

FIRST TIMOTHY

Chapter 1

Greeting

**1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,
2 To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.**

1:1 *apostle*. One specially commissioned by Christ. (CSB)

Christ Jesus our hope. See Tit 2:13. (CSB)

In 1Tm, the Savior's title or office ("Christ") frequently precedes His personal name (Jesus). The difference between this and "Jesus Christ" is slight. (TLSB)

command. Paul's appointment as an apostle was a direct divine order (Ac 26:15–18). (TLSB)

hope. Expresses absolute certainty, not a mere wish. (CSB)

Hope objectively embodied in Jesus is not mere wishful thinking but confident expectation. (TLSB)

This superscription characterizes both content and tone of the entire letter. While Paul does not emphasize his apostolic authority with the force which he uses in the letter to the Galatians or with the firm insistence of the first epistle to the Corinthians, yet the stress is unmistakable: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the command of God, our Savior, and Christ Jesus, our Hope. Paul was an apostle, an ambassador, with a message, in obedience to the command or precept of the Lord. He considered himself under orders from the great Lord of the Church, and distinctly names God the Father and Christ Jesus as the two equal persons from whom the command proceeded. He was an official organ of Christ, an authorized representative of the Lord. It is to be noted that Paul calls God the Father our Savior, a designation which is altogether familiar to earnest Bible-readers, Luke 1, 47; Is. 12, 2; 45, 15. Cp. also 2 Cor. 5, 18, 19. God is the Source of our salvation; God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. At the same time Christ Jesus is our Hope. In His capacity as Redeemer, in His office, He is the object of the hope of our glory, Col. 1: 27. Through Him we have free access to the grace of God; in Him we confidently expect the future glory, Rom. 5. 1, 2. As we are even here on earth united with Christ through faith and are partakers of all His blessings and gifts, thus we also have the certain confidence of attaining to the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. (Kretzmann)

1:2 *Timothy*. A native of Lystra in modern Turkey; the son of a Gentile father and Christian mother (Ac 16:1; 2Tm 1:5). He toured with Paul and later served as a pastor in Ephesus. Paul invited him to join his missionary travels on his second visit to Lystra (Ac 16:3). (TLSB)

my true child in the faith. My spiritual son (see 1:18; 1Co 4:17; 2Ti 1:2; 2:1; Phm 10). (CSB)

An expression used in Jewish and Roman literature. As a spiritual son who confessed with Paul the same faith in Christ Jesus, Timothy would be expected to render loving service to his spiritual father by carrying out the directives in the Epistle. Paul uses this family expression most for those who represent him to others in the churches. Cf 1:18; 2Tm 2:1. (TLSB)

The address of Paul shows the cordial relationship which obtained between him and his young assistant: To Timothy, my true child in faith: Grace, mercy, peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus, our Lord. Timothy was Paul's spiritual child: he had begotten him through the Gospel on his first missionary journey; cp. Philemon, v.10; 1 Cor. 4, 1 5; Gal. 4, 19; through his preaching regeneration, a new spiritual life, had been wrought in Timothy. By virtue of the faith which had been kindled in him in conversion, Timothy was now a true son of Paul; he gave evidence of his father's nature and characteristics. The relationship of faith between the two men was much firmer, much more intimate, than one of blood ties could have been. The salutation of Paul, on account of this intimate fellowship, is therefore extremely cordial. He wants the grace of God, that wonderful blessing merited through the redemption of Christ and intended for poor, helpless sinners, to rest upon Timothy for his person and in his work. But this gift of God, in turn, flows from His mercy, from His sympathetic interest in the condition of fallen mankind, the condition which prompted Him to offer the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son. Quite naturally, finally, there follows from this state of affairs that there is peace between God and mankind through the blood of Christ. The perfect satisfaction which Christ rendered mitigated the wrath of God and removed the enmity between God and man. By faith the believer enters into this state of reconciliation with God. By virtue of the redemption of Christ, which he appropriates through faith, he no longer looks upon God as his enemy, as the just and holy Judge, but as his true Friend, as His dear Father. But these three gifts of grace, mercy, and peace proceed not only from God the Father, who thereby reveals His fatherly heart, but also from Christ Jesus, our Lord. The eternal counsel of love resolved upon in the Godhead was carried into execution in time through the active and passive obedience of the Redeemer. He, therefore, the Lord of the Church, dispenses the gifts of His love with a free hand, through faith, not as a subordinate of the Father, but as the Father's equal from eternity, who donates to men from His own rich store. (Kretzmann)

mercy. To be merciful means to have pity on those who suffer, to forbear from inflicting punishment. Whatever may betide us, let us never think that God is cold and indifferent to us, but He has a warm heart for us and His mercies are new every morning (Lam 3:22, 23) (Koehler notes for the Small Catechism)

