

A Faithful Saying

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Date: 26 January 2022

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn to 1 Timothy this evening. 1 Timothy chapter 1.

1 Timothy chapter 1. And we're going to read from verse 12. 1 Timothy chapter 1.

1 Timothy chapter 1.

To save sinners. 1 Timothy chapter 1.

And as a wayside path around the perimeter area, it had been trodden upon by many people passing by.

[2 : 54] And over the years, it had even hardened as the years were passing by. And in many ways, that's why it's called a wayside pulpit. Because it's situated outside the church.

It's outside the church building. It's situated outside the perimeter area of where the sower scatters the seed week by week.

And it's situated there for those who are passing by. Those who are walking along the wayside. It's for the cyclists who pass by in the summer. It's for the walkers who go past.

It's for the workmen who are working at the new scheme down the road. But it's also for those who have hardened their hearts over the years and now refuse to come into the church to hear the word of God.

And the thing is, they might not come into the church to hear the word of God. But our prayer is that as the word of God goes outside the church, it will speak to our unconverted friends and unconverted family.

[3 : 57] And so it's a wayside pulpit. If you've never noticed it, have a look. It's out this side of the church. It's a wayside pulpit. And as I said, the words of this verse, verse 15, are being proclaimed by our wayside pulpit.

And over the years, we've had different verses being proclaimed from our wayside pulpit. But for the past while, I've left this verse on our wayside pulpit.

Because as Paul says here, it's a trustworthy saying. It's a faithful saying. And it deserves full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

You know, what better statement to have outside your church? Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And Paul says that this is a faithful saying and a trustworthy saying because of his own personal experience.

Paul could say that it was faithful and trustworthy because of his own experience. Because Paul had discovered grace. And in these verses, we see that he declares glory.

[5 : 01] He discovers grace. And he declares glory. And that's what we see in this section that we're looking at this evening. Paul is discovering. He's talking about discovering grace and declaring glory.

Discovering grace and declaring glory. So first of all, we're looking at Paul discovering grace. He's discovering grace. He says in verse 12, I thank him who has given me strength.

Christ Jesus our Lord. Because he judged me faithful. Appointing me to his service. Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor and insolent opponent.

But I received mercy. Because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord overflowed for me. With the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Now as you know, Paul wrote this personal and pastoral letter to Timothy. Timothy was a young minister. He was pastoring a congregation in the urban setting of the city of Ephesus.

[6 : 07] And as we saw last week, Paul was familiar with Timothy's surroundings and Timothy's setting. Because it was Paul who had actually planted the church in Ephesus during one of his missionary journeys.

And during the first century, Ephesus was this illustrious and influential city within the Roman Empire. But Ephesus was also an idolatrous and immoral city within the Roman Empire. But when Paul planted the church in Ephesus, the people of Ephesus, they responded in faith and repentance. And wonderfully, the gospel had this massive impact and this influence upon the idolatry and the immorality within the city of Ephesus.

So much so that for many years, the church in Ephesus, they stood firm. They stood firm because Paul had encouraged them and educated them in the doctrines of grace.

Paul had taught them that they're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. We see that in his letter to the Ephesians. And you know, in many ways, the church in Ephesus, they became this thriving church.

[7 : 16] A church that was educated in the doctrines of grace. A church that was knowledgeable in the truths of the Bible. And a church that was even active in the pursuit of faithfulness and obedience.

You could even go as far as to say that the Ephesians were a model church for the other churches in the early church. But as you know, when Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, the church in Ephesus is no longer the model church it once was.

The wolves had appeared. The false teachers had appeared. They were infecting and influencing and infiltrating the church in Ephesus. And so Paul sends his young apprentice.

He sends Timothy to Ephesus in order to confront and even challenge the erroneous elders and the false teaching that was being preached and promoted in Ephesus.

But of course, that was no easy task for a young minister. A young minister who felt completely inexperienced and immature to deal with this heavy burden that was being placed upon his shoulders.

[8 : 21] Because when Timothy arrives in Ephesus, all he finds is problems. Problems, problems, problems. In fact, there were so many problems in Ephesus that as we saw last week, Timothy wanted to leave.

He wanted to just throw in the towel, give up completely, and walk away from this congregation altogether. After only a year in his charge, Timothy had had enough.

