

OVERFLOWING GRACE

1 Timothy 1.12-20

Having charged Timothy to address the false teaching in Ephesus, Paul recorded his personal testimony.

In 1 Timothy 1.7-11, we learned that the false teachers were misusing the Law. They did not see the Law as a mirror exposing sinners. Paul's testimony bears witness to the reality of God's grace. The Law was given to condemn sinners and the Gospel was given for forgiveness and freedom.

Paul came to admit his deep need

Paul, in a vulnerable few sentences, admitted the way he lived in the past. He was a "blasphemer", "persecutor", and "insolent opponent".

He spoke against Jesus Christ (Cf. Acts 22.9; 23.6).

He "tried to destroy" the Church (Galatians 1.13).

He took delight in mocking Christians and humiliating them.

What brings about a conviction of sin? What is my real need? People become Christians when they see the extent of their depravity. The more mature we become in the faith, the more we see the seriousness of our sin.

Julian Barnes, the atheistic British writer, recently wrote in *Departure(s)* about the terror of "high-speed assaults by forgotten memories...tearing up your very sense of yourself". What if there was "a chronological listing [of our] moral actions and inactions"? How horrible would it be to face "the chronological record [of all our] lies, hypocrisies, cruelties...harsh forgettings, broken promises, infidelities of word and deed"?

If we are aware of our sin, what do we do about it?

Paul received the provision of God's grace in Christ

Paul testified that only God's mercy could have saved a person like him. He is clear on God's initiative in calling him and commissioning him. Our Gospel celebrates Christ's work, not man's.

Paul unpacks the first of five "trustworthy sayings" in the pastoral epistles (1 Timothy 1.15, 3.1, 4.9; 2 Timothy 2.11; Titus 3.8). The statements appear to be pre-Pauline hymns or proto creeds. The "trustworthy sayings" stand against the "speculations" and the "vain discussions" of the false teachers.

1 Timothy 1.15, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”, provides a compact sentence on the Gospel.

This statement i. calls for universal acceptance, ii. presumes Christ’s pre-existence, iii. affirms the incarnation, iv. declares humans need to be saved, v. testifies that salvation is accomplished in Christ, and vi. shows salvation is applied personally.

Paul delights in his mission with thanksgiving

The recollection of his sinfulness created a disposition of thanksgiving to God for His mercy. We must never forget that we are forgiven sinners.

Paul sees his testimony as ministering to the lost (1 Timothy 1.16). That God would extend grace to such a person meant that He extends mercy to all who call upon His name.

The Lord Jesus provides Paul with an inner strength for Christian witness (1 Timothy 1.12).

Having reflected on God’s grace, Paul breaks into doxology (1 Timothy 1.17).

By contrast, Hymenaeus and Alexander have abandoned Christian conviction (the faith) and character (conscience). Once again, we see the link between doctrine and obedience.

Key Idea: Christian, tell your conversion story.

Application Questions:

According to Paul, how did Jesus deal with him (1 Timothy 1.12-16)?

Considering the whole chapter, what does Paul mean when he charges Timothy to “wage the good warfare” (1 Timothy 1.18)?

What is the significance of the language of stewardship (including “charge” or “entrust”) that runs through this chapter (1 Timothy 1.3, 4, 11, 12, 18)?

What clues do we have about how Hymenaeus and Alexander went wrong (1 Timothy 1.19-20)?

How has Christ shown you mercy, grace, and patience?