1 Timothy 1

• The Apostle Paul (Saul in Hebrew) was the foremost evangelist of the early church and probably in all church history
  ○ He was appointed by Christ to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, which was no small task
    • A Jewish Messiah held little attraction for a pagan, Greek society
    • And even Paul’s own fellow apostles were opposed to the idea, at least at first
  ○ Nevertheless, Paul preached the Good News faithfully, and his ministry bore extraordinary fruit by the grace of Christ
    • Paul founded or grew major churches in numerous Gentile cities across the Roman empire, including Antioch, Troas, Berea, Philippi, Corinth, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Colossi and others
    • Paul made a total of 4 journeys including his final trip to Rome
    • And one of Paul’s most loyal companions was a young convert named Timothy
  ○ Paul often worked alone, but not because he was a loner
    • In fact, Paul commonly sought other men to accompany him on his long journeys
    • Men like Luke, Barnabas, Mark and others worked with Paul, giving him support and encouragement in the face of many trials
    • Some of these men worked with Paul for a time but later departed from Paul
    • A few even turned against Paul and caused him much grief
• But only one of them has books of scripture named after him: Timothy
  ○ Paul met Timothy while on his second missionary journey as he ministered in Lystra
    • We read about that moment in Acts 16
Acts 16:1 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, 
Acts 16:2 and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Acts 16:3 Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

- Lystra was located about 100 miles north of the Mediterranean Sea in modern-day Turkey
- When Paul arrived, the church was already present and growing
- And one of the up and coming converts was a young Timothy
  - Timothy’s background was of a mixed heritage
    - He had a Greek father but a Jewish mother
    - Mixed marriages were more common outside Judea
    - Nevertheless, Timothy’s mother and grandmother were devout Jews who raised Timothy in the faith
    - Notably however, Timothy was not circumcised as a child
  - This issue became a concern for Paul, who wanted Timothy to join him on his missionary journeys
    - Paul desired a companion who could move freely between Jewish and Gentile worlds acting as an ambassador for Christ
      - Timothy was an ideal candidate, since he was the son of a Greek father and was raised in Greek society
      - Yet Timothy was also raised with Jewish traditions and could operate within Jewish culture effortlessly
    - But Timothy’s lack of circumcision rendered him unapproachable among the Jews
      - So for that reason, Paul asked that if Timothy were to accompany Paul, he must be circumcised
      - Timothy consented, which was no small thing in a time without anaesthesia
      - That was an early indication that Timothy was a special man
• Timothy proved himself to Paul over the course of several years
  ○ Timothy eventually assisted Paul on several journeys and in many places
    • Timothy was with Paul in Troas, Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth
    • He also accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey as well, where he ministered with Paul in Ephesus
    • While on that journey, Paul dispatched Timothy alone to Macedonia, where he proved himself an effective evangelist
  ○ Paul eventually joined Timothy in Macedonia before the two then traveled together to Corinth and eventually back to Ephesus and Troas
    • Elsewhere in Paul’s letters we also hear of Timothy with Paul in Rome and Philippi
    • After his first imprisonment, Paul left Timothy in Ephesus permanently to lead the church
    • Paul did this likely knowing that his own ministry was coming to an end
• This letter along with Paul’s second letter to Timothy and his letter to another church leader, Titus, have collectively been titled the Pastoral Epistles
  ○ But that term is misleading and even unhelpful
    • Paul’s occasion for writing these letters was less about training up pastors and more about the Church’s need for discipline and self-sacrifice
    • First and foremost, Paul is speaking to Timothy, who seemed uncomfortable and even unhappy in his role as pastor
    • Paul asks Timothy to make personal sacrifices in service to Christ
    • To forgo the life of a traveling evangelist that Timothy obviously sought after, so he could set an example of persistence, diligence and perseverance
  ○ Secondly, Paul looks past the leader and speaks to the congregation as a whole about subjecting personal needs for the needs of the body
• Paul addresses leaders, husbands, wives and children demanding godliness, submission to authority, and respect for others

