

# God Saves Old Sinners



# New Hope Baptist Church | Sunday, July 12, 2026

Primary Text: 1 Timothy 1:12-16 (KJV)

Estimated preaching time: approximately 38-43 minutes with Scripture reading, pauses, congregational response, and invitation.

# 1 Timothy 1:12- 16 (KJV)

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

# Sermon Proposition

No sinner is too old, too far, too practiced in sin, or too stained by the past for the saving mercy of Jesus Christ. The gospel is not good advice for people trying to become acceptable. It is the good news that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

# Sermon Outline

- I. God saves sinners with a long past. — 1 Timothy 1:13
- II. God saves sinners who cannot fix themselves. — Luke 19:1-10
- III. God saves sinners at the last hour. — Luke 23:39-43
- IV. God saves old sinners completely. — 2 Corinthians 5:17

# Opening

Church, this message is not complicated, but it is serious: God saves old sinners. Not polished sinners. Not improved sinners. Not sinners who finally learned enough church language to hide what is wrong. God saves sinners because Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

That word old does not refer only to the number of birthdays a person has had. A person can be young in age and already old in rebellion. A person can be old in habits, old in bitterness, old in guilt, old in excuses, and old in running from God. Some sins have been repeated so long that they feel like personality. Some wounds have been carried so long that shame feels like identity. Some people have sat in church so long that they know when to stand, when to sit, when to sing, and when to say amen, but they have never truly surrendered to Christ.

The good news today is that the saving power of Jesus does not weaken when the sinner has a history. Grace does not become nervous when it sees the record. Mercy does not turn around because the road has been long. The blood of Jesus is not only for the child who comes early; it is also for the old sinner who comes late. It is for the person who should have known better. It is for the person who did know better and did wrong anyway. It is for the person who has promised God before and broken that promise before.

# [Slow down.]

Old sins. Old habits. Old failures. Old shame. Grace is older still, mercy reaches farther still, and Jesus saves completely still.

Paul calls the statement faithful and worthy of all acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. That is the mission of Bethlehem. That is the meaning of Calvary. That is the victory of the empty tomb. Jesus did not come merely to make bad people more respectable. He came to give dead people life, guilty people pardon, bound people freedom, and lost people a home.

So the question is not, “How long have you been wrong?” The question is, “Will you trust the Savior who is right?” The question is not, “How deep did you sink?” The question is, “How deep does His mercy reach?” The question is not, “Can you repair your life?” The question is, “Will you receive the One who can make you new?”

# I. God Saves Sinners With a Long Past



# 1 Timothy 1:13

“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy...”

Paul does not begin his testimony by pretending that his past was small. He names it. He says, “I was a blasphemer.” That means his words and his life dishonored Christ. He says, “I was a persecutor.” That means he did not merely disagree with believers; he actively opposed them. He says he was “injurious,” violent and insolent, harming the people of God while believing he was doing the work of God.

Paul had a religious background, a trained mind, a disciplined life, and a respected position. Yet none of that saved him. In fact, his religion without Christ made him more confident while he was still wrong. He had sincerity, but sincerity cannot turn error into truth. He had zeal, but zeal without the knowledge of Christ can send a person rapidly in the wrong direction. He knew the law, but he did not know the Lord of the law.

Then Paul places four gospel words in the middle of his record: “But I obtained mercy.” He does not say, “But I improved myself.” He does not say, “But I finally balanced my good deeds against my bad deeds.” He does not say, “But I became useful enough for God to overlook the past.” He says, “I obtained mercy.” Mercy means God did not give him the judgment his sin deserved. Grace means God gave him favor he could never deserve.

# [Emphasize the contrast.]

Paul had a long past, but mercy wrote a new future.

The road to Damascus teaches us that the Lord knows how to interrupt a sinner. Saul was not searching for Jesus. Saul was searching for Christians to arrest. Yet the risen Christ met him on the road. That means salvation begins with the initiative of God. Long before the sinner knows how to pray, grace is already pursuing. Long before the sinner sees clearly, the light of Christ is already shining.

Notice also that Jesus did not save Paul by denying what Paul had done. Grace is not pretending sin never mattered. The cross proves sin matters. Christ bore judgment because sin is serious. But the cross also proves that mercy is greater. The same Paul who had helped scatter the church became a preacher who helped establish churches. The same mouth that had spoken against Christ began preaching Christ. The same hands that had harmed believers began serving believers. The same energy once used against the gospel was surrendered to the gospel.

That is what God can do with a long past. He can take what the enemy meant as a permanent label and turn it into a testimony of mercy. Paul did not forget where he came from, but he no longer lived under the ownership of where he came from. His past became evidence of grace, not a prison for his soul.

