

Today's scripture reading is from 1 Timothy chapter 1.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, according to the commandment of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope.

To Timothy, my true child in the faith, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

As I urged you upon my departure from Macedonia,

Remain on Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, 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.

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, 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.

But we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully.

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 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has strengthened me because he considered me faithful, putting me into service, 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.

And the grace of our Lord was more than abundant with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

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.

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.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever, amen.

This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

Thanks, Jason.

We're starting a new series in 1 Timothy.

We'll cover the whole book, Lord willing, by June, first week in June.

Today we're just going to look a little bit at what Paul's trying to do.

I asked Jason to read the whole first chapter so that you could get a little flavor of the book.

A lot of the main themes that we'll be covering as we move throughout the book are located right here in the first chapter.

I wanted to, I was tempted to, and I wouldn't ask Jason to do this, wouldn't put him through that,

read the whole book to you this morning because that's how it would have been delivered to the early church.

But we had too many things to cover in conjunction with that.

So I would just encourage you as we begin this study sometime this week to sit down and just read through the whole book of 1 Timothy from start to finish.

You don't have to linger over any one particular chapter.

difficult passage or section too long, just read the whole thing from start to finish.

Maybe jot down some notes, some questions that you may have.

Hopefully we'll answer along the way.

And as we work through the book, feel free to shoot me those questions.

I'll try to address them as we preach through the sermon if it's appropriate to do so from the pulpit.

So let's pray.

We'll ask for the Lord's help this morning and we'll start looking right at these first couple of verses here in chapter one.

Heavenly Father,

I do ask that you would help me, that you would help us to see Christ this morning as we open your word.

Lord, I don't want to go through the motions this morning of getting up here and preaching another sermon.

Lord, I don't want for your people this morning to just come and hear another sermon.

Lord, we know the day in, the day out, the routines, the things that you've called us to be faithful to are important in shaping us and that there is a certain monotony to them.

But Lord, we also know that you, through your spirit, are working incredible things week in and week out, day in and day out, as we're in your word and as we're looking to you again.

So Lord, we just ask that you would do what only you could do as we look to be faithful to what you've called us to do.

We pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.

So in January, back to the basics month, we took a closer look and one of the things that came up week after week in January was really addressing the question of whose church is this?

And we saw in January that this is Christ's church.

It's not mine, it's not yours, it's not the elder boards, it's not the trustees, right?

It's Christ's church.

God speaks his church into existence.

one heart at a time through the preaching of the gospel, not just from up here in the pulpit, but perhaps more importantly at times through you as you share the gospel with your friends and neighbors and family members.

We saw that Jesus died for his church to present her holy and blameless, and he promised to build his church in Matthew 16.

But Christ isn't physically here in the flesh.

He's not here audibly telling us specifically what to do every time we have an elders meeting or a combined board meeting or a business meeting or even every Sunday as we gather together.

He's not here in the flesh.

Jesus has ascended.

He is in the flesh at the Father's right hand.

And he's left his church here on earth as his ambassadors to the world.

So how do we know who we are and how do we know what to do?

Like how we ought to live together as church?

How do we know who leads a church or his church?

And what are we supposed to do when his church is gathered together and we live together as his church?

Well, we find answers to these questions and many more in the pastoral epistles.

The pastoral epistles are 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus because Timothy and Titus were pastors of local churches at the time that Paul's writing these letters.

So he's writing these letters to local pastors.

And they're kind of the next generation of local pastors as Paul and the apostles are martyred and pass away.

So we're gonna cover one of those books, one of those pastoral epistles this spring in 1 Timothy.

But today we really wanna take a look at what the big overarching purpose of the book is.

And we'll see that purpose

As Paul commands, encourages, and blesses Timothy to continue to instruct believers in how to behave in the household of God.

So this is the big idea for today.

I'll show you the big idea for the book in a second.

But today we're going to see the big idea for the book and how Paul commands, encourages, and blesses Timothy.

So before we get to, we're just going to look at the first three verses today of the book, but before we get to those first three verses, we got to step back, look at the book as a whole, especially when you're dealing with a letter or an epistle.

It's a good idea, as I said before, to sit down and just read through the book, mark some like repeated ideas or themes that seem to come up and try to locate what the main purpose of the book is.