Psalm 145:9, "His tender mercies are over all His works."

peace. Grace is the undeserved mercy and kindness we receive from God our Father through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peace is the restored relationship with God our Father through Jesus. (LL)

Grace was the Gentile greeting word. Peace was the Jewish greeting word coming from the OT Shalom [It is a happiness where one's welfare is secure. It wished prosperity in body and soul to the person being greeted.] In our worship service we use phrases like "The Lord be with you – And also with you" and "The peace of the Lord be with you always – And also with you" in the liturgy. Preachers use it at the beginning of the sermon. It is both an affirmation of the oneness of Christ's body, the church, and the affirmation of the favor which God bestows of his own choosing which is far beyond what we deserve.

1:1–2 The work of the Gospel ministry carried out by Paul and Timothy flows from God's command. The words they speak are His words, not their own. Their competence for ministry comes from God, who called them to His service. Today, we should not judge the effectiveness of those called to serve as Gospel ministers only according to their personality traits or other outward characteristics. Ministers should instead be regarded according to how faithfully they proclaim the Gospel message entrusted to them. The Lord Jesus has called ministers to be His representatives in our lives. The effectiveness of the Word they proclaim and the Absolution they pronounce rests on the power and authority of the Savior Himself. • Lord Jesus, teach us to regard the servants of Your Church not according to their individual strengths and weaknesses but as Your spokesmen, called to serve sinners with Your gifts of forgiveness and life. Amen.

Warning Against False Teachers

3 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, 4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. 5 The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 6 Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, 7 desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. 8 Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, 11 in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

1:3–11 In this section, along with 4:1–8; 6:3–5, 20–21, Paul warns against heretical teachers in the Ephesian church. They are characterized by (1) teaching false doctrines (1:3; 6:3); (2) teaching Jewish myths (Tit 1:14); (3) wanting to be teachers of the OT law (1:7); (4) building up endless, far-fetched, fictitious stories based on obscure genealogical points (1:4; 4:7; Tit 3:9); (5) being conceited (1:7; 6:4); (6) being argumentative (1:4; 6:4; 2Ti 2:23; Tit 3:9); (7) using talk that was meaningless (1:6) and foolish (2Ti 2:23; Tit 3:9); (8) not knowing what they were talking about (1:7; 6:4); (9) teaching ascetic practices (4:3); and (10) using their positions of religious leadership for personal financial gain (6:5). These heretics probably were forerunners of the Gnostics (6:20–21; see Introduction to 1 John: Gnosticism). (CSB)

1:3 *when I was going to Macedonia.* Since this incident is not recorded in Acts, it probably occurred after Ac 28, between Paul's first and second Roman imprisonments. (CSB)

remain in Ephesus. The Ephesian church was well established by this time. Paul had had an extensive ministry there on his third missionary journey about eight years earlier (Ac 19:1–20:1). After his release from prison in Rome (after Ac 28), he revisited the church, leaving Timothy in charge while he journeyed on to Macedonia. (CSB)

Paul likely made this decision during his fourth missionary journey, following his release from prison in Rome. 1Tm was written when it became clear that Paul's return to Ephesus might be delayed (3:14–15). Ephesus was the site of Paul's longest missionary tenure (Ac 19–20), it was a large seaport city on the western coast of modern Turkey. (TLSB)

Without further introductory remarks the apostle here takes up one of the most urgent matters that demanded his attention. So great is his anxiety to have Timothy take up at once the matter broached by him that he does not finish his sentence: Even as I besought thee to abide at Ephesus, while I journeyed into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some men to teach no strange doctrines nor to apply themselves to myths and endless genealogies, such as cause questionings rather than stewardship toward God (so do). At a meeting with Timothy, which had probably taken place at Miletus when Paul was on his way from Crete to Macedonia, or when he was making the journey directly to Philippi, after the first imprisonment, the apostle had given this charge to Timothy. It seems that the latter had found his position in Ephesus too difficult and had made some attempt to convince the apostle that he was not the man for the position. But Paul had not agreed with him, bidding him rather persevere, hold out, continue in his work. He did not come to the assistance of his young fellow-laborer, but continued his journey into Macedonia. Note: Difficulties in the work of the Church often tend to discourage younger pastors, and in

such a case a word of encouragement from an older and more experienced pastor may serve to keep an important post supplied. (Kretzmann)

charge. A military term that implies the giving of strict orders in an authoritative manner. (TLSB)

different doctrine. A Gk term likely coined by Paul, as it appears again only in 6:3. It includes any teaching that was contrary to what Paul taught. (TLSB)