# A Long Past Is Not a Final Verdict

Some people believe they have sinned too long to change. They say, “This is just how I am.” But the gospel confronts that sentence. Sin may have shaped habits, but sin does not have the right to define the final chapter. Family history does not have the final word. Addiction does not have the final word. Bitterness does not have the final word. A criminal record does not have the final word. A failed marriage does not have the final word. Years of unbelief do not have the final word. Jesus has the final word.

There are people who will remind you of who you used to be because they are uncomfortable with who grace is making you. Paul understood that. Some believers feared him because they remembered Saul. Yet Barnabas recognized the work of God in Paul. Church, we must never become so suspicious of old sinners that we forget we are all saved by the same mercy. The church is not a museum for people who never got dirty. It is a testimony hall for people who were washed.

And there is another side to this point. Sometimes the person who keeps reopening the old record is not another person; it is you. God has forgiven, but you keep prosecuting yourself. Christ has paid the debt, but you keep trying to serve another sentence. The Holy Spirit convicts us in order to bring us to repentance, but the accuser condemns us in order to keep us in despair. Conviction says, “Bring the sin to Christ.” Condemnation says, “Hide from Christ because you are beyond help.” The gospel says, “There is mercy at the feet of Jesus.”

# Romans 5:20

“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

That verse does not make sin light. It makes grace large. Paul is not celebrating how far he fell; he is celebrating how far Christ reached. The testimony is not, “Look at what I did.” The testimony is, “Look at what mercy did with me.”

# [Congregational response.]

Your past may explain some things about you, but it does not have to own you. If God saved Paul, God can save an old sinner.

So bring Him the whole past. Do not edit it. Do not minimize it. Do not excuse it. Confess it. The blood does not cleanse the version we pretend to be; it cleanses the sinner who comes honestly. Paul named the sin, and then Paul magnified the mercy. That is where every true testimony must end: “But I obtained mercy.”

Transition: Paul shows us that God saves the sinner with a long past. Zacchaeus shows us something else: God saves the sinner who has exhausted every human way of fixing life but still cannot fix the soul.

# II. God Saves Sinners Who Cannot Fix Themselves

# Luke 19:5, 9-10

“Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house... This day is salvation come to this house... For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Zacchaeus was not powerless in society. He was a chief publican, a man with authority in the tax system. He had money. He had position. He had influence. He knew how to calculate, collect, negotiate, and climb. Yet the Bible describes him with one decisive word: lost.

That is an important word because lostness does not always look broken on the outside. Lostness can wear good clothes. Lostness can own property. Lostness can have a title, a retirement account, a respectable family name, and a place in the community. A person can be successful in business and unsuccessful in the soul. A person can know how to manage employees and still be unable to manage the appetites of the heart. A person can be known by everybody in town and still be unknown in a saving relationship with Christ.

Zacchaeus had learned to climb professionally, but on this day he had to climb a tree just to see Jesus. There is almost a holy irony in the scene. The man who had risen above others in power placed himself above the crowd in a sycamore tree, but the only direction grace could take him was down. Jesus looked up and said, “Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down.”

# [Pause after “come down.”]

Every sinner who comes to Christ must come down. Come down from pride. Come down from self-justification. Come down from the idea that education can save you, money can save you, reputation can save you, church membership can save you, or morality can save you. We do not climb into salvation. We come down and receive it.

Jesus called Zacchaeus by name. The crowd knew him by his occupation and his reputation. Jesus knew his name. The crowd saw a tax collector. Jesus saw a lost man He had come to seek. The crowd had already written the conclusion of Zacchaeus's story. Jesus was standing under the tree to write a different ending.

And notice the urgency in the words of Christ: “Make haste.” Grace is free, but the call is urgent. “Today I must abide at thy house.” Jesus did not say, “Clean the house first, repair your reputation first, pay everybody back first, and then perhaps I will visit.” Jesus entered the house of a sinner. That is grace. But Jesus did not enter and leave the man unchanged. That is transformation.



# We Cannot Repair the Heart From the Outside

Human beings are very skilled at external repair. We can change clothes, change jobs, change cities, change relationships, change routines, and change vocabulary. Some changes are necessary and wise. But external change cannot regenerate the heart. You can move away from the place where you sinned and carry the same heart with you. You can stop one behavior and replace it with another form of bondage. You can become more respectable without becoming redeemed.

