

**Saul's Assaults against the Church, Acts 26:9-11; Saul Is the World's Worst Sinner, 1 Tim 1:15; He Received Mercy So Christ Could Demonstrate Patience, v. 16**

31. Paul admitted to doing many things hostile to the name of Jesus in his testimony before King Agrippa in:

**Acts 26:9 -** "I was convinced that it was necessary I should do many things hostile to the name of Jesus the Nazarene [Ναζωραῖος, Nazōraios: a derogatory term used by Saul and fellow Jews in contempt of His claims to be Son of David and Son of God ].

**v. 10 -** "This is the thing I did in Jerusalem: Many of the saints did I incarcerate in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests of the Sanhedrin, and when they were put to death, I voted against them.

**v. 11 -** "And I avenged myself upon them often in every synagogue, I forced them to blaspheme; and being excessively maniacal [ "**furiously enraged**" (NASB): περισσῶς ἐμμαίνομαι, perissōs emmainomai: an extreme state of psychosis, i.e., murder lust driven by the hatred of religious arrogance—Saul was a terrorist who declared a personal jihad against any and all Christians ] against them, I kept on persecuting them even into other cities."

32. Paul documents that religion drove him to an extreme state of psychosis. Those who develop intense hatred, anger, bitterness, and rage from religion are the most inflexible, dangerous, and evil people in the devil's world.
33. The reason Paul could accurately say he was history's number one sinner was because he was history's number one religious fanatic.
34. Paul's testimony is that God took history's worst sinner and religious fanatic and made him history's greatest example of God's unconditional love.
35. Saul, the worst man who ever lived, was made through grace the greatest believer who ever lived, a magnificent testimony to the magnitude of grace and the power of Bible doctrine in transforming the souls of men.
36. Principle: If God can save and transform the greatest sinner and greatest terrorist that ever lived then He can save and transform anyone.

**1 Timothy 1:15 -** [ETr] "Faithful Is the Word" and worthy of unqualified acceptance, that "Christ Jesus has come into [ἔρχομαι, erchomai: **purpose** ] the world to save [σῶζω, sōzō: **to deliver** ] sinful mankind," among whom I am the worst of all.

**v. 16 - [ NASB]** Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost sinner, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

1. Paul now sets up a contrast between verse 15 and 16 with the conjunction ἀλλά, alla, translated "Nevertheless." It is followed by the causal phrase διὰ οὗτος, dia houtos, "because of this," or "for this reason."
2. Because Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, Paul was able to find mercy even though he was the worst of them all. He expresses this act of grace by the aorist passive indicative of the verb:

ἐλέεω, eleeō - "to receive mercy"

aorist: Dramatic: States a present reality with the certitude of a past event, an idiomatic device used for emphasis and in this case of grace.

passive: Paul receives the act of divine mercy.

indicative: A statement of historical fact.

**“Nevertheless, because of this I received mercy ...”**

3. Paul now presents himself as the ultimate illustration of grace and mercy. He received mercy for a purpose. Here we find the conjunction **ἵνα, hina** which introduces a final purpose clause, translated: “that.”
4. Paul now begins the process of disproving the argument that a person can be too sinful to be saved. He is the champion of them all which he claims with the propositional phrase, **ἐν ἐγὼ πρῶτος, en egō prōtos**: “in me first.”
5. The ultimate of divine grace toward sinners is found in Paul. He is the prime example of how far grace extends in dealing with mankind’s sin problem and how extensive the power of the Word of God can be in the transformation of the human soul.
6. Paul now indicates that his conversion is an eternal demonstration of the Lord’s patience toward those who would simply believe in Him for eternal life. He begins with the proper nouns that identify the Lord as Savior-Messiah:  
**Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Iēsous Christos** - “Jesus Christ”
7. The name Jesus is the Lord’s given name. Were He to have a surname it would be **βάρ Ἰωσήφ, bar Iōsēth**: “Son of Joseph.” He is never called this except as a point of identification in Luke 3:23 and John 1:45 where the word for *son* is **υἱός, huios**, which refers to Him as the assumed adult son of Joseph.
8. The name Jesus means Savior and thus His given name emphasizes the purpose of His First Advent which was to provide salvation for all mankind.
9. The noun *Christos* means “The Anointed One” and is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Messiah*. This identifies Jesus as the Son of David who was prophesied to fulfill the unconditional promises to Israel. As Messiah He is undiminished deity and true humanity in one Person forever.
10. As Savior-Messiah, the Lord uses chief-of-all-sinners Saul to demonstrate an important aspect of His character. This is brought out by the aorist middle subjunctive of the verb:

**ἐνδείκνυμι, endeiknumi** - “to demonstrate something by means of someone”

aorist: Constative: contemplates the action in its entirety but gathers it into a single whole.