And that's why Paul sent this pastoral letter to Timothy. Paul wanted to pastor the pastor through all his problems. And as you know, Paul as a person, he wasn't shy to talk about the problems in the church.

He's not someone who ever looked the other way or swept it under the carpet or pretended it wasn't there. No, Paul always addressed problems head on. And he wants Timothy to do the same.

That's why, as we saw last week, in the first half of this chapter, Paul exhorts and encourages Timothy two things. Stay there and stand firm.

[9 : 26] He exhorted him and encouraged him to stay there and stand firm. He was to remain at Ephesus and reaffirm the gospel. Remain at Ephesus and reaffirm the gospel.

Especially because these erroneous elders were there and they were twisting the Torah. They were glossing over the gospel. But as Paul emphasizes and explains here, he says to Timothy, we need the law.

And we need the gospel. Because the law shows us our sin. The gospel shows us our Savior. We need both. It's not either or. It's both and. We need the law. We need the gospel.

The law shows us our sin. The gospel shows us our Savior. And now what we see is that from his personal experience, Paul goes on to assert and to affirm to Timothy that this is true.

Paul is saying, this is what happened in my life. He testifies here of how the law of God and the gospel of grace worked together in his own experience.

[10 : 31] It worked in his life to bring him from being, as he says himself, a blasphemer to a believer. From being a persecutor of the church to a preacher in the church.

From being an obstacle to the gospel to being a person who uses every opportunity for the gospel. And as you know, and as Paul confesses himself, he says here, before I discovered the grace of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ, he says, I was a blasphemer.

I was a persecutor. I was a violent opponent to the church. And I acted ignorantly in my unbelief.

And we know this to be true because of what we read earlier in Acts chapter 9.

We have the account of Paul's conversion in Acts chapter 9. Where Paul, or Saul as he was then, Saul had this program, this plan of persecution.

He was persecuting the church of Jesus Christ. And he had this determined desire to stomp out and to stamp out Christianity as soon as possible.

[11 : 41] But instead of stopping the church, Saul actually scattered the church. He scattered them as far north as Damascus. Which was 150 miles north of Jerusalem where he was situated.

And so in his determination to destroy the church of Jesus Christ, we read that Saul set out on his crusade. This campaign to crush the Christian church. And he was determined.

Determined to destroy the church of Jesus Christ. That was until the Lord met him. You know what I'm meeting? To meet the Lord in your determination to destroy his church.

The Lord met him on the road to Damascus. And we're told that in a moment. In, as Paul says himself, in the twinkling of an eye. This man, Saul, he's changed.

He's converted. He's transformed. Transformed by the grace of God. And in discovering grace. You know, Saul discovered the same grace that John Newton later discovered.

[12 : 46] John Newton, as you know, he was many ways like Saul was. A blasphemer. Persecutor. Persecutor of slaves. And yet it's John Newton who said and discovered amazing grace.

How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see. And you know, in many ways, that's what Paul is saying here to Timothy.

He's saying, remember. Remember what I was like. Remember what took place in my life. But you know, what's remarkable is that in his letter to the Philippians.

You remember there in Philippians chapter 3. Paul describes how blind and how lost he was before he discovered grace.

Paul says in Philippians 3. I had so much confidence in the flesh. I had so much self-confidence, he says. Because I was circumcised on the eighth day, according to the law of Moses.

[13 : 52] I was from the stock of Israel, God's covenant nation. I was from the tribe of Benjamin.

The same tribe as the first king of Israel, King Saul. In fact, I was named after the first king of Israel, King Saul.

But more than that, Paul says, I prided myself in the fact I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. I was a thoroughbred Jew. Both my parents were Jews.

And as a Jew, I kept all the laws of God. I was a Pharisee. And as for ambitious zeal as a Pharisee, I was a persecutor of the church.

I was determined to destroy the church of Jesus Christ, he says. Because when it came to the righteousness that the law required, I considered myself, says Paul, I considered myself blameless.

That was Saul's self-assessment. I don't need a saviour because I'm my own saviour. Before he discovered grace, that's what Paul thought. I don't need a saviour because I'm my own saviour.

[14 : 56] But Paul says here, For when I discovered the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ, all these things that were once gained to me, I count now as loss for Christ.

All these things that were gained, I now count as loss. And you know, Paul, as Paul looks away from self now, and he looks to his saviour, he says here in verse 12, I thank him who has given me strength.

Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent opponent.

