

I obtained mercy

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[0 : 00] We may now turn to words in 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 16. 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 16.

How be it for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. How be it for this cause I obtained mercy. For a little while tonight we may think on God's mercy as it is confessed and extolled by this man, Saul of Tarsus, Noah Paul, the apostle.

People have different attitudes to God's mercy. There are those who presume upon God's mercy. I am talking about unconverted sinners. Some of them presume on God's mercy. They think that God is merciful and that his mercy inevitably extends to people generally and to themselves particularly because God is merciful.

[1 : 45] They presume upon his mercy. they take no account of other things like the change that inevitably comes about in the lives of those who do receive God's mercy and grace.

There are others who are inclined towards despairing of God's mercy. And we know of people who have for years claimed that they have prayed and sought mercy, sought salvation, but they are still without mercy and without salvation.

They claim that God is not merciful towards them. But God has nothing good, no favor to show to them.

They are full of disbelief, unbelief regarding God's willingness to grant mercy.

Now, first of all, we may look in this particular case on what one might describe as seeming obstacles in the way of God's exercise of mercy.

[3 : 26] In a very simple way, we may consider that aspect of the life, the character and life of the patient who here writes to Timothy and boldly with confidence that he is not stating anything but truth as God knows truth, that he has obtained mercy.

Now, as all of us by now, I think ought to understand from our own reading of the Bible and perhaps of comments on parts of the Bible and from the preaching of the Gospel, if we have been listening to the preaching of the Gospel, Saul of Tarsus was a man who had been all of his life ignorant of the way of salvation.

Now, there has to be added to that charge against against Saul of Tarsus that he had continued ignorant of the way of salvation.

The fact that Saul was a man who had the revelation of the way of salvation because he had we know that he had the scriptures of the Old Testament the book of God the only book wherein the way of salvation was revealed and clearly exhibited down through the ages.

You know that the Old Testament scriptures had been completed about 400 years before Saul was born with the prophecy of Malachi the last of the Old Testament prophets so that when Saul had the Old Testament from the time he was a youngster learning the word of God he had the book that contained the fullness of revelation as God had given it up until that time.

[6 : 08] Now God is a just God and when he judges anyone and measures the guilt of anyone in terms of any particular aspect of a person's character and life in terms for example of a person's ignorance of the way of salvation God assesses the measure of that guilt in accordance with a man's privilege.

Now one can hardly imagine a greater privilege than to have in one's possession the revelation that God himself has given revelation of the way of salvation and to have that revelation in its fullness.

Well as I said up until this time Saul and the others who had the Old Testament scriptures had the fullness of that revelation. In our case we not only have the Old Testament in all its fullness exactly as they had it except that we have it also in our own tongue in two languages that we can

understand but we have in addition the New Testament.

And what is the truth regarding the New Testament? Well it is the final part of God's revelation of his glorious Savior to this world.

when we have the New Testament scriptures we have along with them this assurance uncertainty that there shall be no other word from God to add anything to the revelation that he has already given in order to make men wise into salvation.

[8 : 24] Now just as surely as God would have judged Saul's ignorance of the way of salvation against the privileges that he enjoyed in his own generation he assesses your ignorance and my ignorance in terms of our own particular circumstances and privileges and what can we say?

if we are ignorant of the way of salvation when it is an actual fact that God declares plainly that he shall give forth not one single further word to add to what he already has given.

whatever we expect in order to put us in possession of salvation not one soul on earth tonight needs to look for any further word from God because any who do shall look in vain.

God has made that plain. it is not the view of any man or church that it is part of God's revelation that the revelation is complete that makes men wise unto salvation until the end of time.

Any further revelation that the church of God shall possess will require another state another world to enter into.

[10 : 12] the state of glory and the world to come only there shall we have a further revelation of the glory of God as saviour.

Saul of Tashis he was a man ignorant of himself hitherto. You remember that he was a Pharisee a man who was proud of his own righteousness rather than ashamed of his own sinfulness.

