

## 1 Timothy 1:12-17

### “Do you know the one trustworthy saying?”

12 “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. 13 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.

“14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. 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.

“17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

**Last week we spoke of the way Christ transforms folks.**

God changed Paul from being a hate-filled tyrannical guy to a loving, Christ-like one. **Before God forgave him in Christ, Paul confessed that he was a: “blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man.”**

**The word translated “violent” includes being pride-filled and insolent.**

Paul smugly, brazenly persecuted harmless, innocent people.

### **What brought Paul’s radical alteration?**

“The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.”<sup>1</sup>

**God gave Paul a gift he didn’t deserve.**

**Paul assessed his behavior as world class bad—the worst sinner.**

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<sup>1</sup> “Worst” translates the Greek word “protos” meaning first. This indicates to me that Paul was saying that he led folks in persecuting Jesus followers, the Church.

Many folks look at themselves as  
**“not bad at all.”**

We who assess ourselves as doing OK should probably consider insights Jesus’ half-brother James gave us in his epistle.

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.<sup>14</sup> But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.<sup>15</sup> Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.”<sup>2</sup>

“Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do” James wrote, “and then not do it.”<sup>3</sup>

When Norma and I served in Hollywood, the church received calls and notes from parents in the South, Mid-West, and East.

**“Our son moved to Hollywood three months ago and we have not heard from him.”**

**“Our daughter recently moved to Hollywood. This is the address where we think she is staying. Could you have someone check on her to see if she is OK?”**

The Hollywood church members and staff followed up on scores of young people, even some AWOL old ones.

One young man from Ohio named Stan started school at LA City College, but dropped out. The parents sent his address. Because I planned to visit in the area, I decided to check on him. He lived near the College close to Vermont Avenue. The building housed several young people in unusual living conditions. It appeared to be an old 2-3 story warehouse with few inside walls. Living spaces were not apartments, but cubicles of the type you might see in office buildings.

The fiberboard sides of those cubicles stood no more than five feet tall with no cover or ceiling. They afforded hardly any privacy. Stan’s living space measured about 7’ by 7.’

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<sup>2</sup> James 3:13-15 NIV

<sup>3</sup> James 4:17 NLT

He decorated the flimsy walls of his tiny stall with photos of Playboy Playmate centerfolds.

Surrounded by this scenery, Stan and I talked. “Life isn’t fair,” he lamented.

Rich people should share with the poor,” he complained.

Would it shock you to learn that at the age of 17, I felt the same way Stan did?

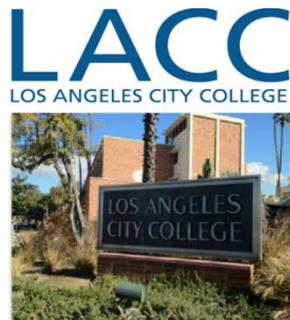
I strongly envied and resented wealthy people. Though I was hardly any wealthier twenty years later, I no longer felt that way.<sup>4</sup>

Here’s how I answered the young man:

“Stan, you don’t have any money, but you are wealthy in time. You aren’t working; you have time on your hands.”

Have you used that time to assist anyone?

As I had at 17, Stan harbored “bitter envy and selfish ambition” in his heart.



Such feelings aren’t “from heaven but” are “earthly, unspiritual, demonic.”

As Jesus’ brother James taught, “Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.”

Those of us who claim innocence might be guiltier than we realize.

Stan earlier committed some offense and was scheduled to appear in court.

An attorney, probably a public defender, advised him to shorten his long hair.

We had Stan over for dinner and Norma cut his Samson-like tresses in our kitchen.

Stan soon returned to Ohio and we never heard from him again.

The Lord warns us against limiting our understanding of sin to acts of commission.

Pride, unconcern, and doing nothing grieve God, also.

Remember the priest and the Levite in Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan?

The long-robed guys didn’t act violently.

<sup>4</sup> The Lord willing I shall have opportunity soon to explain my change of attitude.

1 Timothy 1:12-17 “Do you know the one trustworthy saying?”

**They just thought they were too busy or too important to help the dying guy.**

**If we honestly look inwardly, what would we see?**

Years ago I read a Jewish parable about a family in pre-World War II Germany. The parents wanted to protect their special needs son from the Nazis. Realizing that their days were limited, they paid a German youth to take care of their boy. Instead, the German youth took the special needs Jewish boy into the mountains and let him starve.

The German youth took over the Jewish couple’s property and congratulated himself.

