

Jesus Came to Rescue Sinners

Prayer

Introduction:

Have you ever dropped your phone and needed to rescue it?

Well, I'm sure everyone has dropped their phone, but has it needed rescuing?

One of the site supervisors I used to work with once dropped his phone in concrete. It had slipped out of his pocket without him noticing while pouring concrete for a foundation. It wasn't until the concrete had started to dry and the phone began to ring in the concrete that he realised he had lost his phone and that there was no chance of rescuing it! It was long gone, trapped, where nothing could be done to help.

A friend of mine accidentally dropped their phone in the toilet. That phone was rescuable, but after retrieving it out of the toilet it was never the same. Rescuing it didn't redeem it to its prior glory.

I was working with another colleague of mine. He was preparing the in-ground section of a tower. It was an 8-metre hollow concrete section that was buried in the ground. As he was working at the edge, his phone slipped out of his pocket and landed at the bottom of the 8m section. He spent quite a while trying to fish it out with some string and a magnet but had no success. This phone also, like the one in concrete, was unretrievable! It could not be rescued.

These stories of rescuing phones all turned out with a less than ideal result. The phone was either lost completely or unrepairable.

Maybe you recognise your need to be rescued from sin, but you feel too far gone. Kind of like a phone buried in concrete, stuck, beyond help or hope of repair.

We attempt to rescue a phone because we value it and it is helpful for making phone calls, sending emails, taking photos.

But maybe you feel like no one would ever want to rescue you. Definitely not God.

Tonight in 1 Timothy chapter 1, we see a different type of rescue.

A rescue that changes history.

A rescue that is undeserved, but full of love.

A rescue that restores and repairs.

This is the message of Jesus Christ coming to rescue sinners.

I wonder, did he come to rescue you?

This is the second sermon of our Christmas series that looks at 3 reasons Jesus came to earth.

Last week Chris preached on Jesus coming to **reveal** God. Tonight we'll be looking at how Jesus came to **rescue** sinners, and next week Chris will speak about how Jesus has come to **rule** the world.

Our focus tonight is on Jesus, in fact, our focus every Sunday is on Jesus. Tonight we see how he came to rescue sinners.

First, we will look at Paul's testimony of how he was saved from sin (in 12-14), **Second**, in verses 15-16 we will see the gospel message that saves sinners, and **Thirdly**, in verse 17 we see Paul's response of praise, and how we should respond.

You may find it helpful if you keep your bibles open and follow along as we go through the passage.

To help understand what we're reading, a few words of context:

1 Timothy is a letter from the Apostle Paul. He is writing to the young pastor Timothy, who served at the church in Ephesus.

Look with me in your bibles or on the screen at 1 Timothy chapter 1 starting at verse 12.

Paul begins this section of his letter by joyfully recounting the story of how he was rescued from his terrible life of persecuting Christians and then was appointed to be a minister of the gospel.

This is a brief testimony of what Paul was and **how** he came to faith and service for Jesus Christ.

Paul thanks Christ Jesus our Lord, who considered him trustworthy, appointing him to service.

To understand the reason and seriousness of his thankfulness, we must first hear what Paul was before all of this!

Paul says "I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man"

Acts chapter 8 recounts how "Saul (that's Paul's Hebrew name) began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison."

It also says that Paul approved of the death of Stephen, the first martyr recorded in the bible.

This is the story of a broken man, and he's in great need of rescue.

Paul was deliberately seeking to tear apart the work of Jesus Christ in the early church. He was doing this because he was convicted that it was pleasing to God!

He thought a false messiah had arrived, and he was going to make every effort in his power to bring this movement to the ground!

But then in Acts 9 we see Paul's conversion, the moment God opens his eyes in a spiritual sense, but strikes him blind physically.

Paul is confronted with the reality of his sin as Jesus says to him "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

Continuing back in 1 Timothy. Verse 13 says "Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, **I was shown mercy** because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of the Lord was poured out on me **abundantly**, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

THIS is what Paul is thanking the Lord Jesus for in verse 12!

Do you think Paul deserved mercy? After working so hard against God?

No!

Unfortunately, we don't deserve God's mercy either!

As Paul recounts his conversion of this amazing transformation that Jesus initiates on the road to Damascus, we might wonder if we need rescuing from our sin.

You might see Paul and conclude that you are not as sinful as him, or **maybe** you feel even worse.

God worked powerfully in his life, but would God do such a thing for you?

Maybe you say, I'm a good person. I don't speed, I give to the poor, I pay my taxes, I don't lie too often.

Or maybe you say, I'm a Christian, I believe in God, so I don't sin anymore.