1:4 *myths and endless genealogies*. Probably mythical stories built on OT history (genealogies) that later developed into intricate Gnostic philosophical systems. (CSB)

myths. Fictitious, legendary stories that are of no spiritual value. *endless genealogies*. Probably those found in the OT that had become a source for speculation and the invention of allegorical tales, which had all but replaced the Gospel in the minds of some. *stewardship from God*. The work of administering the Gospel was to be carried forward by faithfully teaching sound doctrine.

Instead of yielding to Timothy's wishes, the apostle had rather given him some specific commands regarding certain people in Ephesus that were probably the reason for his discouraged attitude. These people were to be told not to teach a doctrine different from that which had been delivered by Christ and the apostles, different from that which Paul had taught. It seems that there were indications of an unhealthy movement within the congregation. Certain men, who may have been, as Luther suggests, very able men and pupils of the apostles themselves, were beginning to emphasize secondary doctrines and various questions which drew the minds away from the central doctrine of redemption and justification. The general tendency of their teaching seems to have been Judaizing, and they insisted on the necessity of the Law for man's salvation. 1) The apostle's prophecy, given to the elders of Ephesus, was being fulfilled now. Paul's apprehension was aroused especially by the fact that these teachers were paying such decided attention to myths, rabbinical legends, and genealogies as they were found in the Old Testament and in tradition. It was a favorite pastime of the Jewish teachers of those days to be engaged in crafty speculations in genealogical tables, upon which they placed a great deal of weight. But discussions concerning these questions were endless, infinite, they could not lead to a definite conclusion. Instead of satisfying minds that were anxious for the knowledge of the truth they caused questionings, violent disputings. The number of Jewish rabbinical authorities being so large and their schools differing widely in their understanding of Scripture and tradition, all discussions about the matters introduced by these Judaistic teachers were bound to result in greater divergencies in the congregation than ever. And these vain disputes took the place of the stewardship of God in faith. God's activity as steward of His own mysteries which He carries out through His ministers realizes its object in faith by which people are added to the Christian Church. Naturally, the work of God's spiritual economy is hampered or outright hindered if preachers within the Church replace the old Gospel-truth with subtleties of various kinds, purporting, at the same time, to be the acme of wisdom. Note: This text fits the activity of many so-called ministers in our day, since many of them apparently have a veritable mania to discover doctrines and topics which have only the most remote connection with the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. Thus did Timothy receive his orders to combat the Judaizing teachers and to serve the cause of the Church of Christ. (Kretzmann)

1:5 *charge of love* – The apostle, however, is not satisfied with mere criticism and condemnation, desiring rather that people should learn the way of true sanctification: But the purpose of the Law is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith. The end and purpose of the entire content of Christian doctrine, of the preaching of the New Testament, particularly in so far as it contains precept and admonition, is love, John 13, 34: 1 Cor. 13. The apostle designates the fruit of the tree, which serves as a proof for its life and fruitfulness. He therefore also modifies the term "love" by adding that it must be out of a pure heart, a heart free from all impure motives and objects; out of a good conscience, one that is

conscious of its justification through the redemption of Christ and desires to serve the Lord in humble love; out of sincere faith, a faith free from hypocrisy, based with definite confidence upon the Savior, no vain and empty imagination, but spiritual light and spiritual life. All this flows out of the proper preaching of sin and grace. (Kretzmann)

from a pure heart ... sincere faith. These fruits of faith in Jesus Christ cannot be produced by false doctrines, myths, or genealogies. (TLSB)

1:6 *Certain persons.* Probably those first mentioned in v 3. (TLSB)

vain discussion. Idle chatter or useless talk. (TLSB)