He had not been enlightened to know himself to really understand what it meant that he was a sinner. so there was no evidence whatsoever in the character of Saul that he had been humbled before God that he had a contrite spirit a broken heart in God's presence in which there was any sorrow or sadness or mourning over his sinfulness.

He did not see he had not seen his need of her savior. And Saul also was a man who had continued in unbelief and that again has to be assessed in the light of the knowledge he had of God's word.

I should have pointed out that when Saul of Tassus read and studied the Old Testament scriptures he had the gospel. Everyone who had or who still has the Old Testament has the gospel because the gospel is taught in the Old Testament the passion of Christ is taught there the work of Christ who was to come still to come as the Messiah into the world in order to redeem his people by his obedience unto death all is revealed in the Old Testament scriptures.

[12 : 26] God demanded faith of everyone who had his word demanded faith of them on the warrant of his own inspired word.

You see when anyone questions the foundation as it were of the real reason why faith is demanded of them in this gospel the answer is we are bound to believe because what we are confronted with in the gospel is the very word of God not the word of man there might remain a question against a word given out by any man as to the extent of our duty regarding ourselves as being under total obligation to receive with faith that word but there is none when that word has come first from God that is the reason why primary reason why it ought to be believed because it is the word of the living God now Saul of Tassus lived he lived at a very special time in the history of the world he had lived at a time when the prophecies regarding the coming saviour had been fulfilled he had been living in the days of Jesus of Nazareth in those years when the sin of God walked on this earth Saul we have no doubt had heard about Jesus of Nazareth he lived at the time of those solemn events that we have recorded to us in the gospel Jesus ministry among the people of Judea and Galilee the miracles he had performed of the sufferings he endured and of the death that he had died on the cross of

Calvary his burial and his resurrection from the dead Saul had lived during those solemn events that we have recorded at the beginning of the book of Acts when the servants of Christ were gathered and God poured forth the Holy Spirit upon them and three thousand sinners were saved in one day and the kingdom of Christ had extended its bounds as a result of that outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the disciples of Christ who had been scattered here and there and everywhere brought the message of the gospel amongst the people and the apostles had begun to go forth preaching the message of salvation and yet Saul of Tattus remained an unbeliever

Saul also as he confesses and no doubt with shame here claims to have been a blasphemer God we believe that he has especially in mind when he calls himself for blasphemer the fact that he had considered Jesus of Nazareth to be a deceiver all who were faithful to the Jewish religion they knew that there was a messiah to come into the world and they considered that anyone who claimed to be the messiah would be guilty of terrible deception to the point of being guilty as he says of himself fear anyone claiming to be a messiah the messiah would himself be guilty of blasphemy if his claim was not in accordance with truth well

[16 : 53] Saul of Tarsus did not believe that the claim of Jesus of Nazareth was according to truth so that when Saul blasphemed against the name of Jesus he thought that he did service God that it was his zeal for God and godliness that constrained him to denounce this Jesus who claimed to be the messiah and now Saul had discovered that he was the blasphemer that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the messiah that he was the only begotten son of God who had been from the beginning promised to come for the salvation of his people perhaps Saul of Tarsus had denounced Jesus of Nazareth as one accursed of God perhaps he had agreed with those who claimed that he had a devil and that it was by the prince he else but the prince of the devils that he performed those wondrous miracles

Saul tells us here that he had been a persecutor one who was moved with hatred with a devilish a hellish malicious enmity against the people of God because of his hatred of Jesus of Nazareth he was one of those who witnessed the death of Stephen the martyr and consented to that death a man who died beholding the glorified savior awaiting his own coming into his presence in heaven and Saul admits here that he also was an injurious man a man who without hesitation would blast the reputations of Christian people there are still many in the world motivated by the same spirit as Saul of Tarsus was he found no difficulty in destroying their property no doubt and in depriving them of their liberty he was bent upon imprisoning as many of them as he could it seems that he had no hesitation in doing physical harm to them to the extent of taking away their very lives when you consider just briefly so many indictments against anyone before the judgment power of God you might well say there is an individual in his character and life there are many obstacles in the way of God's mercy for his salvation do you feel like that yourself tonight is there anyone here who feels just like that who thinks to himself there were times perhaps long ago when