When I was in high school, I thought a little bit like that. I had always believed in God. I wasn't one of the rebellious kids at school. I felt like a pretty good person because I was a Christian. At times I forgot I was a sinner.

The truth of the matter is that **any** disobedience to God is sin.

But sin isn't a very popular word. It doesn't feel good to be called a sinner.

And Romans 3:23 tells us that "**all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God."

That means we are **all** sinners. And no matter how hard we try or how many good things we do, or even how hard we seek to ignore it, we cannot fix our broken relationship with God.

We cannot deal with the penalty owed for our sin.

Sinners cannot stand in the presence of God.

In Romans 6:23, our fate is made plain, it says "the wages of sin is death"!

Hearing these passages might make you feel like you can't be rescued. You're too far gone, a bit like some of the phones I mentioned earlier.

This brings us to **point 2**: The gospel; for all sinners

Although Paul was so undeserving, he was shown grace. Which leads him to be able to say:

Verse 15 “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”

Paul isn’t just saying, “hey Timothy, here’s a little secret”. No!

He’s says, Timothy, listen carefully, I’m about to tell you something very important!

Something that is completely reliable, that you ought to accept fully.

I’m sure Paul would say a similar thing to us. So, if there’s one sentence to remember from tonight, it is this trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance:

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

We all deserve death for our sins. But this is the problem that Jesus came to fix, and this awesome news is what we are focussing on tonight in 1 Timothy.

We know that we need saving from the consequences of our sin, but how does Jesus accomplish it?

Being God in the flesh, Jesus lived a blameless life, which we could never live. He was perfect and without the stain of sin.

he willingly died on the cross to satisfy the punishment due for sin. And after taking our sin to the grave, God raised him up on the third day, conquering death once for all.

Romans 10 says: ⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

This is one of the 3 reasons that Jesus came to earth in this mini-series.

He came to save those who believe in him for the forgiveness of sins.

His mission is even declared through his name. Matt 1:21 says “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

The name Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means “the Lord saves”.

Last week we saw how Jesus came into the world to reveal God in a fuller way than ever before, and now we also see that God has made a way for sinners to receive forgiveness!

The whole world was lost without hope because of the consequences of sin, but God in his great mercy sent Jesus to save us!

Many of you are already Christians and know these truths well. Praise God for that!

On the other hand, you may be considering what we’ve looked at, and wondering if you can be rescued from your sin.

You might look at the testimony of Paul in verses 12 to 14 and see a man that did some pretty bad things, but as it says he “acted in ignorance and unbelief”. He was spiritually blind to the truth of the gospel.

He didn’t know any better, but thought he was doing an honourable thing.

You look at Paul and then at yourself, and remember all the wrong things you have done deliberately, even though you knew they were wrong. You sought your own desires and disobeyed the way God commands us to live.

Could you possibly be forgiven?

At the end of verse 15, Paul adds a brief personal reflection. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom **I am** the worst.”

Surely Paul wasn’t claiming to have been the worst sinner that ever existed?

No, but he was humbled, and realised his need for salvation.

Follow in verse 16 “But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.”

Paul is an example for us. Not of the worst sinner to ever receive salvation. He is an example of someone who’s eyes were opened to the sinful state he was living in and was deeply convicted of his need for rescue.

This humbled him as he shamefully declared himself to be the worst of sinners.

But don’t miss the smaller detail. Paul says “of whom **I am** the worst”. He doesn’t say “I was the worst of sinners”, he still is!

Being saved from the consequences of sin doesn’t stop us from sinning.

Earlier I was talking about how I forgot that I was a sinner in high school. I had forgotten the daily need of every Christian. The need for mercy and forgiveness of sins.

Paul’s reflection is also like the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax collector. The Pharisee tells God how good he is by listing all the works he does. On the other hand, the tax collector in humility beats his breast and says the simple words “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” (Luke 18:13)

A literal translation of this is “God, have mercy on me, **THE** sinner.”

He has the same perspective as Paul as he sees the great gulf that his sin has created between him and God and his inability to do anything about it!

All he can do is cry out and seek God’s mercy.

Gladly, God has great mercy on us. Verse 16 says that Paul received mercy as an example that displays Christ’s immense patience.

Even when we know that we have turned from God and rejected his way of life, he is patient. And when we realise our sinful state and seek forgiveness and repentance, he welcomes us into his family.

Jesus says, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.” (Matt 9:12)

It is only 20 sleeps until Christmas!

At this time of year, Jesus' arrival to earth should be at the forefront of our minds.

If you're not yet a Christian, are you ready for Christmas time?

Are you ready for the celebration of when Jesus came into the world to save sinners?

When people talk about being ready for Christmas, they usually think about having all the family gatherings organised, all the presents purchased and wrapped.