Having thus indicated briefly wherein the ministry of the New Testament properly consists, the apostle directs his attention again to the errorists: From which certain individuals have erred and have turned aside to empty talking, desiring to be masters of Scripture, though they understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm. The men to whom the apostle here refers had swerved aside, they had missed the mark; they may originally have had in mind love and a good conscience and faith, but because they followed their own ideas as to the attainment of these virtues instead of being directed only by the Word of God, they had gone in an altogether false direction and landed far from the goal. (Kretzmann)

1:7 *teachers of the law.* This technical term from Judaism is typically used to describe teachers of the Mosaic Law as contained in the Pentateuch. (TLSB)

without understanding – By placing their historical and genealogical speculations into the center of teaching instead of the simple Gospel-truths, they had lost sight of their object. And the next step naturally was that they lost their way entirely. They ended up with vain jangling, empty talk, discourses without sense. Cp. Titus 1, 10. They desired indeed to be masters of Scripture; they thought, in their own mind, that they were penetrating into its truths more deeply than the apostle. But Paul's verdict in their case is that they had no idea what they were really talking about, that they did not possess the faintest notion as to what their affirmations really amounted to. Their own assertions with regard to the Law and its purposes were not clear to them; their arguments, intended to make an impression upon the unlearned, were not understood by themselves. Note: This is invariably the case when men despise the foolishness of preaching, as found in the Gospel, and substitute human wisdom. All the so-called moral Christianity and the social gospel of our day belongs into this category, and the discourses that are delivered in its name, and the books that are printed for its propagation, reflect only too well the truth of Paul's judgment. (Kretzmann)

1:8 *the law is good.* See Ro 7:7–12. (CSB)

Because it is given by God, the Law is intrinsically good. It must, however, be used “lawfully,” i.e., according to God's intent. (TLSB)

Far from decrying the Law and deprecating its continued use in the Church, the apostle is careful to place his right knowledge in opposition to the false teaching of the errorists: We know, however, that the Law is admirable, if one makes a lawful use of it. The apostle chooses such words as bring out his position properly and ward off the objection that his language does not agree with his policy. That the Mosaic Law, the Moral Law, is good, acceptable, that it is of real value in the world, the apostle says also in other instances, e.g., Rom. 7, 12. 14. 18 its contents correspond to the highest demands which can be made with reference to a law, namely, that it be above all justified criticism. But the Law must now also be used lawfully, in accordance with its object. Only then is the Law used properly, when it is taught for the purpose of working knowledge of sin, of making men conscious of their guilt and damnable-ness. It is not

there for the purpose of affording occasion for various idle questions and speculations or for teaching righteousness through works. (Kretzmann)

1:9–10 The list of sins shows how God’s Law is properly used, namely, to bring sinners to contrition and repentance. Each of the sins listed by Paul closely corresponds to God’s Law as found in the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1–17). (TLSB)

1:9 *law ... for the lawless.* “Yet this is not to be understood in a simplistic way, as though the justified are to live without Law. God’s Law has been written in their heart (Romans 2:15). Also a law was given to the first man immediately after his creation (Genesis 2:15–17): He was to conduct himself according to this law. What St. Paul means is that the curse of the Law cannot burden those who have been reconciled to God through Christ. Nor must the Law confuse the regenerate with its coercion, for they have pleasure in God’s Law in the inner man (Romans 7:22)” (FC SD VI 5). St. Bernard of Clairvaux: “The law promulgated in fear by a spirit of slavery is one thing, and that given sweetly and gently by the spirit of liberty is another” (SLSB, p 200). (TLSB)

The apostle now illustrates his meaning by naming such sins as demand the application of the Law: Knowing this (when every teacher for his own person has this knowledge), that for the just man the Law is not set forth. This is a sweeping statement concerning the Moral Law, and one which puts the doctrine of justification into the very center of Christian preaching. He that is justified in Christ through faith and by virtue of the merit of Christ is acknowledged by God as just, is no longer under the Law, for Christ is the end of the Law to them that believe, Rom. 10, 4; 6, 14. 15; Gal. 2, 21; 3, 21. 4 person justified in this manner is clothed with the righteousness of Christ and no longer is subject to the condemnation of the Law. The Law, as demanding a perfect fulfillment, no longer exists for him. “But the meaning of St. Paul is that the Law cannot burden with its curse those who have been reconciled to God through Christ; nor must it vex the regenerate with its coercion, because they have pleasure in God’s Law after the inner man.” 3) To a believer in his capacity as Christian, as justified before God, the Law, as Law, shall no longer be applied. And evangelical admonitions that have the sanctification of the believers in view must never assume the character of legal driving. (Kretzmann)

