Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – February 10, 2019

Nurturing God’s Family

Planting, Establishing, and Leading

Local Churches

 Practical Principles from The Pastoral Letters

 **“God’s Grace: Admit Exhibit A”**

**1 Timothy 1:12-19**

While The Law exposed sinners, it did nothing to forgive them or bring power to change. But the Gospel is a Christ-centered revelation of God’s grace to sinners. And who better to proclaim that hope than the greatest of sinners? Paul is saying, “If I can be saved, anyone can be.”

 His confession is not hollow. He was, in fact, the greatest adversary of the Gospel, not only for persecuting Messiah, but also defending the self-righteousness which comes from “justification by Law.”

**What are Paul’s key points?**  “We should be thankful that. . . .”

✓ God recruits us once-rebellious sinners for His service. v. 12

✓ Mercy found even me, an insolent, blaspheming opponent! v. 13a

✓ While I was willfully ignorant of Messiah and His grace, that grace overpowered me with love for and faith in Jesus. vv. 13b, 14

✓ Jesus’ mission to save sinners lives largest in me, Chief Sinner, as a model of God’s patience for all other sinners. vv. 15, 16

✓ This glorious message calls for eternal worship and praise! v. 17

✓ I’m writing, Timothy, so you will stay true to the message, unlike some who have defected and for now side with Satan. vv. 18, 19

***What is the Big Idea?***

 *A church is established as its leadership stays the course in exalting the gospel of grace in saving even the worst of sinners, while warning those who pridefully reject God’s free offer of forgiveness in Jesus.*

***How do we apply these principles?***

***1. Excuse or Explanation?*** Paul never excuses his sin. While God does not judge us for what we don’t know (Luke 12:47, 48), that is not Paul’s point here, since that would make no sense of his claim to be the greatest of sinners. And, the “reason” (v. 13) for God’s mercy is the same as that in verse 16: Paul was shown mercy as a pattern to all who would ever believe in Jesus. His was ignorance IN UNBELIEF, and is blameworthy (Romans 1:18-20; 2 Peter 3:5, 16). But just as grace moved him from unbelief to faith, it does so for any sinner on the way to forgiveness. This is good news to all who want to be saved, regardless of our past. Matthew 11:28-30

***2. Humility or Hyperbole?***  Why would Paul be the chief of sinners? First, he was the chief opponent of Jesus and the church, even consenting to Steven’s execution (Acts 7:57–8:3; 9:1, 2). His own testimony reveals his hatred for Jesus and His people (Acts 26:9-11). Second, that hatred was rooted in the self-righteousness of the Pharisees, who believed that they kept the Law, and there-fore were right with God (Philippians 3:2-6). So Paul’s “ignorance” was not innocence, but like that of those who had rejected Jesus and to whom Peter appealed to repent (Acts 2:22, 23; 3:11-23).

***3. Now what?*** The Gospel confronts us with decisions. Have you accepted or rejected God’s offer of forgiveness in Jesus? Do you share Paul’s passion for God’s love and grace? Are you telling others about Him? Titus 3:3-7