

POV: Jesus saved sinners like me (1 Timothy 1:12-20)

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Date: 11 May 2025

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[0 : 00] We are in 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 12 to 20. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ 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 charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience.

By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Thank you, Cheryl, for reading that. It's lovely to have Mum read the Bible reading for today.

[1 : 49] Hello, everyone. It's lovely to be back. I was away last week. I managed to visit with a friend, Auckland Japanese Christian Church. So it was lovely to worship with the saints. Yes, it was in Japanese, and my Japanese was terrible, so I'm glad to be back here at our English service.

Let's pray, and let's ask God to bless our time in this word. Our gracious God, all over the world, your gospel is growing and bearing fruit. Whether preached in the congregations that speak Japanese or te reo Maori or English or Cantonese, we thank you.

And we thank you that that message is that Jesus Christ saves sinners like me. May this be the good news that we give thanks for today, that we accept in our lives, and that we defend at all costs.

Father, we pray that you would speak to us through this wonderful passage. In Jesus' name, amen.

Let me ask you a question, and maybe the younger ones of you may be able to help us.

What does POV mean? Point of view. Okay, easy, right? POV on social media, it's slang, shorthand. To say what you're watching, right, was filmed from someone's point of view, not your own usually, right?

[3 : 06] POV, real matcha from Japan, be like this. POV, you just landed in the most beautiful airport in the world. POV, you're standing in line at the supermarket, and this happens, right?

It's just a way to introduce yourself or what you're watching. But it's become so commonplace that we all know what it means. It's no surprise, though. We're immersed in our self-promoting culture, a culture that's all about me.

We're immersed daily in the stories and POVs of others, aren't we? Well, I want to suggest to you, here in our passage, we get a POV, Paul's own view.

Did you notice how often in that passage, he was just saying, I am me? In a culture obsessed with me, myself, and I, let today's passage cut through with a POV that matters.

I'm the worst sinner I know. Christ Jesus mercifully saved me. This is the gospel I give thanks for and command you to defend. That's the passage in a nutshell.

[4 : 12] And we will dig into it, but it's not that difficult, is it? That's the point of view of a Christian saved by grace, transformed by the renewal of his mind.

I gather from Pastor Albert that we began the series, right? 1 and 2 Timothy is what we'll be journeying through the next couple of months. And so, let's just remind ourselves again of the context.

Paul, here, is writing to Timothy, his protege, an emphasis. He calls him his true child in the faith. He's writing a heart-to-heart letter, right? Very personal language here.

And as we heard last week from Muxi, he says, resist the false teachings, right? And persist in the truth. That's how he introduced this letter.

And how do we persist in the truth? Well, we're to magnify him. We're to live for him. And we're to uphold what verse 11 calls the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he's entrusted to Paul and to Timothy and to you and to me.

[5 : 17] In other words, this whole letter, 1 Timothy, is trying to encourage us to guard the gospel. Now, it's a personal letter.

Paul assumes Timothy is teaching this gospel. Paul, it's good news that he knows it. But maybe you're here and you've not heard it before. Or maybe, more commonly, you and I have heard it many times.

But not heard it properly. Not let it really transform you from the inside out. We often, don't we, get absorbed in our own struggles, day-to-day lives, maybe in the classroom, in the office, in the family. That the glorious gospel of the blessed God, what Paul says in verse 11, loses its shine. Gets crowded out by scams. Maybe it's even dropped out of your life entirely, replaced with different doctrines down a doorway to death.

And so, this letter reminds us, this gospel, this good news about Jesus, bears repeating over and over. Some of you who took that challenge of reading this letter in full, right, in preparation for the series, you would have seen hints and highlights of how Paul explains the gospel through the letter, right?

[6 : 36] Even in last week's passage, how does Paul introduce himself? Paul, an apostle of God, apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God, our Savior. Isn't that a wonderful summary, right, of the good news of Jesus?

God is our Savior. Savior. It's this phrase full of echoes from the promises of the Old Testament, like Isaiah. What is the gospel? Our God is Savior.

And we'll hear, of course, more of that in chapter 2. How does God save, right? Well, look at verse 4, right, in chapter 1. Have a look in your Bibles, right? It talks about God's kind of administration or plan of salvation.

Now, this is also how Paul describes the gospel when he writes to the Ephesian church. Or if we look forward to chapter 3, Paul even ends that chapter by quoting what seems to be ancient worship lyrics.

