

Extreme Guilt and Extreme Grace

Introduction

- “Defend...Properly.” What Paul said last week to young pastoral colleague in opening of letter, 1 Tim, close look in sermon series. Some in Eph teaching L&G incorrectly, misrepresenting God’s will, clouding truth. As last week, more teachings misunderstand, wooden spokes...wheel collapses, faith lost. Paul doesn’t want! So throughout 1 Tim, esp in opening, hold onto pure, sound doctrine.
- Today, tells why. Today in verses that follow from last week’s, Paul says God’s doctrines, teaching, will – all centered on, points to his grace: lavish, abundant, extreme grace. God wants us to know, cling to his extreme grace. Definition: undeserved love. Acronym: God’s riches at Christ’s expense. God wants us to know his riches for us at Christ’s expense. But only way to appreciate his extreme grace is to recognize our extreme guilt. So that’s what Paul emphasizes in next section of 1 Tim, today’s lesson: extreme guilt and extreme grace.

Paul’s Extreme Guilt

- Paul makes confession of extreme guilt in **vs. 13a**. You know Paul as missionary man; mission trips across Med world; wrote most of NT (Romans...Philemon). Perhaps greatest missionary in history of Christianity. But when says **vs. 13a**, talking about how before Christian, when still called Saul, was Christians’ worst nightmare. Personal goal to stomp out Christian church before it could grow. Acts 9: **“Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogue in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem” (9:1-2)**. Means: witch hunts, tracking down Christians, to persecute, put to death. Guilty of killing Christians. Murderer who hated Jesus, hated gospel, separated Christian families, violently persecuted Christ’s followers.
- How do such thing? **Vs. 13b**. Denied truth. Denied Jesus as Savior; so also denied actions were wrong. Actually thought pleasing God by killing Christians. So what have here: extreme guilt! P/S hated Jesus, killed Christians, thought pleasing God. No wonder **“worst of sinners.”** Ext guilt.

Our Extreme Guilt

- When look at P/S, might say, “Wow! Bad! I’m not that bad!” Maybe don’t hate Jesus, kill Christians. But later in life, Paul came to realize: can’t understand God’s grace if don’t your guilt. So today, when hear about Saul killing Christians, don’t think, “Wow! Bad!” Think, “What about me? I done? Guilty of?” Don’t like to think like that; tendency to diminish guilt (think not that bad) or (last week) compare to others, find satisfaction in fact not as bad as so-and-so. Today, Paul digs deep into his own root sinfulness, acknowledges his extreme guilt. I think first point of lesson is that that’s what we have to do, too! We have to dig deep into sinfulness, acknowledge our extreme guilt, too. Take honest look at life, actions, thoughts; at public sins, secret sins. Come to grips with gravity of our situation: not better than others; not pretty good; really sinful; really do deserve to go to hell. I want you to think about that personally, no matter how old, what background is, what pet sins you struggle with. First point today’s lesson, no matter who we are, we all need to say with Paul: “I am the worst of sinners.” Not sorta sinful or kinda guilty. Have extreme guilt.

Paul’s Extreme Grace

- And when you can make that confession, then you can begin to understand God’s extreme grace. Paul understood. **Vs. 14. “Abundantly.” Ps 23, “My cup overflows.”** Paul has empty cup; not even drop of goodness. But Jesus comes, pours grace, faith, love into; doesn’t stop at top; keeps pouring. Happened Acts 9; road to Damascus; light; Why?; faith; first time in life, saw light. **Vs. 14.** Ext grc.

- **Vs. 15.** Unpack that trustworthy saying: CJ, true human Son of Mary (name Jesus = Savior), also Son of God, God's anointed Messiah, left glory of heaven, came into this sin-filled, fallen world of sorrow and sadness, to live with sinful humans, like you and me, like those who crucified him, like everyone who hate him; came into this world to *save* sinners, take away extreme guilt, forgive, give hope, peace, comfort, someday bring to heaven. **Vs. 15.** That's extreme grace; God's undeserved love; God's riches at Christ's expense. Saul deserved hell; instead received grace. Jesus even called Paul into public ministry to be missionary, go around world sharing God's grace. That's extreme grace!

Our Extreme Grace

- When you put Paul's extreme guilt and extreme grace side by side and marvel at undeserved love God showed to this worst of sinners, you also can line up your extreme guilt next to the extreme grace God has shown you and be equally amazed. You can say the exact same thing Paul did: **vs. 14.** Jesus poured abundant grace, faith, love into your empty cup, kept pouring when got to top, still pouring to this day. Called you to faith, forgave your sins, called you child in baptism, feeds you with faith in Communion, fills earthly life with joy and hope in midst of pain and sorrow, and went to hell and back to bring you to heaven. All this grace is yours abundantly through Christ Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners by pouring out blood on cross. Your extreme guilt was nailed to cross with Christ, buried in his tomb. When he arose on Easter morning with new life, gave you new life here on earth, eternal life someday in heaven. That's God's riches at Christ's expense; undeserved love; extreme grace.

Conclusion

- Today Paul takes look at his own life, lines up, side by side, his guilt and his grace. I think reason does so, not only because his former lifestyle was so wicked, but also, to highlight how gracious God really is. **Vs. 16.** So today, if you look at P/S and say, "Wow! Look at how God turned him around and blessed him," then can also say about yourself: "Wow! God did same thing for me! Turned me from unbeliever into Christian; worked faith in my heart; saved me; forgave me; loves me, even after everything I've done! Wow! That's extreme grace!" I think that's point of this lesson. What God did for Paul, also did for you and me. **Vs. 17.**

1 Timothy 1:12–17 (NIV)

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.