

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Paul's First Letter to Timothy – Part 4

I. Exposition of Chapter One (Continued).

A. Verse 15 – “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

1. “This is a faithful saying...” – Again, as in verse 12, the word “faithful” means; “pertaining to being trusted—‘faithful, trustworthy, dependable, reliable’¹
2. “...worthy of all acceptance...” - “Acceptance” means; “to come to believe something to be true and to respond accordingly”² D. Edmond Hiebert writes:

“Faithful’ again means trustworthy and indicates that Paul evaluates the saying as a maxim on which full reliance may be placed. ‘And worthy of all acceptance.’ (Only here and in 4:9 is this phrase added.) ‘Acceptation’ carries the idea of approval and welcome. ‘All’ acceptance means that it is worthy to be accepted ‘in every way, without reservations, without hesitation, without the least doubt’³

3. “...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...” – This is the Gospel in a nutshell. The phrase, “Christ Jesus” means “The Anointed Savior.” In a concise manner, Paul tells exactly why Jesus came into the world, “...to save sinners.” The word “save” means; “to save, i.e. deliver or protect”⁴ Greek scholar, William Mounce adds the words; “rescue”, and “heal.”⁵

4. “...sinners, of whom I am chief.” – No matter what Paul’s accomplishments, he remained humble and remembered where he came from. The word “chief” means; “pertaining to being of high rank”⁶

Duane Litfin writes:

“As the worst of sinners (cf. Paul’s other descriptions of himself in 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8), Paul represents the extreme example. If God was patient and gracious enough to save Paul, He is patient and gracious enough to save anyone. All who follow can look back at Paul as a prototype or pattern (“example,” *hypotypōsin*; cf. 2 Tim. 1:13). The ultimate sinner became the ultimate saint; God’s greatest enemy became His finest servant. Somewhere between these extremes fall all the rest.”⁷

B. Verse 16 – “However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”

1. This is the second time Paul uses the phrase “...I obtained mercy...” (cf. 13). We defined “mercy” last time as: “to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need”.⁸ An additional definition is: “to have compassion, be sorry for.”⁹ The New Spirit-Filled Life Bible states: “Mercy is not merely a passive emotion, but an active desire to remove the cause of distress in others.”¹⁰
2. “...that in me Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering...” – “Longsuffering” is defined as: “a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation or misfortune and without complaint or irritation”¹¹ Before his salvation, Paul was most certainly one who provoked God by his persecution of the Church. We should all be grateful for God’s longsuffering towards us.

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” – II Peter 3:9.

3. “...as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.” – The word “pattern” means; “example.”¹²

“But I obtained mercy for the reason that in me, as the foremost [of sinners], Jesus Christ might show forth and display all His perfect long-suffering and patience for an example to [encourage] those who would thereafter believe on Him for [the gaining of] eternal life.” - I Timothy 1:16 – Amplified Bible

C. Verse 17 – “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 376.

² *Ibid.*, 371.

³ D. Edmond Hiebert, *First Timothy*, Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1957), 42.

⁴ James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 70.

⁵ *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, William D. Mounce, Gen. ed. (Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, 2006.), 615.

⁶ Louw and Nida, 737.

⁷ A. Duane Litfin, “1 Timothy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 733.

⁸ Louw and Nida, 750.

⁹ *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Volume 2*, Colin Brown, Gen. Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Corporation, 1976), 594.

¹⁰ *New Spirit Filled Life Bible*, (Nashville, TN, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002), 1564.

¹¹ Louw and Nida, 306.

¹² Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

forever and ever. Amen.” – This is the last verse in this section where Paul is giving his testimony (**vv. 12-17**). He starts off with giving thanks and praise to God and ends it with giving God praise once again. He starts off with four attributes of God.