I held out some hope that someday I might be saved but tonight I have become so hard I have so long and so frequently resisted the strivings of God's spirit in my own personal experience listening to sermons remembering sermons I know what it is to feel the strivings of the spirit of God leading me toward repentance and toward salvation I can remember times when I was even led to prayer to try to call upon

God to save my soul God I have at times when events in my family have awakened me to my folly to some extent I have realized that I am not the man I ought to be or the woman that I ought to be I see others in my neighborhood or in my own family even devoting themselves to God and there isn't the slightest doubt at times in my mind but they are good but they are what the word of God claims his people to be different from generality of sinners different from the godless world I know that they are good I know that there are those who love

[22 : 41] God and who fear God and who worship God they are within my own family circle perhaps you can say they are even serving the Lord and I am hardened to the point where I despair of God's mercy is there anyone here thinking like that tonight or who has thought recently like that who are honest enough to think and to say between themselves and God in their heart I am an idolater the world has such a grip on my heart and upon my mind that I cannot love God I cannot devote myself to the service of God

I see the world and the possessions that I have in the world so precious but even for God and for salvation I cannot release my hold upon them obstacles in the way of God's salvation freely offered to you in the gospel well remember anyone who thinks of himself or herself in these ways remember that Saul of Tarsus was someone who appeared no doubt in the eyes of someone he appeared to be a man beyond redemption you remember that after the event after he was saved made a new creature in Christ that Christian men could not believe that he was one of their company here he tells us

I obtained mercy I obtained mercy and the mercy of which Paul tells us here is something worthy not of Saul or of Paul the apostle or of the church of God or of any man or angel but something worthy of God himself it is something that only God can have only God can give a blessing so

wonderful that it exhibits to those who know it what God is like the kind of God the one living and true

God is as distinct from all others Paul the apostle no doubt often thought back upon his life and saw his own life almost as if it were a picture exhibiting before his own very eyes the glory of God as a merciful God before long the time of God's judgment came about the time for God's bearing mercy to cease had arrived and Pharaoh perished when God's people entered upon a glorious deliverance for which they sing

God's praises not only in this world but in glory eternally for we are told that they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb but Pharaoh could be spared no longer was it not a wonder do you not think to Saul of Tarsus and Paul the apostle that he was spared so long is it a wonder to you is there anyone here tonight who never stops to wonder at the long suffering of God well if you were to for a reason why you are here tonight you could hardly give a just reason a correct reason if you excluded the sparing mercy of

[28 : 18] God have you ever acknowledged do you just now acknowledge in your heart Lord I am here on mercy's ground I have been kept from perishing eternally for my sins and in my sins because of thy sparing mercy and then Paul received what you can call pardoning mercy oh how he needed pardon forgiveness how he needed that God should remove from his person the guilt of all those sins what sins neither

Paul nor any other man could name or number those sins for which he needed pardon do you think you could name or number your own sins and remember for every single one of them you need pardon anyone who departs this life with one sin and pardon departs this life in order to perish in another world for the wages of everyone sin is dead Saul of Tarsus needed great pardon his guilt you might say was a mountainous guilt but when

Paul the apostle spoke or wrote about his personal guilt he was not making as many nowadays would say mountains out of more hills only God knew sin only God knows the height to which the mountain of a sinner's guilt has risen in his own sight only God knows if for no other reason than this that every sin is a sin against God and it is the glory of the God against whom we have sinned that measures the degree of our guilt oh let us all take that to heart original sin the corruption of our nature the want of original righteousness sins of omission sins of commission in thought in word and in deed sins directly against

God sins against God's worship and service perhaps merely by our neglect do not you imagine for one moment that anyone can claim innocence who as we would put it to comfort ourselves merely neglect attendance on God's worship whether it be personal private worship or family worship or the public worship of our congregation no one knows the guilt with which God charges individuals who cannot justify their omission of these exercises of worship worship in spirit and in truth for God seeks such to worship him all who deny him that worship stand accused before him they need pardoning mercy and then