It's really helpful when the author explicitly tells you what the main purpose of the book is,

kind of like this book here in first timothy so if you look at chapter 3 verses 14 to 15 paul writes i hope to come to you soon but i am writing these things to you so that all right here's the reason he's writing this book right if i delay you may know how one ought to behave in the household of god which is a church of the living god a pillar and buttress of the truth

So right out in front here, Paul tells us why he's writing the book, and he's writing the book to help us know how to behave within the household of God or within the church.

It's kind of like a code of conduct for God's family, for God's household.

Now, this image of household and the reminder that the church of God or this house of God is of the living God, the one who's alive, he's not just a force, he's not just something that happened in the past,

but currently living God helped to bring us back to an awareness that God lives, right now lives among his people in a unique way.

Peter puts it this way in 1 Peter 2, he calls us a spiritual house.

And a spiritual house is a temple, right?

We're the temple of the living God here on earth.

And God lived in a lot of places.

He lived in the garden.

He lived in the tabernacle.

He lived in the physical temple in Israel.

But Peter tells us right now that where God dwells here on earth,

is among his people, his church.

And Jesus told his disciples that this was true.

He says, where two or three of you are gathered, there I am.

And since God dwells among his people in a unique way, so he's here among his people in a way that he's not other places in the world.

And since he dwells here in a unique way, his people ought to behave in his presence in a unique way.

Our behavior together, how we come together, how we organize ourselves, and how we operate as a group and as individuals ought to look unique in this world.

Now, and so Paul's writing to Timothy, the purpose statement here, Paul's writing to Timothy and the church at Ephesus, we'll take a look at that in a second, to instruct them on what that behavior looks like.

So this unique behavior that God's people are to have amongst themselves as God's dwelling amongst themselves, what does that look like?

And Paul's like, I'm gonna tell you.

I'm writing a letter to tell you what that looks like.

Now, if you're like me, anytime someone tells you to behave a certain way, your knee-jerk reaction is,

Don't tell me, right?

Don't tell me, or who are you to tell me how I ought to behave and what I ought to do?

Well, Paul was in a unique position to give these instructions, right?

He's in a unique position primarily as an apostle

But the way that he appeals to his apostleship is through this idea or theme of a mystery that God has revealed, right?

The mystery is the gospel.

It's what Christ has done on the cross.

But Paul talks about the gospel as this mystery that's being gradually revealed and has like finally been revealed through Jesus's death and resurrection on the cross.

And that he's bestowed the meaning of this mystery to his apostles and prophets.

So let me just back up and show you that theme in Paul's writings, but also a little bit in the book of Acts so we can kind of place this letter where it needs to be in church history here.

So Paul says in verse 1 that he was an apostle by the command of God, an apostle of Christ by command of God or Savior.

and of Christ Jesus, our hope.

You'll remember that Paul was once called Saul and was a very enthusiastic persecutor of the first followers of Jesus, right?

So he was out basically a terrorist against the church, throwing everybody in prison, all the believers in prison, routing out church homes and other home meetings.

And he was holding coats, right, when Stephen was stoned to death, first Christian martyr there.

But God supernaturally appeared to him as he was traveling to Damascus to do some more persecuting.

God appeared to him, spoke to him, struck him blind temporarily, and then converted him through that whole experience, right?

Converted him and called him to serve the church.

So it's true, right?

Paul was an apostle by the unique command of God.

Most of the other apostles were Jesus' disciples.

A requisite that the church has always...

had in place to be an apostle is that you have seen the risen Lord, right?

You've seen the risen Lord and the church has recognized your unique relationship with that risen Lord and unique authority as an apostle.

So Paul, in obedience to this call, right, this unique command that he gets from God, in obedience to this call, went on missionary journeys, three of them in particular.

In the first one, one of the places that Paul stopped and preached the gospel was

was Lystra, which is Timothy's hometown.

All right, so we're not told anything about Timothy, and so you can find all this information in the book of Acts.

I'll make a few references if you want to jot it down and go see it for yourself.

But Paul's first missionary journey travels through Lystra, preaches the gospel, people get saved, establishes a church in that area, and it's largely assumed that even though Timothy wasn't named, that he was converted through Paul on that first journey.