1:10 *enslavers.* Kidnappers, involved in illegal slave trade. (TLSB)

sound doctrine. Lit, “healthy teaching.” A phrase used by Paul only in the Pastoral Epistles, it implies that the so-called teachers of the law (v 7) in Ephesus were peddling unhealthy and diseased doctrines. (TLSB)

But the case is different with the unbelievers, with the unregenerate. The Law is indeed given, and exists in its full force, for the lawless, for those that deny the validity of the Law and serve their own lusts and desires; for refractory people, unruly rebels that resent restrictions of every kind; for irreverent, that deliberately deny all respect to God; for sinners, such as are continually engaged in acts of evil against God and man; for irreligious, who consider nothing holy and refuse to know anything of the dignity of duty and obligation; for profane, that deliberately tread everything holy under foot. Their sins profane the name of God and destroy all morality. There is, however, not only a general disposition toward evil on the part of the unregenerate, but they become guilty also of specific transgressions. The Law is given for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, children that so far forget themselves as not only to omit the respect and reverence due the parents, but actually mistreat them brutally, and under circumstances do not shrink back from the last terrible step, that of taking the life of them that gave them life. As the Fourth and Fifth Commandments are both included here, so the apostle names the transgressors of the Fifth Commandment separately: murderers. As violators of the Sixth Commandment are mentioned adulterers and sodomites, people that either in a natural or in an unnatural manner abuse their fellow-men for the

sake of gratifying their sexual lust. Cp. Rom. 1, 27; 1 Cor. 6, 9. The kidnapers mentioned by the apostle include all who exploit other men and women for their own selfish ends, especially such as abducted girls and boys for the purpose of selling them into slavery. As transgressors of the Eighth Commandment Paul names liars, such as deliberately speak falsehoods in order to harm their neighbor; and perjurers, that do not hesitate to swear in corroboration of a lie, or deliberately break a word given under oath. All other sins the apostle includes in the expression: And if there is anything else opposed to the sound doctrine, according to the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. The expression “healthy, wholesome doctrine” is peculiar to the Pastoral Letters. Evidently the apostle is speaking of the Christian doctrine as a whole, of the teaching concerning sin and grace. All sins are contrary to this doctrine, for they indicate the corruption of human nature, they are external symptoms for the illness of the soul. Against such transgressions the proclamation of the Law is directed, such violations it condemns. By applying the Law in its proper manner, the disease should be uncovered, the tumor of the soul exposed. Only then will it be possible to put a person in the condition that accords with the wholesome doctrine of the apostle: the Law having shown the disease, the Gospel brings the remedy, health and strength. (Kretzmann)

1:11 *gospel*. The Good News that we are saved eternally from the Law’s condemnation through faith in Jesus. It is the only means by which sinners can be cleansed and saved. (TLSB)

blessed God. God is described as “blessed” in the NT only here and in 6:15. He is the source of all blessedness, which He gives to believers through the “sound doctrine” of the gospel. (TLSB)

entrusted. See 6:20; 1Co 9:17; Gal 2:7; 1Th 2:4; 2Ti 1:12, 14; 2:2. (CSB)

As one of the apostles, Paul had been especially entrusted with the Gospel. (TLSB)

So the apostle closes this paragraph by summarizing his knowledge regarding the wholesome doctrine entrusted to him. He has the knowledge, as every true teacher in the Christian Church should have it, on the basis of the Gospel, namely, that the Law is not made, does not exist, for a righteous man. The apostle wants to distinguish absolutely between the teaching of the Law and the proclamation of grace; for the one class of men, for the justified as such, he wants only the Gospel; for the other class, the unrighteous, he wants only the Law. His Gospel, moreover, is a Gospel of glory; it contains and transmits all the gifts of grace through which God is glorified in the believers. But the perfection of this glory will be reached in the life above, when our existence for eternal ages will redound to the glory of God, of Him who is blessed and perfectly happy in Himself and will make us partakers of this eternal happiness. With the news of this grace, of these blessings, the apostle has been entrusted. He considers his office a wonderful privilege, which no natural inclination caused him to seek, but which he now, in the full consciousness of its dignity and power, defends with all warmth, and which causes him to voice his heartfelt gratitude. (Kretzmann)