Verse 16 of chapter 3. He appeared in the flesh, justified by spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed to the nations, believed by the world, carried up in glory. The gospel is all about this Jesus, isn't it?

[7 : 48] The glorious announcement of what this amazing person has done for us. The gospel can be sung, shared, lived out.

But for our passage today, we get the POV version, don't we, of the good news? We get the first-person narrative. We get Paul's own experience, as if we were there with him, reliving his salvation story in testimony form.

Here in these eight verses, Paul makes it clear to Timothy and to us his experience of this gospel and how we ought to respond to it. So I want to just break down this passage into three sections today for us, right?

Just three sections. So here's Paul's own view of the gospel in 1 Timothy chapter 1. It gives us a reason for thankfulness, a message worthy of acceptance, and then lays out a command for us as well, right?

A reason for thankfulness, a message to accept, and a command set before us. So let's have a look, firstly, at the reason for thankfulness. Listen again to verse 12. As he says, this is Paul speaking, Paul is full of gratitude for how Christ Jesus called him.

[9 : 10] It was a special calling, if you remember. He was set apart on the road to Damascus. He was personally commissioned to bring the good news beyond the boundaries of Judea and Samaria, to break through to the ends of the earth with the gospel.

This is the calling that Jesus trusts him with and appoints him to. And actually, as we heard from Peter Anderson, right, two weeks ago, to say that Jesus is Lord, as he does here, right, in verse 12, that's a very brave thing to do in that time, right?

In a time when people would say Caesar is Lord, right, the Roman emperor, to say Jesus is Lord is a courageous pledge of allegiance. It's to say Jesus Christ is number one amidst all the competing priorities in your life.

And that is the Christian life, isn't it? His priorities must supersede those from my boss, those from my teacher, even my parents. After all, if all authority has been given to Jesus, Matthew 28, 18, Jesus is Lord.

And when he says, obey your father and mother and the Lord, right, through the apostle Paul, we do it. When he says, be renewed in your mind, live a transformed life, we pursue it.

[10:33] We trust Jesus and the ones he has sent to bring his word. And so we trust Paul, right? So let's get back to Paul's story. How did Paul come to this realization that Jesus is Lord?

Did he have a midlife crisis? Was he a good person and just kept doing so many good things that it just tipped him over to knowing Jesus as Lord? No. Did he study all the different faiths and then conclude that Jesus is Lord?

No. He tells us, I was once a blasphemer, a persecutor, a violent man, verse 13. Paul with a violent past?

Surely not. But the Bible tells us that this is true. You can read it for yourselves, a news report style. This is from the book of Acts, of course, when Luke writes and records the birth of the early church. And in Acts chapter 7, verse 58, you'll remember that as the earliest Christians were boldly sharing the gospel, as the word was going out, some were not amused.

[11:36] And so when a particular follower of Jesus named Stephen started to preach in Jerusalem about Jesus being the Messiah, the promised one, all the religious leaders of Jerusalem started to take matters into their own hands.

They stoned him to death, creating the first martyr. And here in Acts chapter 7, verse 58, you can look it up in your own time, we get told that Saul, which is Paul's kind of Jewish name, stands as part of this crowd, stoning him to death.

In fact, he holds all their clothes for them so that he can do so. And then straight after, Luke tells us, he's in on the persecuting, right? Acts 8, verse 3 tells us he was ravaging the church, entering house after house, dragging up men and women and committing them to prison.

Kind of hooked or addicted, like a gamer who wants one more round, a child who can't resist one more hit. Paul of Tarsus was hooked on hurting Christians. That's what is behind verse 13 here in chapter 1 of verse Timothy, right?

A blasphemer, a persecutor, a violent man. But I was shown mercy. What a turn. Actually, just two words here in the original language.

[13:00] More literally, I've been mercy. This is something that's been done to me. God has shown Paul mercy. When I was a kid at school, we used to play this silly game.

I don't know what school yard games are like now. Where we just, honestly, we had no iPhones. So we twisted each other by the elbow until one of us cried out mercy, right? Here, Paul recalls the twist of God's amazing grace and mercy.

I've been mercy, it says Paul. All his sin. All his unbelief. All his ignorance about the Lord Jesus and who he truly is. No match for the God who's saved, who reached down, who rescued this sinner. Who, as Paul describes in verse 14, the grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly. What a picture, right? What a picture.

And remember, Paul never got to live with Jesus like the original OG disciples did, right? The apostles, they got to spend three years hanging out with him. Paul was one untimely born.

