Christ Came Into The World

"Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15). The phrase *"Faithful is the saying"* is essentially a trademark of Paul. Other New Testament writers use the word *"faithful"* to describe God, brethren, and martyrs, and John wrote, *"These sayings are faithful and true"* (1 Pet. 4:19; 5:22, Rev. 2:13; Rev. 22:6), but Paul uses the expression most frequently, albeit exclusively in his letters to Timothy and Titus (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:9; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Ti. 3:8). The phrase means that what he had written or was about to write was something the reader could "stake his life on." Of course the steadfastness and faithfulness of God's promises are reiterated again and again by all writers in the scriptures.

It is a faithful saying that *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* The advent of Christ to secure sinners' salvation is stated many times both by Jesus Himself, or those who wrote of his coming to the earth. *"God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved"* (Jn. 3:17). In the gospel Jesus said He came *"that we might have abundant life"* (Jn. 10:10); that He might *"seek and save that which was lost"* (Mt. 18:11); that He came *"not to be ministered to, but to minister unto and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Mk. 10:45). It is this latter verse which spells out just how Christ would secure man's salvation: he would die in man's stead. This truth was spoken by Jesus, as well as of him by His disciples. Jesus said, *"I lay down my life for my sheep"* (Jn. 10:15), and *"Greater love hath no man than this, in that he lay down his life for his friends"* (Jn. 15:13). *"This is the blood of the New Covenant which is poured out for many unto remission of sins"* (Mt. 26:28). It was of Him Paul wrote, *"For while we were weak in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But, God commended his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:6-8). This love of Christ for us is the core of the gospel. Of this Paul wrote, *"Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures"* (1 Cor. 15:4).

That Christ came into the world *"to save sinners"* prompted Paul to write, *"of whom I am chief."* How remarkable are Paul's words here! His persecution of Christians and his exceeding madness against them was seldom far from his mind. And what is even more astonishing is the fact that although Paul had likely been a Christian 30 years when he wrote this letter during which years he had suffered as few men suffer for the Lord, and that he had labored more exceedingly than all the rest of the apostles; the acuteness of what he

formerly had been and done led him to speak in the present tense: *"Of whom I am chief."*

Did Paul question his eternal security? Absolutely not. He knew he had obtained mercy, that he had been forgiven. He knew that to *"depart and be with Christ would be very far better"* (Phil. 1:23). He expected that a crown of life was laid up for him; that God would preserve him unto His heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. 4:8, 18). Still -- despite all his labors; his sufferings, his trials, he could only account himself the chief of sinners, saved by the mercy of God. Such a spirit as Paul's is in keeping with Jesus' words, *"He that exalteth himself, shall be humbled and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"* (Lk. 14:11).

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