

# Chief of Sinners

## I. Introduction

A. The inspired apostle Paul beautifully expressed the depth of Jesus' sacrifice with the words, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Consider seven principles of Scripture related to this saying. **1 Timothy 1:15**

## II. The Strength of God's Grace

- A. The fact that a zealous persecutor of Christians could be forgiven and become a fruitful servant of God's shows the strength of God's grace. No matter the sin one has committed, it can be forgiven because of Jesus. **1 Timothy 1:14**
- B. As the hymn says, there is *power* in the blood of Jesus. Like Saul of Tarsus, whose record was wiped clean, we can have the dark stain of sin erased by God's grace. *Hymns for Worship, Songs 474 & 276*; **2 Corinthians 5:17**

## III. God's Eagerness to Forgive

A. The extent God went to so that "chief" of sinners could be saved demonstrates not only the *ability* we have to be forgiven, but also the *eagerness* of God to forgive. As God looks on *anyone* living in rebellion against Him, His desire is for that person to turn from sin and be forgiven. **1 Timothy 2:3-4**; **1 Timothy 1:16**; **2 Peter 3:9**

## IV. Needy, But Undeserving

A. The apostle Paul's statement also expresses humble recognition of his dependence on God. Though he was doing a lot of good things for God at the time of writing, Paul's past sins reminded him how undeserving he was to be anything more than a hopeless case. All of those who accept the gift Jesus died for should likewise have this humble recognition. **1 Timothy 1:15**; **1 Corinthians 15:9-10**; **Galatians 6:14**

## V. Loving, Forgiving: Exemplified

- A. Not only do we need God to love and forgive *us*, but we also must strive to *emulate* His love and willingness to forgive. The Lord's attitude toward Saul of Tarsus exemplifies a "loving, forgiving" character. **1 Timothy 1:15-16**; *Hymns for Worship, Song 97*
- B. God's attitude toward Saul stands in contrast to the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day. Instead of treating those in sin condescendingly, God exemplifies the loving spirit we should have. **Luke 15:1-2, 20**

## VI. The Truth: God's Power to Change

- A. Love toward those in sin can also be encouraged by the fact that we never know who might choose to accept Christ. Saul of Tarsus might have appeared to be the least likely of people to accept Jesus. The truth God has given us has the power to take *anyone who is willing* from where he or she is to where he or she needs to be. **Galatians 2:20**

## VII. Not a License to Sin...

- A. The fact that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners does not imply that we can live in *unrepentant* sin and still be forgiven. The apostle Paul was the "chief" of sinners because of *past* sins, rather than current, unrepentant sin (cf. **1 Tim. 1:13**). **Matthew 1:21**

## VIII. ...But Motivation to Serve

- A. Instead of abusing God's grace, we should be motivated by His grace to do what we can in service to Him. We can never fully repay Him, but we *can* bring Him the glory He more than deserves as One who sent His Son to die for us. **1 Corinthians 15:9-10**