[14:09] He got a special revelation while he was on the road to Damascus, en route to arrest Christians. He's mercifully set free from his ignorant way of life.

Praise God. That's amazing grace. And for all this and more, Paul here gives thanks. And I'm so thankful too, right?

My story of God's grace is not the same as Paul's. Your story won't be the same. But thankfulness can be the place to start when we hear a passage like this.

Brothers and sisters, how often do you and I give thanks for the mercy and kindness that God's shown you? You can start with a warm bed to sleep in tonight.

Who do you have to thank? A choice of what to eat for dinner most nights of the week. Who can you thank for that? A safe place to worship, familiar, secure.

[15:07] A church family to cherish. We thank a merciful and gracious God, don't we? Who does not deal with us as our sins deserve. Who looks at all the ways that we have ignored him, mocked him, rebelled against him, lost in our own point of view.

And then he says, I'll send my son to transform your life for good, to disrupt your life for good. How often do we give thanks even just for that and more from our Lord?

And I think thankfulness, if we're brave enough to try, it can cure so much of what we are anxious about, disgruntled about, frustrated about, despairing over.

Why not try it like Paul does? This medicine, start with his words. I know the kids, are you doing a fill in the blank? Question 5. We can fill in the blank too, right?

Verse 12. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has... Or, Lord, thank you for showing me mercy when I was...

[16:19] Or maybe try this one. Wow, God. Today, your grace just overflowed in Christ when you did... Thank you.

Try that. Paul's own view of the gospel. It starts, doesn't it, with having reasons to be thankful.

Reasons to be thankful. Next, what do we see?

We see then that he goes on to declare a message worthy of full acceptance. Right? Have a look again in your Bibles to verse 15. Listen to it again.

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy, so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

You notice that phrase again, don't you? I've been mercy, right? Verse 16. I was shown mercy. Spare the judgment of God. How? Here, Paul is specific.

[17:33] He describes it personally. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, whom I myself... He's not stuttering. He really says I twice. I myself am the worst.

Paul is not being self-absorbed here or narcissistic. He's not being puffed up. He's just stating the obvious. Out of everyone in the whole wide world, Paul knows he's the worst sinner.

He knows. That's it. And Christ saved him, the chief of sinners. How he hung on a cross on Good Friday, bearing the wrath of his father for all the sins that everyone else committed.

And then he conquered death three days later. This is the gospel. God made this world. We broke it by our sin and selfishness.

And so Jesus Christ came to heal this world, to fix what we could not, to enter into our lives, to save sinners. This is the gospel message, worthy of all acceptance.

[18:45] And we remember, right, in the context of this letter, Paul must spell out this good news. Why? Because there are other people spreading false news.

False teaching. Saying things like, no, the good news is that Jesus wants you to join him as a Jewish person. Right? Just cut a couple of things from your life, then you'll be saved. No.

It's a scam. Or the good news is that Jesus saved you, but now you'll need to earn your way to really deserve what he's done for you. No. Scam alert.

Or the good news is that Jesus saves sinners, but come and discover how you can have a higher life this way. A spiritual step up this way. A fullness that you really need, but you don't have for you. Scam alert. No. No. Paul breaks it down, doesn't he? It's so simple. Christ saved me, the worst of sinners. Christ saved you, the worst of sinners.

[19:42] This is the gospel, worthy of fully accepting. And I think we need to remind ourselves of this gospel. We need to go back to it over and over again, because if you're like me, you can start to forget to live by faith in this gospel.

I mean, I know when I'm stressed or sad, I forget this message. I start to function as if, I don't know, so-and-so is the worst sinner I know.

Or I start to think, oh, someone else is to blame for my life. Someone other than me. No. We preach this gospel to ourselves every day.

Let Paul be your template, as it were. As you follow his lead. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Firstly, me. Yes, me. And don't be nervous about this first-person language.

Rather, let it challenge you. A church is an easy place to slip in, to belong without truly believing.

But let this challenge you. If you have not yet trusted personally that Christ Jesus saved a sinner like you, yes, you, can I urge you, today can be the day that you repent and believe this good news.

[21:01] Begin that journey of transformation. Christ Jesus came here to save sinners. To show his mercy, his patience to all who trust in him for eternal life.

And because of that, he is, as Paul praises, the king of ages. And to him, our only God should be all honor and glory forever and ever.

And all God's people cried out, amen. All right, we're doing what Paul's asking us to. Paul's own view started with, what, a reason for thankfulness? A message worthy of acceptance?