1. **“...the King eternal...”** – The **“King”** here, could be referring to either the Lord Jesus Christ (**Revelation 17:14**) or possibly referring to the Father as is the case in **I Timothy 6:15**. Either way, they are both **“eternal”** in that they have had no beginning and no end (**John 1:1-3; John 8:58; Romans 16:26; Colossians 1:16-17**).
2. **“...immortal...”** – **“pertaining to being not subject to decay and death.”**¹³
3. **“...invisible...”** – **“pertaining to that which cannot be seen”**¹⁴ (**John 1:18; John 4:23-24; Romans 1:20; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 11:27.**)
4. **“...God who alone is wise...”** – The word **“wise”** is not found in the original Greek. Most translations render this part something like; **“the only God”**. This is to bring contrast to the polytheism which was rampant amongst the pagans of Ephesus.

“The reason that Paul referred to his conversion in this part of his letter (1:12-17) was to encourage Timothy to be faithful in the ministry with which God had entrusted him (1:3-11). In his ministry at Ephesus Timothy would never encounter a more difficult case than Saul of Tarsus had been. The fact that God had completely transformed Paul proves that He can do the same for anyone. This gives hope to everyone who seeks to win people to Christ and to help them grow in Christ.”¹⁵

D. Verse 18 – “This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,” – In this verse, the apostle Paul gives Timothy a **“charge”** or, command to **“wage a good warfare”** by way of the previous prophecies that had been prophesied to him. The word **“prophecies”** means; **“an utterance inspired by God”**¹⁶ The Bible states that it’s for **“...edification, exhortation and comfort”** (**I Corinthians 14:3**). Donald Stamps in *The Fire Bible* writes: **“Evidently, God had used individuals to speak a special message from Him regarding Timothy, revealing and confirming certain aspects of God’s will for Timothy’s ministry in the church...Paul encourages Timothy to remain faithful to what God had revealed about His plans for Timothy’s life. As a pastor and one commissioned to serve the church, Timothy must remain loyal to faith in Christ and fight against the false teachings creeping into the church.”**¹⁷

E. Verse 19 – “...having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,”

1. First, Paul encourages Timothy to stay in **“faith.”** Later in this letter, Paul will tell Timothy to **“...fight the good fight of faith”** (**6:12**). Faith means trusting in God and His promises in spite of what is going on around you. We are to walk by faith and not by our senses or feelings. (**cf. II Corinthians 4:16-18**).
2. Next, Paul encourages Timothy to have a **“good conscience.”** The Complete Biblical Library asserts: **“The Biblical word conscience is a compound and literally means “co-perception.” It is that within which enables a person to distinguish between right and wrong.”**¹⁸
3. **“...some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck”** – The word **“rejected”** means; **“to thrust away, push away, repel.”**¹⁹

“Put away’ implies a violent and deliberate rejection of one’s personal conscience; the end result is shipwrecked faith. With the word ‘shipwreck’ the metaphor turns from military to nautical.”²⁰

F. Verse 20 – “...of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” – Paul gives these two examples of men who have shipwrecked their faith. Timothy must have been familiar with both of them. Hymenaeus is believed to be the same as found in **II Timothy 2:17**, but the name Alexander was a common name so may not be one mentioned elsewhere (**cf. Acts 19:34-35; II Timothy 4:14-15**).

1. **“...delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”** – Delivering someone over to Satan may mean that Satan is given permission to inflict some illness or disability on the evildoer. It may mean discontinuing fellowship with the church (**cf. I Corinthians 5:5**). It could mean both.

¹³ Louw and Nida, 267.

¹⁴ Ibid., 277.

¹⁵ Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Timothy* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2023), 31.

¹⁶ Louw and Nida, 439.

¹⁷ *Fire Bible: English Standard Version*, Donald C. Stamps, Gen. Ed. (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers Int’l, 2011), 2095.

¹⁸ *The Complete Biblical Library: Acts – Revelation, Volume 2*, (Empowered Life, Tulsa, OK, 2016.), 887.

¹⁹ Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

²⁰ The Complete Biblical Library, 887.