

sermons

New Testament

I Timothy

1:12-17

1

Date written: July 14, 1951

Sources: Ab. Bible Comm., p. 1274

John Milton, Paradise Lost, Classics  
Book Club ed., p. 92.

Ministers Manual 1941, p. 46

Text: I Timothy 1:~~15-17~~ "This is a faithful  
saying and worthy of all acceptance, that  
Christ Jesus came into the world to save  
sinners; of whom I am chief.

Theme: Humility, or awareness of sin, as  
necessary in Christian practice.

Proposition: Regarding oneself as the chief  
sinner for whom Jesus came is a desirable  
attitude for the practicing Christian.

Places and dates preached:

Stockade, Post Chapel, Hospital,  
Camp Cooke, Cal., 15 July,  
Wheatland & Glendale, Wyo. July 3, 51

Text: I have been thinking of you since July 1, 1911

Address: No. 1110, 11th St., N. W., Wash., D. C.

John Wilson, 1110, 11th St., N. W., Wash., D. C.

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### Introduction:

1. The N.T. Books of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are frequently referred to as the Pastoral Letters because they were written by Paul to Timothy and Titus from the viewpoint of an over-seeing or advisory pastor to successor and junior pastors in churches with which he was very familiar. It was no essayist who wrote these letters but a man of affairs whose concern was not to air views or discuss theories for the sake of doing so, but to provide for actual situation.

2. In spite of this practical purpose for these letters, or perhaps because of it, in each letter Paul makes statements which reveal the rich spiritual base for his ministry. These statements are of value to us in forming and maintaining our lives as practicing christians. Such a statement is our text, and particularly is the last phrase of it vital to our thought here.

3. Our text reads "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came to save sinners, of whom I am chief." If Paul, a man who is frequentl





referred to as the greatest christian missionary of all time to date, felt compelled to acknowledge himself as the "chief sinner," how much more should we who practice christianity in our average lives feel the same way. Regarding oneself as the chief sinner for whom Jesus came is a necessary attitude for the practicing christian. To demonstrate this is our chief task now.

I. Spiritual pride, or viewing oneself as above sin, results in unchristian living.

1. A lady once told a minister, "I don't go to church now. I'm busy at the service club helping our boys on Sunday morning, and I'm doing good and enjoying it. I'm satisfied with my religion and my way of life and don't feel that I have to go to church to improve." The way in which she said this was friendly, and it was perfectly true that she was doing much good in her service club activities. Leaving out the error of thought that she made in assuming that she didn't need what

referred to as the "perfect church" and  
that of all time to date, but controlled  
to completely himself as the only  
person, he knew how much of a  
practice could be in our hands  
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the chief sinners for years came to a  
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I. Christian attitude, or what we mean  
as above, is a matter of attitude  
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church could give, her statement illustrated one prevalent, mistaken and unchristian attitude which frequently results in marked indifference or actual opposition to christian living. That is the trait of spiritual pride or spiritual self-satisfaction. The minister concerned didn't know this particular lady long enough to be sure just how her attitude affected her living generally, but it is a usual thing that such an attitude results in unchristian living.

2. One well-known illustration of this fact was given by Jesus himself, as recorded in Lk. 18:10-14. Two men went to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and one a Publican. The Pharisee thanked God that he was not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers. Then he told God how good he was, fasting twice a week and giving 10% of all he had to the church of his time. The Publican, on the other hand, hardly dared approach God because he felt so insignificant, and beating his breast and looking down he humbly asked, "God,

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 hated himself because he felt so  
 filthy, unclean, and needing his best  
 and feeling that he was hardly saved, "God,



be merciful to me, a sinner." Jesus' comment on the two attitudes tells the story, demonstrates the point we're making here. He said "This man (the Publican) went down to his house justified rather than the other (the Pharisee): for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

3. Our point isn't about eventual rewards, however, but is to see that the principle holds all through life, ~~that~~ spiritual pride results now in unchristian living.

a. This can be demonstrated surely, on an institutional level, whether the institution be state, church, business, or other.

(1) A government can become so sure that it has the right way of meeting problems that in its efforts to extend itself, or its ideas, it uses any available methods, to the detriment of millions of individuals. The present and the recent past have witnessed

be involved to me, a singer. I was  
present on the two occasions. In the  
first, he was asked to sing. In the  
second, he said "This man (the  
singer) is so his house is filled with  
the other (the singer) for everyone that  
he himself shall be asked; and he  
that himself shall be asked.  
3. Government is a very serious  
matter, but it is to be seen that  
the people of the world are in a  
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such governments in Nazi and Communist form.

(2) A religious institution sometimes becomes so convinced that it possesses the only way of salvation that it becomes actively intolerant of ~~other~~ religious groups and their members to the point some times of persecution, even of execution. Protestant and Catholic churches alike have made this error at times in the past, thereby denying in practice the spirit and teachings of Christ.