But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

You know, I love these verses here because when Paul speaks about his personal experience of discovering grace, you know, the first word that Paul uses in verse 12 is the word grace.

[16 : 10] He uses the word grace. That's the first word he actually uses. And as we said before, the acronym for grace, I'm sure you've heard it and know it. Grace, God's riches at Christ's expense.

God's riches at Christ's expense. Because that's what we discover when we discover grace. I always remember the first time I discovered grace. And that's what came back to me, what I had learned as a child.

God's riches at Christ's expense. When we discover grace, we discover God's riches at Christ's expense. And that's why Paul, when he speaks about his personal experience of discovering grace, the first word he uses here in verse 12 is grace.

God's riches at Christ's expense. You know, if we were to translate verse 12 literally, it would read, I have grace to strengthen me because of Christ Jesus our Lord.

I have grace to strengthen me because of Christ Jesus our Lord. The first word Paul speaks about when he speaks about his own testimony, his own experience, he says grace.

[17:24] I have grace to strengthen me because of Christ Jesus our Lord. And you know, when Paul discovered grace, he discovered that God's grace is sufficient and also surprising.

Sufficient because, well, it covers all our sins. Surprising because Paul is amazed that God would forgive someone like him, the chief of sinners.

We'll see that in a moment. Paul discovered, when Paul discovered grace, he discovered that God's grace is amazing, abundant, and abounding.

It's amazing, abundant, and abounding. That's what he says in verse 14. The grace of our Lord overflowed for me. Or literally, it's abounded for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. And you know, when Paul describes in these verses his discovery of grace, he describes it using key words. And I want you to notice these key words in these three verses.

[18:31] He uses the word grace, mercy, grace, faith, and love. If you look at it, verses 12 to 14. Grace, mercy, grace, faith, and love.

He says, I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service. Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, insolent opponent, but I received mercy, because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

He uses particular words, grace, mercy, grace, faith, and love. Grace, mercy, grace, faith, and love. I find myself repeating that all day.

Grace, mercy, grace, faith, and love. And as you know, grace, grace is receiving what you do not deserve. Grace is receiving what you do not deserve.

Mercy is not receiving what you do deserve. And faith, hope, and love, well, Paul says they abide. But the greatest of these is love, because greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

[19:41] Grace, mercy, grace, faith, and love. Grace, mercy, grace, faith, and love. Remember that. And so Paul, he speaks from his personal experience, and he speaks about discovering grace.

Discovering grace. Then secondly, we see him declaring glory. Declaring glory. So discovering grace, and declaring glory.

He says in verse 15, the saying is trustworthy, and is serving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost, 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.

To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. As we said, Paul is testifying here to Timothy about how the law of God and the gospel of grace have worked in his life, his personal experience.

And this was important because these erroneous elders in Ephesus, they were distorting, they were diluting the teaching of the Torah. They were, you could say, gliding and just glossing over the truths of the gospel.

[21:08] They were promoting their own agenda, they were preaching with arrogance, and they had all these futile discussions, we saw that earlier in the passage, and they also had all these false debates.

And all it demonstrated was, was their ignorance of the gospel, rather than their intelligence of the gospel. And Paul says here, none of it, none of it, was glorifying to God.

None of it. None of it emphasized or even enhanced the grace of God or the glory of God. None of it. Which is why Paul says in verse 15, he says, Timothy, Timothy, my son, this is a faithful saying. This is a trustworthy saying. This is what's important. This is what should be accepted in the congregation. This is what should be agreed among the Lord's people. This is what should be acknowledged in Ephesus.

This is what should be preached and promoted and proclaimed to your people. That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

[22:13] Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, he says in verse 15, of whom I am the foremost. You know, having discovered the grace of God in the gospel, Paul claims and he even confesses that he is the chief of sinners.

He is the chief of sinners. Now, the reason Paul says this is not out of a sense of false humility, which is why some people say that they're the chief of sinners. But, you know, Paul says this here because he views himself as a prototype of the grace of God. Paul sees himself here as a prototype of the grace of God. And I say that because the word Paul uses for foremost, or if you're using the authorized version, chief, chief of sinners, foremost, that word is protos in Greek. It's the word protos, which is where we get the word prototype. Protos, prototype. And as you know, a prototype is the first of its kind.