1:3–11 This Epistle was written to stop the teaching of false doctrine among the Ephesian churches and to promote the teaching of sound doctrine. Our sinful nature often leads us to be unconcerned about the doctrines God has given us in His Word. When this happens, we are guilty of being poor stewards of the Gospel. Yet, in the good news of Jesus Christ, we are given a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith—all of which enable us to receive God’s gift of sound doctrine with thanksgiving and eagerness. • Dear Lord, apply Your Law to our hearts, that we might recognize our sins and be brought to repentance. Give us a love for the healthy teaching of Your Gospel, that we might be faithful stewards of all You have entrusted to us. Amen. (TLSB)

12 I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, 13 though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. 17 To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. 18 This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, 19 holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, 20 among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

1:12 *I thank him...given me strength* – Paul knows who he was which comes out in verse 13 and therefore gives God all the credit for anything he is able to accomplish. Christ enabled Paul, particularly in the act of his call, to be an apostle.

1 Corinthians 15:9-10, “⁹For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”

Galatians 1:15-17, “¹⁵But when God, who set me apart from birth^a and called me by his grace, was pleased¹⁶ to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man,¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.”

Ephesians 3:7-8, “⁷I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

judged me faithful. The Lord Jesus considered Paul faithful even before Paul was able to demonstrate his faithfulness as a minister of the Gospel. Cf Ac 9:15–16. (TLSB)

service. As an apostle. (TLSB)

1:13 *I was a blasphemer, persecutor and an insolent opponent.* See Ac 9:1; 22:4–5, 19; 26:10–11. (CSB)

Paul’s own apostolate is the clearest Gospel of divine mercy written into the life of undeserving mankind.

Before his conversion, Paul (then known as Saul) had actively persecuted the followers of Jesus (Ac 7:58–8:3). Yet, in his zeal to ravage the Church, Paul was, in fact, persecuting the Lord Jesus Himself (Ac 9:4–5). (TLSB)

I acted ignorantly – This did not make him guiltless, of course, but he had not placed himself outside the sphere of Jesus’ prayer from the cross (“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” – Luke 23:34) by deliberate rejection of the truth, as false teachers do.

Paul was the passive recipient of mercy from the Lord, whose mercy is always undeserved and unearned—it can be received only as a gift. Paul’s admission that he acted ignorantly is not offered as an excuse for his sin. It shows, rather, that he did not willfully reject the Savior because he was ignorant that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. (TLSB)

1:14 *the grace of our Lord overflowed for me* – Mercy is equated with grace. God’s grace is abundant. See his grace in Christ Jesus. The abundant grace of God in Christ hinges on his coming into the world to save sinners.

Paul’s heart was changed by God’s overflowing grace. *grace*. God’s undeserved favor shown to the guilty sinner. *overflowed*. Though he regarded himself as the foremost of sinners, the Lord’s grace for Paul was poured out in abundance. (TLSB)

1:15 *the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance*. A clause found nowhere else in the NT but used five times in the Pastorals (here; 3:1; 4:9; 2Ti 2:11; Tit 3:8) to identify a key saying. (CSB)

Perhaps a restatement of what Jesus proclaimed concerning Himself in the Gospels (cf Lk 19:10). (TLSB)

came into the world. At His incarnation, Christ entered the realm in which human beings live and sin (Php 2:5–8). (TLSB)

of whom i am the foremost – Paul calls himself the chief of sinners. We know that we are not immune to the vile virus ourselves. We, too, are lost and condemned sinners. We are seriously bound for Satan’s fire.

Paul led persecution against the Lord and His followers. The present tense of the verb indicates that Paul’s self-designation remains valid, even though he has been fully absolved and saved by Christ Jesus. Christians do not cease to sin until the life of the world to come. In this life, we remain saints (people made holy through faith in Jesus) and sinners. (TLSB)

1:16 *for this reason*. In v 13b, Paul describes God’s mercy in terms of what God did for him; in v 16, that same mercy is described in terms of the example it set for others. (TLSB)

display his perfect patience – Christ showed his patience and mercy over sin in Paul for the sake of others who would come to faith. There’s a pattern to behold! God’s mercy meets of misery; Christ comes to save. God hid his face from our sins in Christ, and through Christ God blotted out all our iniquities. In other words, God pursues us with his mercy. So eager is God to catch up to us with his blessings that he ran out of breath doing it. He became a breathless, lifeless body on a cross so that we run-away people might have a clean slate and come back home with the Father who chased us in his Son.

