

**Read: 1 Timothy 1:12-17**

## God's Mercy is for Sinners Like Paul and Me

### **1 Timothy 1:15-16**

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.

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

“If you want it, you gotta earn it!”

Maybe that’s what a parent says to get you to clean your room, feed a pet, take out the garbage, or help out around the house. If you help, there will be a reward.

“If you want it, you gotta earn it.” Can you imagine your pastor saying that as he tells you about Jesus’ love, God’s forgiveness, and eternal life in heaven? If you want them, you gotta earn them? I sure hope not! Because that’s definitely not what the Bible says! God does not give us those things because of who we are or what we do. He gives them because of Jesus. He loves us even when we are at our worst. He forgives us even when we find it hard to forgive ourselves or each other. God wants us to be with him in heaven even in the moment we feel a million miles apart from him.

In today’s verse, the apostle Paul points to himself as an example of someone God showed mercy. Listen: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.” Paul doesn’t say “I *was* the worst.” (But now I’m so much better.) He says, “I *am* the worst!” (Like right now, even today!) Paul understood the bad we all have in our thinking and our talking. They are with us every single day in our hearts. Paul’s right. I am the worst.

Yet, Paul experienced the amazing mercy of God! God used him as an example that:

- Jesus came to save sinners—like Paul and like you!
- God’s love is not for sale, but freely offered.
- forgiveness is not earned but received through Jesus’ cross.
- heaven is really open and really for you!

Even when we are at our worst, God is always at his best. Marvel at the mercy of God for you.

*The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.*

### **Questions for Younger Children**

- Why did Paul say that he was the worst?
- Who earned God's love for us?

### **Questions for Elementary Age Children**

- What's the difference between Paul saying, "I *am* the worst of sinners" and "I *was* the worst of sinners"?
- What are some ways that we can show mercy to the members of our family like God showed mercy to us?

### **Questions for Middle School and Above**

- Think of examples in life where "you gotta earn it." How does that mess people up when it comes to being right with God?
- What are some examples of God's mercy and grace that we see and hear in church when we worship?

### **Closing Prayer:**

God be merciful to me, a sinner. In thankful response to your mercy in Christ, move me to be patient and kinder to the people around me. Amen.

### **Hymn: CW 596:3 – Let Me Be Yours Forever**

O gracious Holy Spirit,  
My comforter and guide,  
Grant that in Jesus' merit  
I always may confide,  
Him to the end confessing  
Whom I have known by faith.  
Give me your constant blessing  
And grant a Christian death.