• In all these things Paul appeals to the church on the basis of Christ’s example, so that we not think ourselves better than we ought

○ Nevertheless, the three letters of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are very similar in theme

• 1 Timothy covers the demands of life in the body of Christ and the requirements for church leadership

• Titus focuses only on the requirements for leadership

• While 2 Timothy focuses only on the life of the body

• In that sense, 1 Timothy is the most general of the three letters

○ Most importantly, they all focus on something Paul calls the “mystery of godliness”

• The term refers to the means of godliness, Christ, taught and lived out

• Church leaders must teach the truth of Christ, defend the truth of Christ and model it in their lives

• While the church body must receive the truth of godliness in Christ, obeying that truth and witnessing to it

• Moving to the letter itself, Paul begins his letter by establishing his prophetic authority as he usually did in his letters

1Tim. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope,
1Tim. 1:2 To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

• Paul’s opening is a familiar one to Bible students

○ Paul names himself and declares his title as an apostle of the Lord

• An apostle is a special office limited to a handful of men who lived in the first century

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• Apostles were commissioned by a personal appearing of Jesus Christ, either before or after His death and resurrection

• Obviously, Paul was commissioned after Jesus was resurrected when he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus

  ○ We see the uniqueness of the apostolic office reflected in Paul's salutation when he declares he is an apostle by the commandment of God

  • God our Savior commanded that Paul be an apostle

  • Paul goes further to name Christ Jesus separately

  • So God the Father chose Paul as an apostle and God the Son appeared to reveal the news to Paul

  ○ But the word “commandment” is particularly interesting

    • It reminds us of Jesus' words in Acts when Paul was blinded

  Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
  Acts 9:16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.”

• Paul didn’t apply to become an apostle

• Nor did Jesus send Paul an invitation

• It was a command of God that Paul serve and suffer in this way

• Paul addressed his letter to Timothy, who Paul calls his true child in the faith

  ○ In the early church, it was commonly to refer to someone being a “child in the faith” to another believer

    • To be a child in faith or a father in faith simply referred to someone we brought to faith or who brought us to faith

    • So in this case, Paul is saying that he led Timothy to faith, and therefore Timothy was his child in the faith

  ○ Paul extends his customary greeting of grace and peace to Timothy

    • But Paul adds mercy to his greeting in this letter and his second letter to Timothy
• The traditional Jewish greeting was mercy and peace, so Paul includes the extra word for his Jewish friend

• Then Paul moves quickly to his first major point of the letter

**1Tim. 1:3** As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,

**1Tim. 1:4** nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.

**1Tim. 1:5** But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

**1Tim. 1:6** For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,

**1Tim. 1:7** wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

• After Paul left Timothy in Ephesus and continued his journey to Macedonia, it seems Timothy became anxious to return to the road with Paul

  ○ Paul had urged Timothy to stay behind, which may indicate Timothy was reluctant to assume a local pastoral role
    • Maybe Timothy didn’t feel cut out for pastoral work
    • Maybe he just enjoyed Paul’s company or liked itinerant ministry
    • Perhaps it was a bit of everything, but whatever the reason Paul had to convince Timothy to stay

  ○ Since then Timothy has written back to Paul it seems, asking if he can leave his post to rejoin Paul in Macedonia
    • This is Paul’s response to Timothy
    • Paul refused Timothy’s request
    • Then he gives Timothy encouragement and advice to stay the course in his new pastoral role in Ephesus

• Paul says he left Timothy behind because Paul knew bad men were coming to Ephesus

  ○ And these bad men (certain men) were going to teach strange doctrines
    • A single Greek word is translated “teach strange doctrines”
    • It means to advocate a different truth
• Anything that departs from what is prescribed by the Spirit is strange or different than the truth

○ In Timothy’s day the church in Ephesus was probably little more than an association of house churches meeting under humble circumstances

• These churches were supervised by elders, older men who had some experience in the faith and the character to lead others