[23 : 25] A prototype is the first of its kind. And that's what Paul is explaining and even emphasizing to Timothy here, that he has come to experience and to enjoy grace, mercy, grace, faith, and love.

And he's come to experience and enjoy it for a reason. And the reason is that as the foremost, as the chief of sinners, as a persecutor, and a blasphemer, and an insolent opponent of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, I am the prototype, he says, of the grace of God. I am someone who demonstrates and displays the grace of God in his life and witness. And so, what Paul is saying to Timothy is, Timothy, as a pastor and as a preacher in Ephesus, your ministry is not to be like these erroneous elders who are promoting their own agenda and preaching with arrogance.

No, he says, just present to them the law of God and the grace of God in the gospel. Because the law is good, the law is gracious, the law is great, the law is the schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. If it wasn't for the law, we wouldn't know sin. And if it wasn't for grace, we wouldn't know the gospel. Therefore, we need the law, we need the gospel, because the law shows us our sin, the gospel shows us our savior.

[24 : 51] And Paul is saying to Timothy, this is what you need to present to your people. And you know, the point that Paul is making, it's actually applicable to all of us, not just to Timothy as a pastor in Ephesus, because Paul here, he's just reaffirming and reminding us of the simple truth, that if the Lord is able to work in his heart, Paul's heart, if the Lord is able to work in Paul's life, if the Lord is able to transform a blasphemer into a believer, if the Lord is able to transform a persecutor of the church of Jesus Christ into a preacher in the church of Jesus Christ, if the Lord is able to change someone who's an obstacle into someone who is using every opportunity for the gospel, if the Lord is able to do that in Paul's life, then Paul is saying to Timothy, he's able to do it in anyone's life.

He's able to do it in anyone's life. And you know, for Timothy, who was about to walk away from it all, you know, what a great reminder.

The Lord is still able to work. Don't lose heart, he's saying. Don't lose sight of the grace of God. God is able to save sinners.

And you know, my friend, if you ever question the grace of God towards sinners, and if you ever doubt, as we sometimes do, we doubt the power of the gospel to convert our unconverted friends or our unconverted family.

You know, if we ever doubt, if we ever question, question, all we need to do is read Paul's testimony. Read Paul's testimony because as he says himself, he is an example.

[26 : 45] He is an illustration. He's a prototype of God's grace in the life and heart of a sinner. He says in verse 16, I received mercy for this reason, that in me as the foremost, as the prototype, as the example, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

And what Paul is saying is, very simply to Timothy, if the Lord is able to save me, the chief of sinners, then he's able to save anyone in Ephesus. He's able to save anyone in Barbasa.

He's able to save anyone in Lewis. He's able to save to the uttermost because as the Bible reminds us, his arm is not shortened that he cannot save.

Neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear. And you know, I know that for some of you, you have unconverted husbands and unconverted wives and unconverted children.

And I think of you so often, and I've said this before, but he's able to save. His grace is sufficient. He is able to save to the uttermost.

[28 : 06] And what Paul is saying to young Timothy is, do not lose heart. And it applies to all of us, doesn't it? Do not lose heart. God's grace is able to save to the uttermost.

And with that, Paul, he not only asserts and affirms that he has discovered grace, but here he's declaring glory. He's declaring God's glory in the gospel.

And he does so in verse 17 with this doxology. He says in verse 17, to the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.

Amen. Paul declares God's glory in the gospel with a doxology. And a doxology is just a statement of praise which seeks to glorify God.

It's a doxology. The word doxa is Greek for glory, for displaying and magnifying the glory of God. And that's what Paul is seeking to do as he draws this chapter to a conclusion.

[29 : 14] He wants to assert and to affirm and even to ascribe all praise, honor, and glory to the grace of God in the gospel. It's not of man, he said.

It's all of grace. It's all of God. So don't lose heart. Keep on keeping on. And so as Paul writes this opening chapter of his letter to Timothy, he exhorts and he encourages Timothy to stay there, stand firm, and stay focused.

Stay there, stand firm, and stay focused. That's instruction. for us as a congregation. Stay there, stand firm, stay focused.

Because salvation is by God's grace and salvation is for God's glory. It's by God's grace and it's to God's glory.

Salvation is all about discovering grace and declaring glory. Discovering grace and declaring glory. And you know one, you know, is it any wonder that Paul said, this is a faithful saying, this is a trustworthy saying, that's to be accepted and agreed and acknowledged.