(3) A business man running a self-service automatic laundry is very proud of his shiny new machines and equipment, to the point of carefully checking each customer's loading of the machines. Invariably he finds customers who, though they may be used to similar facilities elsewhere, have by his estimate overladed machines, causing the customer to rent an additional machine or so. He uses soap and bleach and bluing very cautiously,

10-11-17  
11-11-17  
12-11-17

Each organization in the Command

(2) Religious instruction should  
be given as soon as possible. It is  
the only way of saving the soul of  
the individual. It is the only way  
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The point of view of the individual  
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and because of this the wash often isn't clean. He is thus hurting his business through his excessive pride in it, the pride causing selfishness on his part which is so evident to many customers that they can't come back. In business pride, whether "spiritual" or strictly business, is a tricky thing, often resulting in selfish and unchristian conduct.

b. On the individual plane it is especially true that spiritual pride brings unchristian conduct.

(1) In classic literature there is a story telling how before the creation of the world God ruled in heaven surrounded by angels. One angel was so popular that he was full of pride and rebelled against God, trying to equal God in glory. For punishment, he was cast out of heaven, and in vengeance declared war upon all that the heavenly Father did. When the world was made this angel, Bezelbub or the devil, sought vengeance, and continually





seeks vengeance on God through leading astray those made in God's image and whom he loved. Thus in story ~~does~~ one writer attempts to ascribe even the beginning of sin and death to the folly of spiritual pride on the part of an individual.

(2) A beautifully-dressed young woman said to her pastor, "Did you see my two new diamond rings which I received for my Christmas present?" "Yes," said her pastor, "I saw them when you dropped that dime in the missionary collection plate." This story illustrates a common weakness of many of us, the love ~~and~~ acquiring ~~of~~ fine things for ourselves while neglecting the support of the faith in which we profess to believe. Surely this is pride, or sin, which results in unchristian living.

(3) Other illustrations from life could be shown, like the too-pious man whom you feel you couldn't trust with a dollar out of sight, just because





His strong affirmation of religion sounds too good; etc.. Let's turn, instead, to the positive side of the picture, and see that:

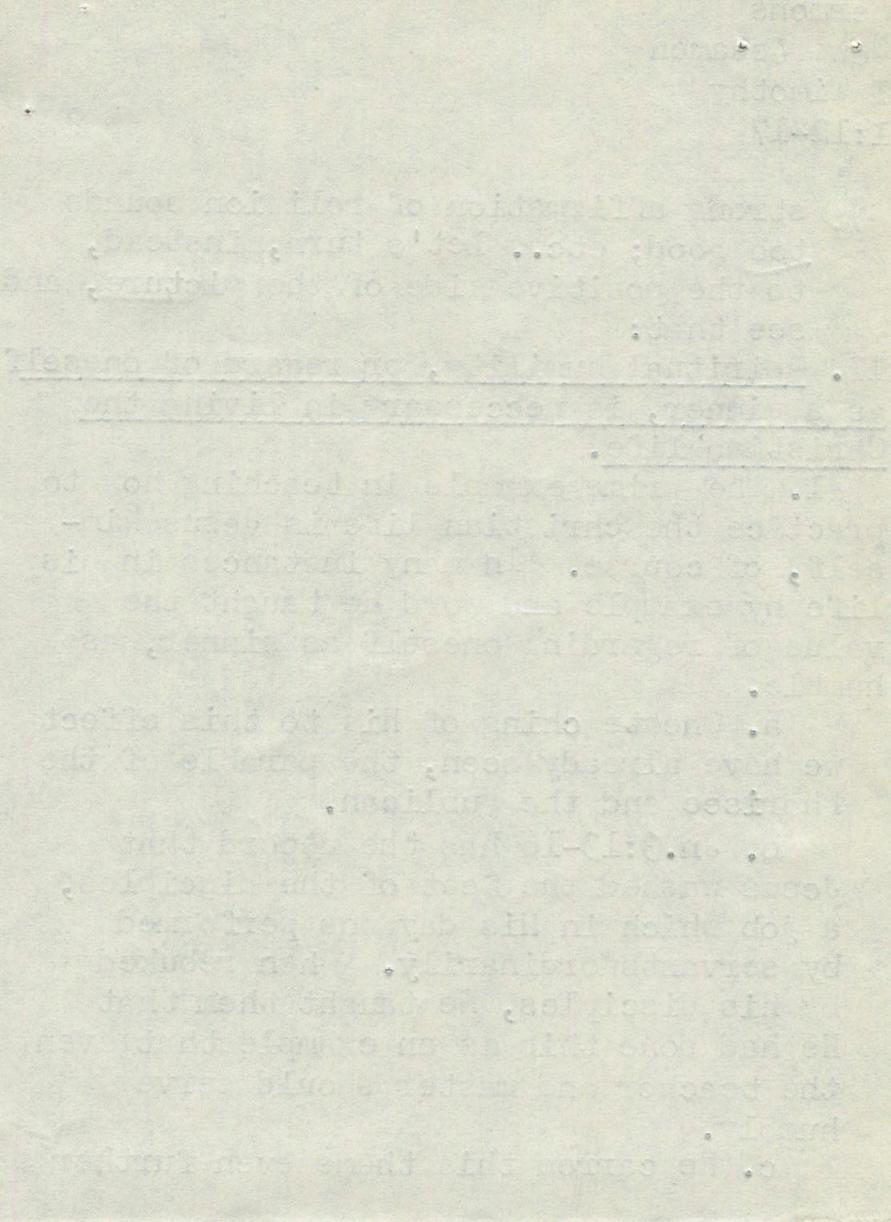
II. Spiritual humility, or regard of oneself as a sinner, is necessary in living the Christian life.