• Timothy was not an elder; he seems to have been a pastor serving in one or more of these house churches

• The role of pastor was not a position of leadership so much as one of service to the body in shepherding

○ Nevertheless, Paul clearly had high expectations for Timothy

• Paul expected Timothy to defend the flock despite his youth and inexperience

• Much like a young David was expected to defend the flock from wolves

• Here we find one of the major themes of this letter: guarding against false doctrine

○ Any teaching that departs from the true doctrines of the faith as revealed in scripture is false and should not be heard

• Notice Paul asks Timothy to instruct those who are spreading false teaching to cease doing so

• Paul doesn’t tell Timothy to debate them nor to counsel them

• The first order of business was to silence the false teaching

○ This is an very politically incorrect tactic today, since we try to avoid confrontation under any circumstances

• Frankly, it’s amazing how much contradictory teaching takes place in the church

• Churches often tolerate teaching on multiple, contradictory perspectives within the body on major doctrines of the faith

○ It’s not uncommon to find various Bible studies taking place simultaneously in the same building teaching opposite views of eschatology, gifts of the Spirit, marriage, church leadership, etc.
• This tolerance is usually explained either as an effort to “educate” the body on the spectrum of interpretive views in the church

• Or especially in the case of prophecy, opposing views to share the pulpit because we assume that certainty is unattainable

• Paul doesn’t seem to share these concerns, because his first concern was to silence strange doctrine in the church
  ○ And of course we apply this approach in every other academic pursuit
    • What would a history department chair say to a professor who taught his students that the Holocaust never happened because he preferred that viewpoint?
    • Or what would a science department chair say to a teacher to taught that the earth was flat because many people still held this view?
    • Would the department chairs set up a debate between the two positions in the spirit of fairness?
    • Would the chair agree that the truth can’t be known with certainty?
    • Would the department tolerate the alternative perspectives just to avoid division?
  ○ Yet in the church, we often respond to false or strange teaching in these ways but Paul says we shouldn’t
    • The sources for false teaching should be silenced by the church leadership
    • Of course, if the people teaching are teachable, then we should also educate them from scripture on the correct interpretations
    • But under no circumstances should we permit the body to be confused by contradictory teaching we know to be false

• In the case of Ephesus, the strange teaching was a common culprit in the early church
  ○ In v.4 Paul describes the false teaching as involving myths and endless genealogies
    • Myths could refer to almost anything, of course

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• But Paul also mentions endless genealogies

• And in v.7 he mentioned the men teaching strange doctrines were men who wanted to be teachers of the Law

○ Putting all these together, a picture comes into focus

• Certain men, probably leaders and possibly elders in the church, were introducing Jewish heresy into their teaching

• The myths may have been Jewish myth surrounding the Messiah or other prophecies

• And genealogies were probably popular Jewish mythologies invented about obscure biblical characters

• These were the ear-tickling teachings of Paul’s day, and they had gained an audience in Ephesus through the influence of these men

○ These men and their teaching were not furthering the administration of God which is by faith

• The word administration in v.4 could also be translated plan

• Paul’s referring to the plan of salvation, which is by faith alone

• But men in the church were teaching in a way that didn’t further this plan

• At best this teaching was a distraction from understanding the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ

• And at worst these teachers were misrepresenting salvation, substituting a works salvation or salvation through Jewish roots

• Instead, Paul wants Timothy to ensure the church received better teaching by meeting three tests Paul gives in v.5

○ First, the teaching should come from a pure heart

• A pure heart refers to our intentions toward our students

• A pure heart is one that genuinely desires to share the truth for the benefit of the student