When God delays judgment against sin, this patience is an occasion for repentance and salvation (2Pt 3:9, 15). (TLSB)

example. God would also graciously deal with other sinners who would repent and believe in the future. (TLSB)

1:17 *King of ages*. The past, present, and future are under His control. (TLSB)

immortal. Immune to corruption and decay. (TLSB)

invisible. Jesus says that God is “spirit” (Jn 4:24). He is the Maker “of all things visible and invisible” (Nicene Creed). (TLSB)

only God. Even as Christians confess the divinity of Jesus as the Son of God, they worship one God, the Holy Trinity (Rm 3:29–30; 1Co 8:4–6; 1Tm 2:5). (TLSB)

1:18 *prophecies previously made about you.* In the early church God revealed his will in various matters through prophets (see Ac 13:1–3, where prophets had an active role in the sending of Paul and Barnabas on their mission to the Gentiles). In Timothy’s case this prophecy may have occurred at the time of or before his ordination (4:14), perhaps about 12 years earlier on Paul’s second missionary journey (see Ac 16:3). Prophecies about Timothy seem to have pointed to the significant leadership role he was to have in the church. (CSB)

Occasions when God’s Word was spoken to Timothy, perhaps concerning his call to serve as Gospel minister. John Chrysostom : “What is ‘by prophecy’? By the Holy Spirit. For prophecy is not only the telling of things future, but also of the present.... To elevate him, and prepare him to be sober and watchful, he reminds him by whom he was chosen and ordained, as if he had said, ‘God has chosen you’ ” (NPNF 1 13:423). (TLSB)

by them. The prophecies from God concerning Timothy would sustain and direct him as he carried out his charge. (TLSB)

good warfare. Timothy is charged to silence those in Ephesus teaching different doctrines. Paul’s military vocabulary implies that, in the discharge of his duties, Timothy will suffer hardships and be expected to render faithfulness to those in authority over him. (TLSB)

1:19 *holding faith and a good conscience.* Timothy’s work would require faith in God’s prophecies, by which he would wage the good warfare. Fully relying on God’s Word would naturally result in a good conscience for Timothy. (TLSB)

this. The prophecies (Word) of God. (TLSB)

a shipwreck of their faith. A graphic depiction of what happens to the faith of those who thrust aside the prophecies (Word) of God. Before Paul wrote this Epistle, he had been shipwrecked several times (cf 2Co 11:25; Ac 27:39–44). (TLSB)

1:20 *Hymenaeus.* See 2Ti 2:17–18. (CSB)

Alexander. Perhaps the Alexander of 2Ti 4:14 (but see note there). (CSB)

handed over to Satan. The reference is to church discipline (see note on Mt 18:17). Paul had excluded these two men from the church, which was considered a sanctuary from Satan’s power. Out in the world, away from the fellowship and care of the church, they would be “taught” (the word means basically “to discipline”) not to blaspheme. The purpose of such drastic action was more remedial than punitive. For a similar situation see 1Co 5:5, 13; see also note on 1Co 5:5. (CSB)

Formal expulsion or excommunication from the Christian community. Cf 1Co 5:3–5, 9–13. (TLSB)

learn not to blaspheme. The goal of excommunication is that the sinner be led to repentance and be restored to the faith previously rejected. Cf 2Co 2:5–11. (CSB)

1:12–20 “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (v 15). This truth is the beating heart of all our hope and joy. God’s patience and mercy are at work to save all sinners, whether they are blinded by ignorance (like Paul) or have actively rejected the faith (like Hymenaeus and Alexander). Our conscience may sometimes be plagued by doubts and regrets. But if God’s desire to save sinners could extend even to Paul, who actively persecuted Jesus’ followers, and who is foremost among sinners, then it can certainly extend to us as well. God’s mercy and patience for us is demonstrated at the cross, where Jesus died as the substitute for all sinners and won eternal life for all who believe. • “Almighty God, You turned the heart of him who persecuted the Church and by his preaching caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world. Grant us ever to rejoice in the saving light of Your Gospel and, following the example of the apostle Paul, to spread it to the ends of the earth.” Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p 954) (TLSB)