



SOVEREIGN GRACE®  
MINISTRIES

when sinners say

**“I Do”**  
[sin]

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### ▪ 1 Timothy 1:12-17

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, <sup>13</sup>though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, <sup>14</sup>and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup>The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. <sup>16</sup>But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. <sup>17</sup>To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

## II. THE WORST OF SINNERS

### A. Did I Marry A Sinner?

### B. Am I A Sinner?

1. An easy question for Paul
2. Context: false teachers have begun to teach different doctrines (v. 3), causing some to wander away (v. 6); teachers of the law who don't understand the law (v. 7)
  - Big miss: the law reveals we are sinners
  - False teachers have lost the 'sinfulness of sin'
3. In order to appreciate the good news, we must understand the bad news
  - *Until sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet.*<sup>1</sup>
4. In verse 12, Paul applies truth to himself, BUT also recognizes that his life serves as “an example to those who were to believe” (v. 16)

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Watson

### III. FOUR AFFIRMATIONS FROM PAUL'S EXAMPLE

#### A. Affirmation #1—Our Biggest Problem Lay Within Us

1. According to verse 13, Paul was a sinner
2. According to verse 15, Paul is still a sinner
3. How could a statement like that ever be a sign of health?
  - a. First, it's healthy when it recognizes that there's only one heart in the world where we have a front row seat
  - b. Second, it's healthy when words are not an end but a means
  - c. Lastly, it's healthy when we build churches that declare the whole gospel

(1) *As I look across the Christian landscape, I think it is fair to say concerning sin, "They have healed the wounds of my people lightly" (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). I take this to refer to leaders who should be helping the church know and feel the seriousness of indwelling sin (Rom. 7:20), and how to fight it and kill it (Rom. 8:13). Instead the depth and complexity and ugliness and danger of sin in professing Christians is either minimized—since we are already justified—or psychologized as a symptom of woundedness rather than corruption. This is a tragically light healing. I call it a tragedy because by making life easier for ourselves in minimizing the nature and seriousness of our sin, we become greater victims of it. We are in fact not healing ourselves. Those who say that they already feel bad enough without being told about the corruptions of indwelling sin misread the path to peace.<sup>2</sup>*

(2) We need to exult in the solution without ever losing sight of the problem

(3) We can't truly proclaim grace without addressing sin

(4) *The gospel is meaningful for us only to the extent that we realize and acknowledge that we are still sinful. Although we are new creations in Christ, we still sin every day in thought, word, and deed, and perhaps even more importantly, in motives. To benefit from the gospel every day, then, we must acknowledge that we are still sinners.<sup>3</sup>*

#### B. Affirmation #2—Our Highest Status Comes From God, Not Others

1. Our greatest hindrance in marriage
  - For a marriage to be healthy, it requires two people defining themselves first in reference to God

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<sup>2</sup> John Piper

<sup>3</sup> Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 21.

(1) *For they speak best who speak the worst of sin.*<sup>4</sup>

(2) *It is no wonder that he who is not resolved to be an enemy of sin is conquered by it.*<sup>5</sup>

2. The status we assign ourselves must start with the gospel
3. Being sinned against is not our first or most significant status; our status is first “loved, but sinful”
4. Many believers affirm sinfulness, but view themselves as primarily sinned against
  - We have sinned against God more than anyone has sinned against us
  - Parable of the unforgiving servant
  - Story of Jeremy and Cindy

### **C. Affirmation #3—Our Greatest Hindrance is Our Confident Morality**

1. Assuming the moral high ground in evaluating others
2. Self-righteousness and assigning motives
  - *I believe that human morality, rather than flagrant sin, is the greatest obstacle to the gospel today.*<sup>6</sup>
3. Drifting from the gospel and taking on the role of judge
4. Strengths become weaknesses when they make us confident in our righteousness

### **D. Affirmation #4—Our Loudest Praise Targets God’s Astonishing Grace**

1. Verse 17
2. Moral of the story: God is amazing and should be exalted
3. Because we live each day more aware of what we have been saved from, it makes God’s love real
  - Ultimate point of the passage: it’s not that sin is big, but that grace is amazing

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<sup>4</sup> Ralph Venning

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Edinburgh, England: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987) 120.

<sup>6</sup> Jerry Bridges, *The Gospel for Real Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 121.