• The teacher isn’t attempting to manipulate his audience or hurt an opponent
• A pure heart has the best interests of the students in mind
  ○ Secondly, the teaching comes from a good conscience
    • A good conscience refers to teacher’s motives for teaching
    • A good conscience doesn’t teach seeking fame and fortune
    • A good conscience seeks to serve God, to share knowledge and to further the kingdom
  ○ Finally, teaching must be accompanied by a sincere faith
    • Sincere faith refers to a genuine born-again relationship with Christ by His Spirit
    • It also refers to operating by faith in seeking to know scripture by the counsel of the Holy Spirit
    • Teachers that lack sincerity of faith are either unbelievers
    • Or they are believers working in their flesh, absent of God-given insight
  • We can safely assume these qualities were lacking in the certain men Paul mentions
    ○ They were teaching with false motives, corrupt conscience and absent sincere faith
      • At best they were misguided, carnal Christians with egos inflated by positions of authority in the church
      • Or at worst they were unbelieving wolves in sheep’s clothing deceiving the flock
      • Either way, they needed to be silenced
    ○ And we need to apply these same three tests against our teachers
      • If a teacher offers intriguing biblical insight but stirs up division and controversy, walk away
      • If a teacher is diligent and scholarly but ambitious for attention and wealth, steer clear
      • And if a teacher’s life lacks sincerity of faith, beware
When these things are lacking, it's like a boat has lost its anchor in a storm as Paul says in vs.6-7

- Paul says when men stray from these things, they turn aside
- The Greek term for “turn aside” literally means to put something out of joint
- Imagine a long distance runner whose hip suddenly pops out of joint
- The runner couldn’t move properly much less continue the course
- They must turn aside, leave the path

- This is a serious moment in a spiritual life
  - Turning aside is much more than simply becoming confused or distracted
    - The idea in the New Testament always implies a wandering away from walking with the Lord
    - Not losing salvation, for that is not possible
    - But still a serious impediment to obtaining a good testimony as we’ll see shortly
  - These men turned aside to fruitless discussion
    - We could also translate that phrase as empty talk
    - It's a complete waste of time, and if there is one thing Christians can't afford to waste, it's time
    - Our time is precious, since it's the most powerful resource we have to honor and serve the Lord
    - As Paul says in Romans 12

**Rom. 12:1** Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

- In v.7 we see where they went wrong...they didn’t possess pure hearts or good consciences
  - They wanted to be teachers of the Law
• A teacher of the Law is a term describing a position of authority and power

• Among Jews, the term would be Rabbi

• Today, we might say professor, except in that day the term was one of significant authority

  ○ These men were motivated in their teaching by prestige and authority, which meant they didn't possess a pure heart or pure conscience

  • Their hearts were not directed at the good of their students

  • And their conscience was polluted by selfish desires

• Perhaps most importantly, they lacked sincere faith concerning the things they taught, as we see at the end of v.7

  ○ Paul says they didn't even understand the things they taught though they made confident assertions

    • A person working in sincerity of faith will be bound by the Spirit in his teaching

    • Sincere faith doesn't assure us perfect understanding of scripture

    • But it does guard us against making confident assertions about things we know we don't understand yet

  ○ But when your motives are corrupted and your conscience is compromised, you don’t worry about such things

    • Which reminds us that sincerity is never a substitute for insight

    • Confidence and sincerity doesn’t equal accuracy, and many false teachers are confident and sincere...sincerely wrong

    • Ironically, many good teachers take caution with their conclusions, not wishing to be arrogant or over confident in their interpretations

    • So if we judge teachers on sincerity or confidence, we’re likely to follow the wrong person at times

    • Always inspect a teacher’s motive, conscience and faith

• Having exposed the false motives of these men, Paul can’t resist also taking a swipe at their teaching
1Tim. 1:8  But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 
1Tim. 1:9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who 
are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for 
those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers 
1Tim. 1:10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and 
whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, 
1Tim. 1:11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been 
entrusted.