And then finally, briefly, we do need to touch on what he gives us as well. From verses 18 to 20, he gives us a command, right? He sets us a command to fight against spiritual shipwrecks or shipwreckers.

Earlier this week, Monday, about 3 a.m., all of East Auckland's social media lit up with chatter about a fire, right?

[22 : 06] At McDonald's Pakaranga. Yes, some people groaning because they're just remembering all their memories there. Yep. Collected over several years.

People were reporting the smell of burnt plastic. Neighbors got out their selfie sticks and drone cameras and so on. There were some memes, I think, that started showing up about, was it KFC or Burger King that was to blame?

I don't know. But it started to take a sinister turn because then the police said, I think this was set deliberately. Okay? So, unfortunately.

And so, sadly, people began to wonder. There's an arsonist on the loose. A fire starter. Right? And every time another fire comes on the news, we start to get nervous.

Right? Okay. What's going on here? Is it the same thing? Forgive me for mixing analogies here, but I think here Paul is speaking of some fire starters.

[23 : 02] A danger just as serious, right? He uses that phrase. It's very rare. He uses this phrase, shipwreckers on the loose. It's that serious. Listen to verse 19 again.

Right? Hold on to the faith and a good conscience, in which some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. And among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, who have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

None of you would have been around in New Zealand. Or maybe some of you older people. When in the 80s, actually, French secret agents, believe it or not, they were sent from France, of course, to bomb a ship in Auckland's Viaduct Harbor, the Rainbow Warrior.

And so after that, actually, the government had to very strongly call them out and say, these people bombed it. And here in the final lines of 1 Timothy, Paul, he publicly names and shames these fire starters.

These spiritual terrorists. Hymenaeus and Alexander. It's like, as Paul is saying to Timothy and to those readings later, you know them. They live in our midst. They shipwreck their faith.

[24 : 17] And I'm warning you, you need to do battle with them. You need to be ready to fight. Because it's a real fight. They are spiritual spies. They are gospel villains.

They're throwing around conspiracy theories. Teaching half-truths about Jesus. They're denying the good news I just shared with you. And church, the Hymenaeuses and Alexanders of 2025, they're no different.

Look, their names and what languages they speak, they might differ. But there are people today that still divide families. That still shipwreck spiritual lives.

Whether it's the feel-good Hong Kong megachurch that has sadly led some of our aunties astray into a fitness-as-gospel fake news. Whether it's the cult member actually at the Wednesday night market two Wednesdays ago, who with a book in his hand was urging people, you need to keep the Passover to be saved.

And what he didn't, he neglected to say, was to be saved into the church of An Sang-hong, a dead Korean guy. Or, timely in the news, and very hard for me to say this, but you realize that the Pope, the head of the Roman Catholic Church, still is officially called the Vicar of Christ.

[25 : 40] I.e. someone who is the only representative of the Lord Jesus. Do we take that? There are spiritual shipwrecks on the loose.

I'm sorry to say this, but we need to beware. And now, Paul's talking candidly, right? Remember, this is a one-on-one letter. So there's some ways that we say this stuff.

That is different in public versus in a private message. And so, yes, he is frank in ways that you and I may not be. And yet, this letter, if you flick to the very last line, chapter 6, verse 21, it says, Grace be with you.

If you have a Chinese Bible, actually, it will tell you the truth. It's grace be with you all. This is a letter to everyone, not just Timothy. And so, church, one of the ways we guard the gospel that we're grateful for is that we are, we take up this responsibly to call out false teachers.

There's a song called False Teachers by hip-hop artist Shia Lin. I won't wrap it for you today. But here's an example. And he says this, My heart breaks even now as I'm rhyming.

[27 : 01] You want to know what all these false teachers have in common? What? That's called selfishness, the fastest-growing religion. They just dress it up and call it Christian.

Don't be deceived by this funny biz. If you come to Jesus for money, then he's not your God. Money is. Jesus is not a means to an end. The gospel is that he came to redeem us from sin.

And that is the message forever I yell. If you're living your best life now, you're headed for hell. And then Shia Lin will name some of these false teachers, right?

Now, not all of us have this kind of public platform like Shia, our brother. But when was the last time you were confident enough to say, Actually, that sermon, I don't think that gelled with what the Bible said.

When were you able to actually confidently say, Hmm, I think that podcast, that speaker wasn't so good. Or that book I just read, I think there's something wrong here. It doesn't square up with what the Scriptures teach.

