

04. 1 Timothy 1:12 - 2:7



1 Timothy 1:12

I am grateful to the Messiah Jesus our Lord, the source of my strength, that he judged me trustworthy and appointed me to his service

Paul is expressing his gratitude to Jesus. He hopes to be faithful, but he marvels at the fact that Jesus chose to trust him with the commission of proclaiming the gospel. He speaks of himself as being in the ‘service’ (διακονία) of Jesus, for he has been chosen to carry out a divine service as Jesus’ ambassador.

1 Timothy 1:13

even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief

In what is perhaps his earliest extant letter, his Letter to the Galatians, Paul wrote: ‘You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it’ (Galatians 1:13). It is a subject that he comes back to a number of times. Here he speaks of himself as a ‘**blasphemer**’, not in the sense that he took God’s name in vain, but in the sense that he was insulting God by contravening God’s will. He came to see his brash, youthful, zeal as **arrogant** (ὕβριστής). He was so sure of himself that he neglected to listen for God’s inspiration. He is grateful that he ‘**received mercy**’ (see 1:2).

1 Timothy 1:14

the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in the Messiah Jesus.

Behind verse fourteen stands not only Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, but a lifetime of intimacy with Jesus through more than thirty years of committed service as an apostle. It has been a life of **faith**, a life of **love**, and Paul knows that it is not his faith and his love that has carried him through the years. God graciously poured into Paul's heart the very faith and love of Jesus himself: 'It is no longer I who live. It is the Messiah who lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, loving me and giving himself for me' (Galatians 2:20). All of this and more is captured in one of Paul's favourite expressions, 'in the Messiah Jesus'. Paul stresses the abundant overflowing of grace in typical Pauline fashion, by prefixing ὑπερ to the verb πλεονάζω ('to fill '**grace overflowed**' (ὑπερπλεονάζω).

1 Timothy 1:15

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that the Messiah Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the foremost.

The gospels record Jesus as saying: ‘I have come to call not the righteous but sinners’ (Mark 2:17), and ‘the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost’ (Luke 19:10). When Paul wrote to the Romans: ‘God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners the Messiah died for us’ (Romans 8:6), he was writing from his own personal experience. Likewise when he wrote: ‘where sin increased, grace abounded all the more’ (Romans 5:20).

1 Timothy 1:16

For that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus the Messiah might display the most magnanimous love, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life.

If God has shown such mercy to him in spite of the gravity of his sin, no one need feel excluded from God's love. Paul stresses God's magnanimous love (μακροθυμία).. At the same time, being love, it requires our welcome in faith. This is something stressed by Paul when he writes: 'Do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realise that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?' (Romans 2:4). The memory of such superabundant love draws from Paul a prayer of praise.

1 Timothy 1:17

To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:18

I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you

Though he is addressing Timothy, Paul is writing for the community. He wants to remind them of the divine origin of Timothy's call and of the authority which he exercises among them, in accordance with which Timothy is to act against those responsible for heterodox teaching. Paul refers to 'prophecies made earlier about you'. We can perhaps find a parallel in his own experience as recalled by Luke. Having spoken of Paul's ministry in Antioch, Luke continues; 'While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them' (Acts 13:2). Timothy's calling, and perhaps even his position of leadership in Ephesus, was something that was discerned in prayer. He and the community can be confident that it is an expression of God's will as revealed through Christian prophets.

1 Timothy 1:18

so that by following them you may fight the good fight

In the context of having to oppose false teaching, Paul uses one of his favourite metaphors, likening the ministry to a military campaign: 'We live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey the Messiah' (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

1 Timothy 1:19-20

having faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith; among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Timothy is to have ‘faith and a good conscience’, for it is these, as Paul has already stated (see 1:5) that support love, and it is love alone that gives the power of the Spirit to whatever means Timothy uses against the enemies of the truth. If the methods chosen by Timothy lack love they lack truth and are no better than what he is opposing.

To ‘**turn over to Satan**’ seems to mean to declare solemnly that the men concerned have, by their behaviour, placed themselves outside the church. Such a declaration is made in the hope that ‘**they may learn not to blaspheme**’. They have been taking the Lord’s name in vain by teaching in his name what is not true – something of which Paul has already accused himself (see 1:13).

1 Timothy 2:1

First of all I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone

Paul is writing that the Christian community ‘**may know how one ought to behave in the household of God**’ (3:15). He begins with **prayer**, for our relationship with God shapes all other relationships. Only a community which is in touch with the religious experience of its members and gives expression to this experience can discern and respond to God’s will. Paul will go on to speak about the mediatory role of Jesus, a role which includes intercessory prayer, for it is Jesus ‘who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us’ (Romans 8:34) before his Father. Since the church is his body, living by his Spirit, the prayer of the church is the prayer of Jesus in which each Christian is caught up into Jesus’ own prayer. Jesus living in us is most intimately experienced when the Christian community assembles in prayer.