• These teachers were teaching on the Law given to Israel, and Paul makes clear 
his problem with their teaching is not with the Law itself
  ○ The Law is good, meaning study of it is profitable, provided it is used 
  lawfully, that is in the way God intended
    • The Law served a certain purpose for Israel as part of their Old 
      Covenant
    • And it serves a different yet complimentary purpose for those in 
      the New Covenant
    • For Israel, it defined and secured the nation as God intended
    • And for the NT believer, it explains the mission of our Messiah
  ○ But when we cross those purposes, we depart from a lawful use of the 
    Law
    • Specifically, we err if we teach NT believers they must live as if 
      they were under the Old Covenant instead
    • Requiring believers to observe the Law is using the Law 
      unlawfully
  ○ To prove his point, Paul explains that the key function of the Law both 
    for Israel and for the believer today was to expose sin
    • In v.9 Paul says the law was not made for the righteous person
    • He's referring to the essential quality of any Law
    • Laws exist to define and expose unrighteousness
    • There is no need for Law among the righteous, since they do 
      nothing wrong
Righteousness and unrighteousness are not terms that describe behavior so much as nature

- Righteousness is the absence of sin while unrighteousness is the absence of perfection
  - We are unrighteous by nature, and this remains true whether we are currently engaged in any sin at the moment
  - Even at rest, we are unrighteous
  - When we sin, we are acting out of our unrighteous nature

- Those who are unrighteousness benefit from living under Law, because by that Law we come to see how we live in unrighteous ways
  - We note that our behavior departs from the Law
  - And that departure is a measuring stick of our unrighteousness
  - Our unrighteousness was always there, but the Law helped us quantify it in a sense

- So Paul takes this truth and turns it back upon the very men who desired to be teachers of the Law
  - Paul says the Law is meant for those who practice lawlessness
  - The Law acts as constraint on their evil
  - And Paul lists a number of particularly serious sins as example
  - But clearly, Paul chose the harshest examples to make an association with these men

- In effect, Paul was saying that if these men wanted to be associated with the Law, let that association be in the way God intended
  - Specifically, let the Law reveal the truth about these men’s hearts
    - They are lawless and rebellious men
    - Though they desired to show themselves as better than others by their supposed expertise in the Law and their piety in keeping it...
    - Let the the Law show they are no better than other ungodly sinners
They are like the unholy and profane, the sexually immoral, the dishonest and violent

- Ironically, Paul throws these teachers in with the worst of the law breakers
- They used the Law to make themselves superior which was never the purpose of the Law
- The chief purpose of the Law was to convict sin where it existed, and these men should have felt conviction, not pride, in what they taught

- Notice how Paul ends his rogues gallery with anything contrary to sound teaching
  - With that statement, Paul equates the work of these teachers with the other terrible sins
    - Do we need any further proof of how Paul viewed false teaching in the church?
    - And this perspective is not Paul’s alone
  - Peter, Jude and Jesus Himself also criticized false teachers in equally harsh terms
    - While we’ve generally softened our criticism of teaching contrary to scripture, scripture itself roundly condemns it
    - Anything teaching of salvation that is contrary to the truth is an expression of unrighteousness equal to the other sins on that list
  - In v.11 Paul says what’s at risk is the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ that he preached
    - The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only truth, the only message in the universe that carried the power to bring eternal life
    - So how dangerous is that thing that would undermine the message?
    - And so Paul has positioned himself on opposite sides from these men
  - In summary, Paul is commanding that teachers of scripture must endeavor to teach the word as God revealed it
• It must be taught from a motive of love and a sincere desire to communicate what God intended

• This is especially true when presenting portions of scripture by itself, including larger portions like the Law

• Every verse, passage, chapter and book of scripture must be taught in light of the overall message of scripture

• To do otherwise is to misuse scripture, misrepresent the truth and possibly join that rogue's gallery

• Now Paul had his own history of contrary teaching and behavior
  ○ Paul knew that history could be used against him by these false teachers in defending themselves from his charges
  ○ So Paul preempts those accusations in vs.12-17

1Tim. 1:12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,
1Tim. 1:13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;
1Tim. 1:14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.
1Tim. 1:15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.
1Tim. 1:16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.
1Tim. 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

