality.

Reflect on that. And then we're going to spend some time praying out loud as a church.