That is why the gospel is not a self-help program. A drowning person does not need swimming advice shouted from the shore; he needs rescue. A dead person does not need encouragement to try harder; he needs life. A guilty sinner does not need a religious paint job; he needs pardon and a new heart. Jesus did not come merely to advise Zacchaeus. Jesus came to save him.

When salvation came to the house, Zacchaeus stood and declared that he would give to the poor and make restitution where he had defrauded others. We must understand the order. Zacchaeus did not purchase salvation by giving money back. The changed conduct was the fruit of salvation, not the price of salvation. Grace entered first, and then greed started losing its grip. Jesus saved the man, and the saved man began dealing honestly with what sin had damaged.

Real salvation changes what we love, what we hate, what we pursue, and how we treat people. It does not mean a new believer becomes instantly mature or never struggles again. It means a new Lord has entered the house. The old master no longer holds unquestioned authority. The direction changes. Conviction appears. Restitution becomes possible. Generosity begins to replace greed. Truth begins to replace manipulation.

# [Apply directly.]

We are not saved because we changed. We begin to change because we have been saved.

Somebody may say, “I need to get myself together before I come to church.” That sounds humble, but it is actually impossible. You do not take a bath before you take a bath. You do not wait to be well before you go to the physician. You do not fix yourself before coming to the Savior. You come as you are, but you do not remain as you were.

The crowd complained that Jesus had gone to be the guest of a man who was a sinner. Religious crowds are sometimes more comfortable discussing a sinner than seeing a sinner saved. They can tell you why he does not belong, what he has done, whom he has hurt, and how long he has been doing it. But Jesus announces His mission: “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

The church must never forget that mission. We cannot merely open the doors for people who already know how to behave in our rooms. We must carry the gospel to the people who assume they would not be welcomed. We must tell the addicted, the bitter, the dishonest, the ashamed, the wealthy, the poor, the respected, and the rejected: Jesus still seeks and saves the lost.

# Ephesians 2:8-9

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Not of yourselves. That sentence ends the argument. Salvation is not a ladder we climb. It is a gift we receive. Zacchaeus climbed the tree, but Jesus brought salvation to the house. He could position himself to see Jesus, but only Jesus could save Zacchaeus.

Transition: Paul had a long past. Zacchaeus could not fix himself. Now at Calvary, we meet a man who has no future left on earth. He is not merely old in sin; he is at the final hour. And even there, Jesus saves.

# III. God Saves Sinners at the Last Hour

# Luke 23:42-43

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

The thief on the cross has no time left to build a religious résumé. His hands are fastened. His feet are fastened. His reputation is ruined. His sentence has been rendered. He cannot come down and undo the crime. He cannot join a church, be baptized, sing in the choir, teach a class, serve on a committee, or spend years demonstrating reform. He has nothing to offer Jesus except guilty faith.

Two criminals are crucified near Jesus. Both are close to the Savior physically, but only one turns to Him spiritually. Proximity is not the same as faith. A person can sit near the pulpit, near the choir, near the Bible, near Christian family members, and still refuse Christ. One thief uses his dying breath to mock. The other uses his dying breath to believe.

Listen to what the believing thief understands. He acknowledges his own guilt: “We indeed justly.” He recognizes the innocence of Christ: “This man hath done nothing amiss.” He recognizes the kingship of Christ even while Jesus is hanging on a cross: “When thou comest into thy kingdom.” And he makes a humble request: “Lord, remember me.”

That is remarkable faith. The disciples had scattered. The crowd was mocking. The religious leaders believed the cross disproved Jesus. Yet a dying criminal looked at a crucified Savior and saw a coming King. He did not understand every doctrine. He could not explain every prophecy. But he knew enough to place his dying soul in the hands of Jesus.

# [Slow and deliberate.]

The strength of faith is not in how much the sinner can offer. The strength of faith is in the Savior upon whom the sinner rests.

The thief says, “Remember me.” Jesus gives him more than he asks. He asks for remembrance in a future kingdom. Jesus promises fellowship that very day: “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Not after probation. Not after centuries of uncertainty. Today. With Me. In paradise.

Those words show the sufficiency of Christ. Jesus was bearing the judgment of sin, yet He still had authority to save a sinner beside Him. His hands were nailed, but His saving power was not restrained. His feet were nailed, but grace still reached the thief. His enemies had lifted Him on a cross, but He was still the King opening paradise.

# Late Grace Is Still Real Grace

The salvation of the thief gives hope to every family praying for someone who has resisted God for years. Do not stop praying because the heart looks hard. Do not stop witnessing because the person has said no before. Do not decide that age, illness, pride, addiction, or a long history has placed somebody beyond the reach of Christ. As long as there is life, we proclaim the gospel and ask God for mercy.