[30 : 34] Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And with that, Paul is saying to Timothy, keep that in your mind.

Stay there, stand firm, stay focused. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And you know, what better reason for us to have that text on our wayside pulpit that as we pray, those who read it, those who pass by it, that they too will discover grace and that they too will declare the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christ. Well, may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we marvel at what thou art able to do in the lives of sinners such as we are.

We thank thee and we praise thee that we can say amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.

We marvel, Lord, that thou art a God who deals with us so graciously, a God who shows us mercy and grace and love, a God who is so faithful to us despite our unfaithfulness towards thee.

[32 : 06] And we pray that we would take to heart what Paul said to Timothy, to stay there and to stand firm and to stay focused, to stay focused upon the message and the mission, to preach and to proclaim that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

O Lord, we pray that thou wouldst work in our homes and in our families for those, Lord, who have unconverted husbands, those who have unconverted wives, for our children, Lord, and even our children's children, that thy righteousness would extend to them.

we pray, Lord, for our neighbors, our friends, our work colleagues, those whom we rub shoulders with day by day, that they too would discover grace and that they too would declare glory, that they would declare the glory of God that he is able to do in us and for us exceedingly, abundantly, above all, more than we could ask or even think.

Hear us then, we pray, go before us and cleanse us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to sing again, this time in Psalm 84.

Psalm 84, again in the Scottish Psalter, page 339, if you're using the blue psalm book. Psalm 84, and this is, as you know, Ian Murray's favorite psalm.

[33 : 38] our elder, and we're also going to sing his favorite verse, which is verse 7. But before we do that, I want to highlight to you the praying for one another prayer notes.

I've neglected them the last couple of weeks because, as I said, I was put upside down by the fact they sent them out on a Monday morning now instead of at the beginning of a month. But this week, we're being encouraged to pray for not only congregations within our denomination, but also missionaries missionaries in different parts of the world.

So that's why they've changed the prayer notes, not only to include congregations, but also the missionary prayer notes and congregational prayers. They brought both together to give us daily prayers and to pray through these things daily.

But we've been encouraged this week to pray for the Free North, that the Lord would strengthen their witness in the heart of the city of Inverness. So remember the Free North and their minister, Angus McRae, and the work that they're doing there.

There's the Dumasani Theological Institute in South Africa. Pray for the start of the classes and the teaching and the training that they receive. We're also encouraged to pray for the congregation in Aran.

[34 : 48] We were there last summer. I was doing supply there in the congregation of Aran. And they're a small congregation, but they're a lovely people who are dedicated to the Lord and they want to see people saved.

And so pray for them that the Lord would provide for them and encourage them. They're in a time of vacancy. I'm not sure if they're able to call a minister at the moment, but please remember them in their struggles.

We're also encouraged to pray for our mission board and also pray for Sasra. We all know about them, how they work alongside the military, bringing God's Word to them. And also the Collegio San Andres to pray for them as well.

So just to highlight these prayer points to you, not only to pray for them this evening, but also to pray for them throughout the week. So to pray for one another, that's what we've been encouraged to do.

So those watching at home, please take time if you can afterwards. The live stream comes to an end after the end of this psalm. So please take time to pray if you can. Now we're going to sing Psalm 84 from verse 7.

[35 : 56] Psalm 84. So they from strength unwearied go, still forward unto strength, until in Zion they appear before the Lord at length. Lord God of hosts, my prayer hear.

O Jacob's God, give ear. See God our shield, look on the face of thine anointed dear. And particularly verse 11 in relation to what we were just thinking about.

For God the Lord's a sun and shield. He'll grace and glory give, and will withhold no good from them that uprightly do live. So Psalm 84 from verse 7 down to the end of the psalm to God's praise.

verse 7 So they from strength unwearied go, still forward God to strength, until in Zion Lord God of hosts, my prayer hear.

O Jacob's God, God of hosts, Christ, Lord of hosts, His bless and Father my concentrations Mother and Mary O Jacob of hosts, to help us answer Why dwell in days of sin

[38 : 26] For God the Lord's a son and shield, He'll grace and glory give, And will with all no good problem, That of thy need to live.

For thou that art the Lord of hosts, That man is truly blessed, Through my assured confidence, On thee, your Lord of hosts.

For God the Lord of hosts. For God the Lord of hosts.

For God the Lord of hosts.