The next day while he shaved he noticed a sizeable lump on the side of his head. That lump represented his guilt. He found that he could move that lump by working it and manipulating it. He worked it up to the top of his head, put his hat over it and went to work. I suspect that many of us hide various kinds of guilt that we never admit or resolve.

**We hide our guilt in interesting ways.**

**Paul hid nothing; he thought he was worst of sinners because he knew his own heart. “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”<sup>5</sup>**



**Paul:** “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.”

We quit hiding our guilt and admit it realizing Christ paid for all our mistakes and misdeeds on the cross.

**Do you doubt whether God will accept you? Along with Paul, we admit our emptiness and how difficult it is to do right.<sup>6</sup>**

**We glorify God for his mercy in Christ.**  
We share God’s great news of grace by glorifying His greatness, not ours.

**We are not special, but sinners saved by God’s grace.**

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 17:9 NIV

<sup>6</sup> In Romans chapter 7, Paul wrote of his continuing struggle to do right.

**We humbly live joyfully,  
thankfully, and lovingly.**

**At an L.A. Bible study for business and professional people, I spent several minutes responding to an agnostic, who challenged some Bible details.**

I thought I gave credible, factual answers.  
After the class, I asked a newspaper publisher friend what she thought of my response.

**I hoped to hear a positive review of my presentation.**

**She didn't tell me what I expected.**

**“Bob I really wasn't paying much attention to your logic” she said.**

**“I was interested more in your body language and whether you dealt with Jerry amiably and pleasantly.”**

We share God's news of mercy in the most loving, humble manner possible.

**Last week I mentioned that after years of sharing, I still feel inadequate when trying to share my faith.**

How to begin conversations gives me special difficulties.



**In the mid-1980s, I drove a 1956 Chevy 210, which we bought from our son Steve.**

**Similar to the car pictured, it was 2-door, but all this shade of green and it had full hubcaps.**

**For some time Norma and I bought tires from Chuck's Auto Care on Fairfax Ave. in LA across from Farmer's Market.**

**Because his business partner handled tire sales, I had never met Chuck.**

Numerous times I tried talking to the partner about the Lord, but he seemed uninterested.

**One day the engine on our Chevy blew up at Melrose and Vine in Hollywood.**

When we had the vehicle towed to Chuck's, I met Chuck for the first time.

**On one of the shop lube racks was a 1960s Corvette he was restoring.**

As he showed me the repairs he was making on that classy car, it became apparent that Chuck and I did not speak the same language.

**I struggled to interpret what Chuck said.**

**He didn't curse or use foul English language, he spoke a combination of Hollywood, street, and car talk.**

The 56 was at Chuck's for a few weeks while they overhauled the engine.

**At the time, I felt that God had led me to Chuck's for some reason, but I was baffled.**

**Chuck and I seemed to have little in common.**

**I also tried striking up conversations with Chuck's employees, but got nowhere.**

One day they called to say the 56 was ready.

**They parked the 56 near the front door.**

**I wrote Chuck a check.**

Frustrated that I never conversed about the Lord with anyone there, I trudged to the 56.

**Eyeing the grille of the 56, Chuck said, “Hold on a second; I'd like to show you something,” and went inside his office.**

Returning with a small can containing wadding, he began polishing the 56's grille with some of the stuff.

**“It's the darnedest thing,” he said, “I've been in the auto business for years, and just learned about this product the other day.”**

**“I've been a minister for years,” I replied, “and I learn new things every day.”**

**“Is that a fact?” said Chuck, “I'm scheduled to fly to Australia and plan to buy tapes so I can listen to the Bible on the long flight.”**

Emboldened, I said, **“My wife and I have a weekly Bible study in our home, would you like to join us some time when you return from your trip?”**

**“I'd love to!” he said.**

**Chuck began attending the study and brought friends**

**Norma and I studied personally with him.**

**He gave his life to Christ and we had the honor of baptizing him.**

When we retired from the Hollywood church in 1991, Chuck began teaching the Bible study.

**Not only does God forgive our sins in Christ, He assists those who depend on Him and serve Him.**

God rewards even our feeble efforts to testify about Jesus, by sending profound assurances of His presence, working, and power.

**“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 immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.”**

**“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”**



**“Then he said to the crowd, ‘If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. 24 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. 25 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? 26 If anyone is ashamed of me and my message, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in his glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels’” (Luke 9:23-26 NLT).**

**I pray that, if you haven’t yet accepted God’s mercy, you and your loved ones will take up your cross and boldly follow Jesus.**

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