The constative covers a period that includes both eternity and time: (1) eternity past when the Lord’s omniscience perceived that Saul/Paul would be selected at physical birth, (2) time including the period of Saul the unbeliever and Paul the believer, and finally, (3) eternity future when Paul in resurrection body enjoys the eternal state.

middle: Jesus Christ secures the results of this action in His own interest: advancing the plan of God.

subj.: The divine purpose regarding Paul as an illustration of the magnitude of saving grace is described.

**“Nevertheless, because of this I received mercy that in me, as foremost of all sinners, Jesus Christ might demonstrate ...”**



11. What we are about to learn from this passage is that in eternity past Christ from the omniscience of His deity was able to perceive that although Saul would demonstrate the extent of how low the human soul could go, even so his free-will faith in Jesus as the Christ would be sufficient to save his soul resulting in eternal life.
12. What is demonstrated is divine patience. In other words, God was willing to be patient with Saul until he could get to the point of Gospel hearing since omniscience knew he would respond positively to the message.
13. This patience is described with two words:  
**ἄπας μακροθυμία, *hapas makrothumia*** - “perfect patience”
14. This is a compound made up of **μακρός, *makros***: “far distant” or “far off” and **θυμός, *thumos***: anger, wrath, indignation”; literally “far removed from anger.”
15. Compounded they mean “patience” and with the adjective *hapas* it is translated “perfect patience.”
16. The etymology of *makrothumia* adds insight to the Holy Spirit’s selection of this word to describe the Lord’s approach not only to Saul as a sinner but by extension to every member of the human race. We consult:

**Kittel, Gerhard (ed.). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 4:375:**

In **Strabo** \strā'-bō\ [Greek geographer, 63 BC–AD 23] **μακροθυμία** has the sense of desperate patience which in the supreme emergency of siege leaves no stone unturned to try to stave off the inevitable end [*Geographical Sketches*].

In **Artemidorus** \ärt-a-ma-dōr'-as\ [2d century AD Greek soothsayer] **μακροθυμία** (is) used in a context which suggests delay or procrastination, the putting off of an action [*Oneirocriticum* (Ὀνειροκρισία, *Oneirokrisia*: The Interpretation of Dreams)].

**μακροθυμία** (Ionic) is found in **Areteus** \är-a-tē'-as\ [2d century AD Greek physician] for the patience and endurance of the physician in treating severe chronic illnesses with only doubtful hopes of a cure.

Similarly in **Plutarch** \plū'-tärk\ [ca. AD 46–119 Greek biographer] it is used of the steadfastness of the general or soldier in putting up with hardships, i.e., “endurance” until a goal is reached [*De Lucullo*].

**Flavius Josephus** [ca. AD 37–ca.100] Uses the word in exactly the same way when he puts it on the lips of Titus in an address to his soldiers to kindle them to steadfastness by the example of the Jews:

“My brave Romans! It is right for me to put you in mind of what nation you are, in the beginning of my speech, that so you may not be ignorant who you are, and who they are against whom we are going to fight. For as to us, Romans, no part of the habitable earth has been able to escape our hands hitherto; but as for the Jews, that I may speak of them too, though they have been already beaten, yet do they not give up the cause; and a sad thing it would be for us to grow weary under good success, when they bear up [**μακροθυμία**] under their misfortunes.” [*Wars of the Jews*, Bk 3, chap.10, par. 2, *The Lives and Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, nd), 734].

17. The Lord provides maximum time for every sinner to respond to the Gospel no matter how despicable and evil he may be. He is pictured, as Strabo describes, as leaving “no stone unturned” in reaching out to the unbeliever who is under siege from *cosmos diabolicus*.

18. Artemidorus suggests “delay and procrastination” in “putting off an action” to give the time to respond.
19. Aretaeus speaks of the patience of a physician. The Lord is the Great Physician Who is pictured having patience and endurance toward the lost who suffer from the “severe chronic illness” of imputed, genetic, and personal sin with “no hope of a cure” short of faith alone in Christ alone.
20. Plutarch and Josephus use the word in military contexts to describe the steadfastness of soldiers who put up with hardships until the goal is attained or a decision reached. In like fashion the Lord is steadfast in His patience toward the unbeliever for the purpose of winning him to salvation. Some are steadfast in defeat, as were the Jews of Jerusalem in AD 70, and some are steadfast in victory, as was Paul following his salvation on the Damascus Road.

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