Saul of Tarsus when he declares that he obtained mercy no doubt had in view God's power graciously revealed in his own personal experience in the renewing of his character a man who had treated the things of God and Christ and of the church and the members of the church especially themselves like a vulture or like a lion who was bent only upon their destruction he has turned almost all of a sudden to be their best ally in this world more like a dove than a vulture more like a lamb than a lion in his attitude towards

[34 : 30] God's people and God's cause in the world it was great mercy that God showed to Saul of Tarsus and the same mercy that he shows to all whom he blesses with salvation in the case of Saul he received abundance of mercy that exalted him to an extraordinarily high level of knowledge and understanding of things divine and heavenly reflected for us in the epistles that he wrote to the churches of Christ in the world it was mercy that exalted him as to his office in the world he became one of the apostles of the Lamb who was blessed not only with knowledge and inspired with words to convey more and more of the wondrous revelation of

God's mind to the church to the end of time but in order to establish the church in the world and its government in the world Saul was exalted to the high office of apostles by the abundant mercy of God towards him and we know also from his own confessions from his epistles how clearly he was blessed with mercy that gave him wondrous experiences in fellowship with God the father and with his son Christ Jesus you remember how he tells us in one place in his epistle second epistle to the Corinthians how he knew a man in Christ 14 years before he knew not whether he was in the body

or out of the body how such a man was taken to the third heaven he was caught up into paradise he heard unspeakable words but it is not lawful for a man to other of such an one he says will I glory yet of myself I will not glory but in mine infirmities and that occasion it may have been an extraordinary occasion in the life even of Paul but we believe still that it was only one out of many wonderful experiences that he had during the course of his life as the servant of Christ and he was given great mercy in the youth that God made of him in the world no man has ever been such a means of blessing to this world than Paul the apostle by the mercy of God a man who had been like a curse on the face of the earth who hated

Christ and his people to the point that only their destruction could satisfy him changed to become a sort of blessing to the church of Christ and of glory to the name of Christ and for the advancement of Christ kingdom amongst Jews and Gentiles and in the course of his serving of the Lord surely Saul of Tarsus was given abundant mercy in the way in which God sustained him and upheld him and preserved him for he had many foes and dangers to encounter now that same mercy remains with God and is still God's gift to sinners in this world it has never become lessened reduced it is as abundant as ever it overflows it is in the passion of

Christ stored up in the passion of the Christ who laid down his life in order to make that mercy freely available to sinners in this world it was because God God was merciful and gracious and because he had appointed men unto salvation that he sent his son into the world to make a way as it were for his mercy into the lives of those who deserved only his watches and judgment in time and in eternity and through the salvation of Saul we discover that in his own words in this context that Christ and God in Christ had certain ends in view showed his own long suffering that in me first [40 : 35] Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering and then it was in order to show the freeness and the power of God's grace in Christ Christ who had come into the world to save sinners calls a of whom I am chief and all who want to discover whether they themselves are saved blessed by God's great mercy will find in the experience of Saul of Tarsus a pattern as long as the world remains salvation in the case of Saul meant the exercise of God's mercy in renewing his nature in receiving him as righteous in his sight through the righteousness of Christ alone being imputed to him oh the many places in which

Saul describes for us so wonderfully what salvation really means what the exercise of God's mercy towards a lost and undone sinner means that they are accepted as righteous in God's sight that all their sins are freely pardoned and that they shall never come unto condemnation and that they are enabled to follow Christ through ill report and good report until their dying day that they shall persevere in the way into which God has called them that they shall give more diligence in making their calling and their election sure and then a death that God will take them to be with himself he shall guide them by his counsel and receive him afterward into his glory because of the mercy of God to hell deserving sinners such as we all are by nature you then turn to God now look up to him and cry to him in your heart in sincerity and in truth praying God be merciful to me sinner you remember what is recorded of the one who made that prayer in the temple he went down to himself justified more than the other the self righteous Pharisee who considered himself too good to cry for mercy may God bless these thoughts to us let us pray ways not you have heard