  ○ Paul acknowledges he too once taught wrongly against the very Gospel he now cherishes
    • He was formerly a blasphemer, speaking against Jesus
    • And he was a persecutor and violent aggressor
    • We remember in Acts 8 that Saul was an instigator of Stephen's death and probably many more

  ○ Paul had to deal with this inconvenient truth during his ministry, and yet it was also his most powerful defense
• Paul's history validated the earnestness of his confession

• Paul gave up everything he valued to join the side he once persecuted

• There was no earthly explanation for Paul's about-face except that the message of the Gospel was true
  ○ At the same time, Paul's past was a frequently used tool of his critics to discredit him
  • How could the church trust the teaching of a murderer, they would ask?
  • Therefore, Paul was forced time and again to explain how the Lord could use one such as himself

• As we see in this passage, Paul was also honest and humble about his past
  ○ He admitted his crimes, for how could he deny them?
    • Nevertheless, the Lord forgave Paul and showed him mercy
    • Obviously, Paul was shown mercy on the same basis as all believers: by his faith in Christ
    • At the end of v.13 and into v.14, Paul states clearly that he was rescued by grace though he was a great sinner
  ○ So on the question of Paul's guilt, he acknowledges his past, but then so must his critics acknowledge that Paul has been made righteous by faith
    • Paul was saved like all people
    • Paul was a sinner needing God's grace
    • He's simply like the rest of us
  ○ But Paul is moving toward a larger question
    • Why did the Lord select someone who persecuted the church to receive such a position of honor in the church?
    • Paul's answer is he acted in ignorance
    • Paul is not suggesting his sins were forgiven because he was ignorant

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• He’s saying his opportunity to assume high office was not jeopardized by his crimes, because those crimes were committed prior to faith

• Paul’s role as persecutor and blasphemer predated his knowledge of God in faith, and therefore he couldn’t have been expected to be any different
  ○ Paul blasphemed against Christ and he persecuted the Church out of unbelief, therefore, those past actions didn’t disqualify him from serving God
  ○ How could anyone serve God if our resistance to God prior to faith were grounds for disqualification?
  ○ Our qualification for service to God is measured by who we are and what we do following faith
  ○ Paul is inferring something about the men he opposes in Ephesus
    • The false teachers can’t rest on the same excuse for their false teaching
    • They understand the Gospel, and therefore they are not ignorant
    • Yet they continue to teach error
    • So ironically Paul’s critics accuse him of having disqualified himself by what he did prior to faith even as they disqualify themselves after faith

• Finally, Paul explains why the Lord chose someone like him to serve the Church
  ○ Paul says so that God could use him as an example to other believers
    • Breaking it down, Paul says “in me as the foremost”
    • He’s referring back to his earlier comment about being the foremost sinner
    • The word foremost doesn’t mean the greatest, for who can call themselves the greatest sinner?
    • In a way, calling yourself the greatest sinner would be a sin in itself, since it would be a boastful statement
  ○ The word in Greek means more prominent, as in the person standing first in line so that you can’t see who is behind that person
• Paul was the most prominent sinner in the church
• Imagine if Hitler had become Christian during WWII or if Stalin or some other famous evil person had converted to the faith?
• That person’s crimes would probably hang over their head in the minds of the Church for sometime
• They would be the most prominent sinner in the church, as Paul was in his day

• So Paul says he was shown mercy as the foremost sinner so that he could serve as Christ’s billboard
  - Forever more, Paul gave witness to how patient and forgiving the Lord is willing to be for those who believe in Him
    • If anyone thought themselves too evil, too far from God to receive forgiveness, Paul stood as God’s counter-argument
    • No one is out of reach
    • No sin is unforgivable in Christ Jesus
  - So though Paul’s critics pointed to Paul’s past as evidence he couldn’t trusted, since he had too much baggage
    • Paul says his past is merely evidence of the depths of God’s mercy in Christ
    • And so Paul ends in a minor doxology, born out of personal gratitude
    • To the eternal, immortal invisible God belong all the honor, glory and praise forever and ever
    • Amen