Some have come to Christ in childhood. Some in young adulthood. Some after marriage. Some after failure. Some in a hospital room. Some in a jail cell. Some after decades of running. The hour may be late, but the blood has not lost its power. The Savior does not ask how much daylight remains before deciding whether grace is sufficient.

But this story also contains a warning. The fact that Jesus can save at the last hour does not mean we are promised a last hour in which we will be able or willing to repent. One thief was saved at the end, but the other thief died in unbelief beside the same Savior. Delay hardens the heart. Every no makes the next no easier. Tomorrow is not a possession; it is a possibility known only to God.

## 2 Corinthians 6:2

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

The devil has two lies. To the young he says, “You have plenty of time.” To the old he says, “You have waited too long.” The gospel answers both lies. To the young it says, “Come now.” To the old it says, “You may still come.” No one is too young to trust Christ, and no one is too old to be received by Christ.

Do not confuse mercy with permission to delay. The lesson is not, “Wait until you are dying.” The lesson is, “Even if you are dying, look to Jesus.” The thief could do nothing about his past and almost nothing about his future, but he could entrust the present moment to Christ.

There may be someone listening who has said, “One day I will get serious about God.” One day is not on the calendar. Today is. You do not need a cleaner history, a stronger emotion, a more dramatic experience, or a better promise. You need Christ. The prayer may be simple, but the faith must be real: “Lord, remember me.”



# [Congregational response.]

Jesus saves in the morning of life, at the noon of life, in the evening of life, and even at the last hour. But the hour to trust Him is now.

Transition: The thief shows that Jesus can save late. The final question is whether He merely rescues us from the final consequence or whether He truly changes the whole condition. Scripture answers: God saves old sinners completely.

# IV. God Saves Old Sinners Completely

## 2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

When God saves a sinner, He does not merely touch up the old life. He brings the sinner into union with Christ and begins a new creation. Paul says, “If any man be in Christ.” That means the foundation of salvation is not what I can become by myself; it is where I am found. I am no longer merely in Adam, under sin and condemnation. By faith I am in Christ, covered by His righteousness and joined to His life.

The words “new creature” do not mean that personality disappears or memory is erased. They mean the ruling identity changes. The sinner receives a new standing before God, a new relationship with God, a new power for living, and a new destination. Old things begin passing away because the old lord has been dethroned. All things become new because Christ is now Lord.

To say God saves completely does not mean every believer becomes instantly mature. Newborn babies are fully alive, but they still must grow. A new Christian may have old habits to unlearn, damaged relationships to repair, and deep wounds that require time, truth, accountability, and prayer. Sanctification is a process. But the process begins because something real has happened. The believer is not pretending to be new; the Spirit of God has begun a new work.

# Completely Forgiven

First, God saves completely by forgiving completely. The gospel does not offer partial pardon. Jesus did not pay the down payment and leave us to finish the debt. On the cross He declared, “It is finished.” The believer does not stand before God with a mixture of Christ’s righteousness and personal merit. We stand accepted in Christ.

# Romans 8:1

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...”

No condemnation does not mean no correction. The Father corrects His children. The Spirit convicts believers. Sin still has consequences in life, and repentance remains necessary. But condemnation—the final guilty verdict before God—has been answered by Christ. The record that could send us away from God has been nailed to the cross in the work of Jesus.

Some saved people still live as though forgiveness has an expiration date. They believe God forgave the first failures but must be tired of them now. Yet our assurance rests in the finished work of Christ, not in the strength of our feelings. We do not use grace as an excuse to sin; we use grace as the reason to get back up, confess, and walk with God.

# Completely Received

Second, God saves completely by receiving the sinner fully. Jesus said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” He does not receive the young sinner more gladly than the old sinner. He does not place the person with a church background in a better class than the person saved out of public sin. At the foot of the cross, the ground is level. We all come by grace.

Old sinners often fear rejection because rejection has marked their lives. They may say, “The church may not want me. My family may not trust me. People may always remember.” Some relationships do require time for trust to be rebuilt. Forgiveness does not erase wisdom or consequences. But the acceptance of Christ is not tentative. The one who comes by faith is received, adopted, and brought near.

# John 6:37

“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

That phrase “in no wise” closes every loophole fear tries to create. Not because of age. Not because of the number of failures. Not because the sin became public. Not because the person came late. Not because the person has to learn how to live the Christian life. Come to Christ, and Christ will receive you.