I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings
be made for everyone

Always the missionary, Paul's concern is for the proclamation of the gospel which has been entrusted to him (see 1:11). An essential dimension of the gospel is its 'catholicity': it is for 'everyone'. It is likely that the Jewish Christians who were causing trouble in the community were not in favour of the Gentile mission. Furthermore, their speculation about genealogies (see 1:4) points to a narrow perception as to who is and who is not to be saved.

1 Timothy 2:2

pray for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

It may be that Paul is concerned that the Christian community is being drawn into the growing tension between the Jews and Rome. The Christian communities are not to be aligned with Jewish nationalism, and this must be clear for all to see.

Paul recognises the important role played by civil government and urges prayer especially for those in influential positions in society: prayer that they will govern according to God's will, and prayer that they will come to the knowledge of the truth (compare Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1).

God does not need our prayer to be persuaded to pour out all the grace that people need for salvation. It is we who need prayer to open our hearts and the hearts of others to welcome the grace that is being offered.

so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

Prayer is an expression of our communion with God, which Paul calls ‘**godliness**’ (εὐσέβεια). Though he speaks of ‘ungodliness’ (ἀσέβεια) in his Letter to the Romans (see 1:18, 4:5, 5:6, 11:26), he does not speak of ‘godliness’ in his earlier correspondence, perhaps because of its connection with pagan religious cult and its political overtones demonstrated by the use of Σεβαστός. to translate the Latin ‘Augustus’ (see Acts 25:21,25; 27:1). However εὐσέβεια (Latin: pietas) was considered of the utmost importance in the Roman world, as it consists in an attitude of reverence for the gods shown in religious worship and in respect for the order that is sanctioned by the gods. It is close to our concept of ‘religion’.

Though the Hebrew ‘fear of the Lord’ is normally translated literally in the Septuagint, in three texts it is translated by εὐσέβεια (Proverbs 1:7; Isaiah 11:2; 33:6). The spirit given to the Davidic king includes ‘the spirit of knowledge and εὐσέβεια (fear of the Lord)’ (Isaiah 11:2). King Josiah is praised because he ‘kept his heart fixed on the Lord; in lawless times he made godliness (εὐσέβεια) prevail’ (Sirach 49:3). The Jewish authors were attempting to build a bridge between the Jewish faith and the surrounding culture. We might surmise that Paul is doing the same and that it became part of Paul’s missionary vocabulary during his time in Rome. Always the missionary, he saw the importance of ‘baptising’ the Roman ‘pietas’, by directing it to the true, living God as revealed in Jesus. Luke makes the same connection in his account of the healing of the cripple at the temple gate (see Acts 3:12), as well as in his account of the conversion of the Roman centurion (see Acts 10:2,7).

‘**Reverence**’(σεμνότης) is closely related to εὐσέβεια. It speaks of a life that avoids dissipation and distraction because of an awareness of the sacred. The influence exercised by those in positions of authority in the state makes prayer for them especially important. Here, however, the emphasis is on prayer being offered ‘**for everyone**’ – prayer of all kinds ,including prayer for mercy, prayer for needs, and prayer of thanksgiving.

1 Timothy 2:3-4

This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

If we pray for everyone, our heart will be open to demonstrate to everyone the love that God gives us for them in prayer. True love must be universal because ‘God our Saviour desires everyone to be saved’. Paul’s logic could not be simpler. It has been Paul’s conviction from the start that his apostolic commission is to proclaim God’s offer of salvation to all the nations.

Paul declares that those who are hindering his ministry ‘displease God and oppose everyone by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved’ (1 Thessalonians 2:15-16). Everyone who responds in faith to God’s offer of grace in Jesus, everyone who lives by the Spirit of Jesus, shares in some way in this same ministry. This is why Paul exhorts them that their love increase, not only for each other, but for all (1 Thessalonians 3:12), and that they do good to all (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

In his correspondence with the Corinthian church, Paul insists that God has enlightened them, and so their mission to the world is to 'give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus the Messiah (2 Corinthians 4:6). It is God's will, through the spread of the gospel, to draw all to this experience, and so Paul admonishes them: 'Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of the Messiah' (1 Corinthians 10:32 - 11:1).

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul rejoices that ‘the gospel is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world’ (1:6). The heart of the gospel is Jesus: his revelation of God, and the life that he makes possible for all. ‘Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in the Messiah (1:28).

The letter to the Ephesians stresses the centrality of Jesus in God’s eternal design for the salvation of the world. The nations are called to be ‘sharers in the promise in the Messiah Jesus through the gospel’ (Ephesians 3:6). God’s design is to draw everything into unity under Christ as head.

To the Philippians he writes: ‘I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing the Messiah Jesus my Lord’ (3:8). The mission of the Philippians was to ‘hold fast to the word of life’ (2:16), to treasure the knowledge and intimate communion with Jesus which they experienced, and to ‘shine like stars in the world’ (2:15).