1. The prime example in teaching how to practice the christian life is Jesus Himself, of course. In many instances in His life by example and word he taught the value of regarding oneself as sinner, as humble.

a. One teaching of His to this effect we have already seen, the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.

b. Jn.3:13-16 has the record that Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, a job which in His day was performed by servants ordinarily. When rebuked by His disciples, He taught them that He had done this as an example that even the teacher and master should serve humbly.

c. He carried this theme even further





when He replied to the request of Zebedee's wife that her children should sit on His right and left hand in paradise. He summarized His teaching her thus "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

d. Perhaps the most beautiful expression that Christ made of christian humility is found in Mt.11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

e. The value of thinking of ourselves as sinners constantly in need of His saving grace is taught by Jesus and recorded in several places. Christ dealt with and associated with them. He was a friend of publicans and sinners (Mt.11:19, Mk.2:16, etc.). He even defended them (Jn.8:1-11), not in their sin but against punishment from other





sinners, and brought thereby the realization of sin and the acceptance of His salvation by the sinner.

2. Paul in our Scripture is the great missionary pastor, teacher about Christ, and yet one who regards himself as "chief sinner." Surely his life was one of christian practice, and speaks to us for a similar attitude on our part.

3. Important, too, for demonstration of the necessity of an attitude of humility, ~~a realization of self as sinner~~, for the practicing christian are illustrations from contemporary life. That these abound supports our supposition.

a. A very successful and well-known hospital chaplain in a civilian hospital lecturing to a group of army chaplains had this thought central to his theme: that the work of ministers and chaplains was a constant awareness that we (the ministers and chaplains) are but sinners working with sinners, who could do nothing good and helpful except for the grace and help of God. He referred to the christian





church as "a fellowship of sinners seeking to know and keep Christ's saving gospel." If an attitude like that has produced a man who in his work as hospital chaplain has comforted and helped thousands over a period of years, surely it is of value to you and me as everyday practicing Christians too.

b. Alcoholics Anonymous demands that those who seek its help must admit that of themselves they can do nothing to stop the habit, and that God alone can help. Such an attitude, and a constant awareness of personal weakness or sinfulness has redeemed from and kept many a man off the degrading road of alcoholism.

c. Between these examples of a professional religious worker and the down-and-out alcoholic is the average man attempting to practice Christianity. Again and again the feeling of worthlessness or sinfulness is expressed somewhat like this: "I would like to join the church, but I'm not good enough." ~~The first part of the statement being~~ correct except that this is a healthy attitude with which to join





If in the church, this: "I am not smart enough and good enough to teach this Sunday School class (or do some other job), but if I'm needed I'll try."

Or by a successful business man, "I've ~~xx~~ worked hard and tried to be honest, and I'm thankful for the measure of success God has permitted me to have." Example after example could be given to show the value of a feeling of unworthiness and of sin in a christian's life.

Conclusion: A summary of these values is: humility and a feeling of being "the chief sinner" keeps down conceit and objectionable vanity. It causes one to feel the necessity of constantly seeking God's forgiveness, help and grace. Paul felt that he was a sinner, and because this feeling was in him sought God ~~xxxxxx~~ so constantly that he was a chief instrument in bringing salvation to thousands. Feeling as "chief sinner," we come to know by personal experience the meaning of our text, for it is a personal statement of experience. (State

*Text and Proposition: - character*

If in the church, this: "I am not afraid  
enough and good enough to do this  
under school class (or do not count  
it), and if I needed it, I will."  
I was a successful business man, I was in  
the bank and tried to be honest, and  
I was thankful for the measure of success  
I had received. I was a  
other things could be given to show the  
value of the feeling of an ordinary man  
of in the Christian's life.  
Conclusion: A variety of these values is  
within the feeling of being the  
first sinners to go to a council and  
to see the vanity. It causes one to  
feel the necessity of constantly seeking  
for forgiveness, help and grace. I am  
not alone in this, the presence of  
others in this world of sinners so  
constantly that he was a chief in the  
world, the revelation to the church, the  
other sinners, we come to know of the  
in the world of sinners, for it  
is the world of sinners.