So he goes through Lystra.

In his second trip, Paul gets Silas with him, and he and Paul and Silas are now traveling around on the second journey.

And we're told in Acts 16, 1 to 3.

that Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra.

A disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.

He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.

Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

So on the second trip, Paul, in a way, commissions Timothy and brings Timothy along with he and Silas and the rest of their group, probably to replace John Mark, who had abandoned the group early on there, kind of in between the first and second missionary journeys.

And then later...

Paul brings Timothy, so he brings him on the second trip.

And then later he brings him on this third trip, the missionary journey after they've traveled around a little while.

And in his third trip, in his third and final trip, they spend, he and Timothy and probably others, spend about two years in the city of Ephesus.

So while Paul's in Ephesus, he wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians, which he had Timothy deliver to Corinth.

And he wrote Romans.

But we know Timothy didn't deliver Romans because he actually sends a greeting from Timothy in the book of Romans.

So Paul and Timothy, they left Ephesus after about two years of being there.

They traveled around some, but eventually they made their way back to Miletus, which is kind of a part of Ephesus.

It's like the harbor town or the port town.

for Ephesus.

They go to Miletus, and Paul calls all of the Ephesian elders to him in Miletus, and he kind of reads them the riot act.

You can read that in Acts 20, 18 to 35.

He confronts them about some false teaching that had crept in to the Ephesian church.

So after confronting, and that little speech, if you're a nerd like me and you just want to know,

Ephesians 20, 18 to 35 is kind of crucial for confirming the Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy and helping us place 1 Timothy in the timeline there.

So there's a lot of nerd history evidence linking those two speeches, a lot of overlapping themes and things like that.

So after confronting the Ephesian elders, Paul travels around a bit more, but then he ends up in Jerusalem where there's a big riot and everybody blames it on Paul, which is kind of his fault, but not really.

And then he's arrested and put in prison and eventually executed.

So the prison is a long time.

It's like four or five years where he's both in prison and then in house arrest.

He writes a lot more books, including the book of Ephesians.

And somewhere in between there, between Paul getting arrested and the confrontation with the Ephesian elders, Timothy makes his way back to Ephesus, where he becomes kind of the lead pastor, in a sense, the lead elder of the church there in Ephesus.

So all that to say, the important thing to see here is that when Paul writes Ephesians and he writes 1 and 2 Timothy, though he's writing them at different times and for different purposes, he's writing these letters generally to the same people in the same place.

So 1 and 2 Timothy and the book of Ephesians generally go into the same people to the same place.

And we see some overlapping themes in Ephesians and in 1 Timothy, 1 and 2 Timothy.

One of those themes being this idea of the mystery of Christ.

So I'm getting back around to what I was talking about earlier.

If I lost you, jump back in now.

This mystery of Christ, this theme of the mystery of Christ, is a major theme in Ephesians, and it's a small theme, although it's right there at the big purpose of 1 Timothy.

This mystery was revealed to Paul by the Spirit, we're told in Ephesians 3, 2-5.

He says, Assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation as I have written briefly.

When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which is not made known to the sons of men and other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

And this mystery of what Christ has accomplished

This mystery of Christ and what he accomplished through his death and burial and resurrection is described three more times, well, two more times, including that passage I just read for you there.

But it's really described in three relationships in the book of Ephesians.

One, the unifying and bringing together heaven and earth in chapter 1, 9-10.

It's also described, this mystery of what Jesus did on the cross, is described of the bringing together of Jews and Gentiles in 2, 11, 3-6.

That's primarily what he's talking about in the passage that's on the screen still.

And it's also described in the relationship of a husband and wife in chapter 5, 31 and 32.

So Paul's giving instructions to husbands in particular, and he says, you know, love your wife and present her holy and blameless before the Lord, sacrificing your own needs and your own self.

And he says, this is a profound mystery, but I'm talking about Christ and the church, that marriage is to reveal this mysterious relationship between Christ and the church.

Each of those relationships shows us another aspect or a unique angle on Christ's reconciling work on the cross.

How Christ, when he died, he brings together people, right?

Reunites God's people and God, but then also unites all kinds of people with God and together.