# Completely Changed

Third, God saves completely by beginning genuine transformation. He changes the direction of the life. Paul went from persecuting Christ to preaching Christ. Zacchaeus went from exploiting people to restoring what he had taken. The thief went from reviling to trusting. Different backgrounds, different circumstances, one saving Lord.

The evidence of salvation is not perfection but new direction. The saved person can no longer make peace with sin the way he once did. He may stumble, but he cannot settle comfortably under the old master. There is conviction. There is hunger for the Word. There is a desire to pray. There is a growing love for the people of God. There is a warfare inside because the Spirit now opposes the flesh.

Do not be discouraged because growth is slower than you hoped. Old habits may have deep roots, but roots can be pulled. Some victories happen suddenly. Others happen through daily surrender, counseling, accountability, disciplined obedience, and the steady renewal of the mind through Scripture. The same grace that pardons also trains us to live differently.



# [Build toward conclusion.]

Jesus does not save halfway. He saves the whole sinner—  
mind, heart, record, identity, direction, and destiny.

# Completely Kept

Finally, God saves completely because He is faithful to finish what He begins. Our confidence is not that we will never be weak. Our confidence is that Christ is strong. We are not kept because our grip on Him never trembles; we are kept because His grip on us does not fail.

# Philippians 1:6

“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

The Lord does not abandon His construction site. He keeps working. Sometimes He removes what we thought we needed. Sometimes He exposes what we tried to hide. Sometimes He disciplines us, stretches us, and humbles us. But every act of faithful correction proves that He has not given up on the work.

This is why an old sinner can have a new song. Not because the old days never happened, but because they no longer control the ending. This is why an old sinner can serve, worship, witness, and finish well. The grace that saves also sustains. The blood that cleanses also gives access. The Spirit who gives life also produces fruit.

Church, do not reduce salvation to a moment at the altar and then leave people alone to struggle. We must disciple those whom God saves. We must teach them Scripture, pray with them, make room for growth, hold them accountable, and remind them that identity is now in Christ. Old sinners need a church family that believes both sides of the gospel: grace receives us as we are, and grace refuses to leave us as we were.

# Conclusion: The Gospel Is for the Old Sinner

Let us gather the four witnesses. Paul stands and says, “I had a long past, but I obtained mercy.” Zacchaeus stands and says, “I could not fix myself, but salvation came to my house.” The thief stands and says, “I came at the last hour, and Jesus received me.” Every believer in Christ stands and says, “I am a new creature; old things are passed away.”

The message is not that sin does not matter. The message is that Jesus matters more. The message is not that consequences always disappear. The message is that condemnation can be removed. The message is not that we can save ourselves after enough effort. The message is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

# [Repeat with increasing emphasis.]

He saves sinners with a long past. He saves sinners who cannot fix themselves. He saves sinners at the last hour. He saves old sinners completely.

Somebody may feel too old in sin. Come. Somebody may feel too stained by the past. Come. Somebody may have tried religion without surrender. Come. Somebody may have promised to change and failed. Come. Somebody may be saved but still chained to shame over what Christ has already forgiven. Bring that shame to the cross and stop calling unclean what the blood has cleansed.

# Invitation

There are several invitations in this message.

First, if you have never trusted Jesus Christ, come to Him now. Do not wait until you understand everything. Do not wait until you feel worthy. You will never become worthy by waiting. Repent of sin and place your faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He died for sinners. He rose again. He saves all who come to Him in faith.

Second, if you have been religious but never redeemed, come. Church attendance cannot replace conversion. Knowing hymns cannot replace knowing Christ. Being baptized cannot save a heart that has never trusted the Savior. Do not hide behind family tradition, vocabulary, service, or familiarity. Be honest with God.

Third, if you are saved but carrying old shame, bring it to the Lord. Confess any present sin that needs confession. Make restitution where Scripture and wisdom require it. Seek help where bondage remains. But stop trying to pay a debt that Jesus has already paid. Walk in the light. Receive the mercy of God and begin again in obedience.

Fourth, if you are praying for an old sinner, come pray. Bring the name before God. Do not surrender the person to despair. Ask the Lord who stopped Saul, called Zacchaeus, and received the thief to reach the one you love.

# [Invitation appeal.]

The issue is not how long you have been a sinner. The issue is whether you will trust the Savior now.

Jesus says, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” That is His word, not mine. Old sins can come. Old failures can come. Old regrets can come. Old habits can be surrendered. Old shame can be laid down. The door of mercy is open because Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

God saves old sinners. He saves them now. He saves them fully. He saves them forever. Come to Jesus.

# Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, save the lost, restore the ashamed, strengthen the struggling, and give us courage to respond now. In Jesus' name, amen.