When , therefore, Paul speaks of ‘**God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth**’ (2:4), he is giving expression to his fundamental insight into the universality of God’s love. He is continuing to carry out his apostolic commission given him by ‘Jesus by the command of God our Saviour’ (1 Timothy 1:1) to preach the gospel of that love.

It is typical of the Pastoral Letters that Paul would connect salvation so closely with coming to ‘**the knowledge of the truth**’. We recall the way in which he introduced himself and the main theme of his letter in writing to Titus: ‘Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus the Messiah, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness’ (Titus 1:1).

The ‘**truth**’, for Paul, is the truth of who God really is, and what God’s will for us is, as revealed in Jesus. Heterodox teaching, to the extent that it does not proclaim the truth, is not a medium of grace or of salvation. By planting bad seed it mixes weeds with the wheat (see Matthew 13:25). The weeds can strangle the young plants, so that the good seed comes to nothing. Heterodox teaching, if not checked, can ruin the harvest.

1 Timothy 2:5

For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, the Messiah Jesus, himself human

The fact that salvation is meant for all rests ultimately on monotheism: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone’ (Deuteronomy 6:4). The fact that salvation comes to all through Jesus rests on the place of Jesus in God’s providential plan (οἰκονομία, 1:4) for the saving of sinners (see 1:15): ‘There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus the Messiah, through whom are all things and through whom we exist’ (1Corinthians 8:6). ‘All things have been created through the Messiah; and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things’ (Colossians 1:16,20).

1 Timothy 2:6

Jesus gave himself a ransom for all. This was attested in his own time

In his Letter to the Galatians Paul states that Jesus ‘gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father’ (Galatians 1:4). Paul experienced this as being true for him personally: ‘the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, loving me and giving himself for me’ (Galatians 2:20). It is true for all the nations. As Paul urges: ‘live in love, as the Messiah loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God’ (Ephesians 5:2). In Jesus ‘the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all’ (Titus 2:11). Paul writes to the Corinthians: ‘As all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in the Messiah (1Corinthians 15:22). The salvation and the knowledge of the truth that God intends for the whole world is what God has revealed and offered to us through Jesus.

The Second Vatican Council has this to say: 'By the Incarnation, Jesus, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each human being ... If we follow him, life and death are made holy and acquire a new meaning ... Sharing in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, the Christian, strengthened by hope, is moving forward to the risen life. All this holds true not only for Christians but for everyone of good will in whose heart grace is invisibly active. Christ died for all, and all people are called to one and the same divine destiny. We must hold, therefore, that the Spirit of God offers to everyone the possibility of sharing, in a way known to God, in the mystery of Christ's dying and rising. Such is the nature and the greatness of the mystery of human beings as seen in the light of Christian revelation ... Christ has risen again, destroying death by his death, and has given life abundantly to us so that, living the life of God's Son, we may cry out, in the Spirit: Abba! Father! (G&S n.22).

I Timothy 2:7

For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.'

Paul has just instructed Timothy to see that the churches under his care come together and pray to God for everyone, because 'God desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (2:4). God attested this through the revelation made through Christ Jesus 'who gave himself a ransom for all'. God did so 'in his own time' (καιρός). Paul is looking beyond time as a measure of change in our world. He is looking to the surprise of God's presence and action which remain mysterious and over which we have no control.

Paul's assertion here of his commission is in view of asserting the authenticity of the gospel which he preaches – the gospel which he has just stated concerns the universal scope of God's will to save. He was appointed a 'herald', to proclaim the good news of the salvation which God wills for all. He was appointed an 'apostle', sent by the risen Jesus to tell everyone what he has seen and heard. He was appointed a 'teacher of the Gentiles', to reveal the implications of the good news for them. Paul is using his claim to be an apostle to support the truth of what he has just said. He really has 'seen Jesus our Lord' (1 Corinthians 9:1), and he has been commissioned to tell the whole world that salvation is offered to everyone. People are to welcome the good news of salvation 'in faith'. To do so, they will need to know the 'truth'. 'Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness (Titus 1:1).

Through Jesus' life and especially through his life-giving, God has revealed his love in a way that can attract all to him. By raising Jesus from the dead and exalting him in glory, he has made him the source of a new way of living for all: a way which is free from the dominion of sin, and is responsive to grace. Jesus has attained the goal for which all humankind, indeed all creation, was intended. He is the new Adam, the beginning of a new creation. Through him, by sharing his life, all can now live as sons and daughters of God. Hence the importance of the gospel. Hence the central role of the church in God's loving design. The church as the visible body of the exalted Jesus, lives his life, and witnesses to his love. It is in the church that the gospel is preserved and proclaimed. It is in and through the Church that Jesus carries on his mission of drawing all to his Father. Paul refers to Jesus as the '**one mediator**'. It is especially in and through the Christian community that Jesus exercises this mediation.