But all this busyness, which is often called silly season, completely misses the point of Christmas.

So how should you prepare for Christmas?

To start with, it is all in the word. Christ-mas.

It should be all about Jesus Christ.

If you haven't yet put your faith in Jesus, use this time to investigate the Christmas story and the life and death of Jesus.

Discover the significance Christmas has for the whole world and can also have for you.

It should be a time where you ask yourself, if Jesus came to save sinners, what might be stopping me from calling on the name of the Lord and being saved?

Paul saw himself as the worst of sinners, but Jesus mercifully saved him, making an example for all who will believe.

Holidays and celebrations come and go, are celebrated and then forgotten.

But Christmas has been celebrated for 2 thousand years, and the message it celebrates stands just as true as it was at the first Christmas.

So this Christmas, set aside some time to consider the true reason for the season. Consider your lostness in sin, but then remember the incomprehensible gift of life offered through Jesus.

Jesus concluded his parable of the lost sheep by saying: "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." (Luke 15:7)

Paul says in 1 Timothy 2 that God "wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

I read earlier from Romans 6 that "the wages of sin is death", but the passage goes on and says "**but** the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Christmas is an awesome gift from God for **all** of us.

Christmas time is all about the message of the gospel, which is good news.

And such good news prompted a joyous response from Paul.

Point 3: Paul's response of praise.

In verse 17 Paul says, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Paul began this part of his letter in verse 12 with thanksgiving to Christ Jesus, and he now ends with this packed statement of praise to God, reflecting on his character and being.

Paul reflects and worships God in praise.

God is the King eternal. All other kings rise and fall. Dynasties only last for a time, but not God’s reign. He is the King of the ages.

God is immortal, he will never die or get old and become weary.

He is invisible, no one has ever seen him. We see his glory in creation. Moses saw the glory of God, but not God himself. And in Jesus, the apostles saw the image of the invisible God. (Col. 1:15)

He is also the only God. Man has made gods with their hands and imaginations, but the God of heaven and earth is the only true God.

Jeremiah says: “There is none like you, O Lord” (Jer. 10:6)

These divine attributes of God remind us that he deserves honour and glory for ever and ever.

And Paul says, Amen. Truly, may it be so.

This doxology is a good and right response when receiving and remembering the blessing of the gospel, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

For those of you who have already put your faith and trust in Jesus, the Christmas season is just as important for you.

We ought to celebrate and praise God for this blessing, just like Paul does in 1 Timothy!

It is a time to share of this joy with family and friends and to speak of the good news of Jesus.

It is a message worth sharing!

When we sing Christmas carols and songs, sing with joy and gratitude. Don’t become complacent, just letting these truths wash over you without stopping to reflect.

Praise and thank God for it all.

So, are you ready for Christmas?

For the Christian, this is a time to intentionally dwell and meditate on the meaning of Christmas.

To remember our state of despair before Jesus saved us, and to cherish this gift.

I know from my own experience that this can be challenging. Work can get really busy at the end of the year. You might be organising a holiday.

And this year, we are busy catching up with family and friends we haven't seen while in lockdown.

These are good things, but are you busying yourself with too many activities and you don't commit time to the worship of God and thanking him for his many blessings?
Have you planned to read again of the birth of Jesus in the gospels?

When work is busy, are you still looking for opportunities to share of the joy you have in this season?

When your colleague at work or friend at uni asks you what you're doing this Christmas, you can say: "celebrating the arrival of Jesus to save sinners, sinners like me."
Share of the special meaning Christmas has for you.

1 Peter 3:15 says "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

So when they ask about your hope and joy, you will be happy to give an answer.

We should intentionally prepare our hearts and our minds for this season, as we remember the significance of Jesus' arrival to earth.

This is a time where both Christians **and** those who are not yet Christians (In other words, **everyone**) ought to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.

This Christmas season, remember what Paul has said in 1 Timothy.

1. He has shared his story of saving grace in his life.

When we meet together with Christians, isn't it encouraging to hear of how someone has come to faith and been saved from the debt of their sin?

Just as Paul shared, we should share our testimonies with each other more often.
It serves as an encouragement to Christians, and as a witness to those who have not yet come to faith.

2. Remember the trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Reflect on this good news.

3. And don't forget to respond to such good news.

Whether that be with thanks and praise, or time in private remembering the saviour's work in your life.

Maybe for you, you can celebrate Christmas for the first time knowing that Jesus came to rescue you.

Are you ready for Christmas?

That is, the true celebration of Jesus' arrival.

Let's pray that we don't waste this Christmas, but that we would draw close to God as we celebrate his son Jesus.

Let's pray