[28 : 09] And I get it. We might feel a bit awkward about this kind of practice, this kind of command. We are so polite, aren't we? And we don't want to cause disunity. We are united in service.

But Christians, there is a war. There's a spiritual battle out there. And in here. And so part of our duty as children of the faith, as group leaders, as fellow brothers and sisters, as fathers and mothers, part of our duty is to fight against spiritual shipwrecks.

To push against, lovingly of course, teachers who clearly deny and distort the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now let's be clear. Our focus shouldn't just be on picking fights with others all day long. And criticizing people for the sake of it. How we do it matters, doesn't it? Did you notice the order in this passage? Right? And even just the priority that Paul places. Even in a personal letter, he's naming and shaming Hymenaeus and Xander after he's laid out the good news.

Right? We focus on that good news first. That flows on into defending it. And so, this passage is definitely not licensed to push your personal agendas and hobby horses.

[29 : 28] There's certainly no need to squabble over the tiniest anthills in church life. And so let's save our long emails and lengthy speeches only when we have to defend what's of first importance.

The good news of Jesus. But on the flip side, equally, we must fight. Contend for the truth when the gospel is at stake.

I'm so proud when I heard someone say, I'm just going to call that out. I'm not sure what it is. That happened recently.

And risking breaking some friendships. But they were just so concerned that what they were hearing was not matching up with the good news of Jesus. And actually, here in verse 20, we get a glimpse of that kind of member's responsibility.

Paul the Apostle goes as far as to use the language of church discipline to say, this is how we go against false teaching. Right? Because here, verse 20, he says, Whom I've handed them over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

[30 : 33] And that sounds a bit scary at first, right? Is he being satanic? Like, literally? No. We realize that actually this language mirrors what we saw in 1 Corinthians 5, verse 5.

You can look up the sermon if you like. Paul, remember, he was a young church planter back then. And he was addressing a sin issue in CCC, Corinth Christian Church. You remember there was a man who was deep in sexual immorality, wouldn't repent.

And Paul urges the church, right? He doesn't go in and do it. He urges the church, Please deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

It's strong language. It's saying there's a spiritual battle. He has been caught up, captured by the will of the devil, in a sense. But please help to free him by pointing out his error and by welcoming him, inviting him, pleading him to repent.

That's the posture. That's what we do with false teaching amongst us. And actually, believe it or not, this practice is in our church's way of life, at least officially.

[31 : 46] Our constitution actually lays down, chapter 6, verse 5, cancellation of membership, right? It actually lays down a process where if a member is involved in false teaching, heresy, harming the church, that sort of thing, I think they all go together.

That members have a responsibility to bring it up. And at last resort, to put them out of the membership. It's a lot to pray about, isn't it?

Right? And to think about. Thankfully, prayer is next on the agenda for Paul in 1 Timothy 2. Isaac will talk more on that next week. But one thing I have prayed for often, right?

If you want things to pray for, one thing I prayed for often here at PCBC is that we never have to do this final step. We are just guarding the gospel, right? In our daily life.

In the songs we sing. In the conversations we have. In the ways that we direct our groups to Jesus. That we will never have to go this far. And yet, perhaps there will be a time.

[32 : 55] Maybe I'll be long dead with Jesus. When it's good and right to confront a false teacher among us. Who's making a shipwreck of my faith and your faith.

The faith that Jesus delivered to us. But in the meantime, the way we avoid ever using that emergency button. Is we just keep imitating Paul's POV, right?

Give thanks for Christ's mercy and grace. Just keep meditating on that worthy message. Jesus saves sinners like me. Yes, me. And we protect this gospel.

Week in, week out. Until he calls us home. Are you willing to serve that cause, PCBC? To keep patiently proclaiming this point of view? Well, may the Lord empower us to do so out of his mercy and grace.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we are so thankful for so many things.

[33 : 57] But even our words and our mind cannot comprehend your grace and mercy. So let's keep singing about it, Lord. Would you show us how to?

Would you humble us where we have drifted from this first priority? And we ask that you would be the one who empowers us by your grace to follow you, to proclaim you, to give thanks, and to share the wonderful message.

Jesus saves sinners like you and me. Like you and me. Yes, even me. Lord, I pray. Lord, I pray, especially for our church family, our young ones, the next generation, yet to know fully that, Lord, you are with them.

May your good news grow in their hearts. May the message that we preach from Jesus fall on good soil. We ask all these things knowing that you can do far more abundantly than all we ask or think. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.