But again, the main point, the main point of this mystery, and here's what we need to see with this whole theme of mystery, it's very simple, is that we don't and we can't know these things about God and about Christ on our own.

That God has to show them to us.

They were once a mystery, and then God reveals them to us.

And he has revealed them through the apostles and the writings.

And this...

This theme continues into 1 Timothy.

If you look at verse 16 of chapter 3.

So we said 14 and 15 are the main purpose of the book.

I'm writing so that you will know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

And then he says in 16, great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness.

So this...

behaving well, looking like God, having the quality of godliness.

This is mysterious, and we see it in full mysterious form in he was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed in the world, taken up in glory.

Jesus, we'll talk about this passage more on Easter, actually.

Jesus shows us God perfectly, and he reveals the mystery of who God is and what he looks like perfectly.

But the point is, this was a mystery, and to our sinful hearts and minds, still is a mystery to a degree, and we need somebody to help us understand, and we need somebody to show us and to teach us what godliness looks like.

Paul's saying, just like Jesus came to do some very mysterious things, things that need explaining.

We look at the cross, we see a man die on the cross, and we see reports and eyewitness accounts of a man being raised from the tomb.

That's cool, but what does that mean?

There's a deeper spiritual meaning behind those physical events that needs to be shown to us, that needs to be explained to us to help us understand.

He's saying just like that mysterious reconciling work that God does through those events is a mystery and needs to be revealed, godliness and godly behavior that comes out of that reconciling work also needs to be explained and shown to us.

So if we're to behave in a way that's appropriate as the members of the household of God, we need help.

We need someone to explain this mystery of godliness to us, to help us know what it looks like to live within the household of God.

And Paul's saying, God helped me, Paul, right?

God helped me, Paul, to understand this mystery, and I'm writing to help you.

And he begins this help and this explanation pretty simply with a simple but profound greeting.

So we're just going to break this down.

Paul kind of looks at his command, but the authority that comes with his position, he encourages Timothy and he also blesses Timothy as well.

Let's just look at verse 1 here.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ our hope.

So this is kind of unique.

Paul wrote, we got a lot of Paul's letters in the Bible.

And this greeting is unique among, man, I'm really struggling to talk today.

I'm working hard, guys.

This greeting is unique among Paul's letters because he attributes his apostleship to God's command.

So a lot of times he attributes his apostleship to God's grace, his mercy, how he didn't deserve to be an apostle, but God showed him grace and mercy and gave it to him.

But this time he attributes it to God's command.

This is a militaristic term.

And he's telling Timothy that, look, I've received my commission.

I've received my marching orders from God.

It's important to remember that Timothy, and by inference, Paul, because Timothy was Paul's guy, trained by Paul, sent to Ephesus to help keep them in line.

because Timothy was receiving opposition, and by inference, Paul, they were receiving opposition by these false teachers in Ephesus.

So Paul's reminding Timothy and the Ephesian church of his authority, and that his authority to clarify these matters

is coming directly from the Lord, right?

That the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus.

There were witnesses to that.

There were people that affirmed this teaching and this instruction that Paul received from the Lord following that.

So Paul knows that Timothy needs, right?

In the face of this opposition, he needs to be strengthened.

He needs to be emboldened by this authority that's delegated to him.

But then right after he talks about the command of God, he rightly identifies God as our savior and of Christ Jesus, our hope.

So Paul knows that Timothy needs to be strengthened and emboldened by the authority of this call.

But then he also knows that that authority can be misused, it can puff him up.

So he reminds him of our need and his need of a savior and hope, right?

Any calling, right?

Any calling that God gives us within the household of God is all of grace.

Whatever role God calls us to play, whatever he calls us to do within the household of God is all of grace.

The Psalmist says, I'd rather be a doorman in the household of God than a king elsewhere.

I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the household of God because there's grace and I'm near the presence of God.

Each of our situations before Christ was dark and hopeless.

My situation before Christ, just as dark and hopeless as anyone sitting here.

Any role that God calls us to play is all of grace, and especially within positions of leadership, that authority or that role ought to be exercised with humility and selflessness that is appropriate and that ought to flow from being a recipient of that grace and mercy.

So Paul reminds Timothy in Ephesians,

and the Ephesian church of his God-given authority, but also the purpose for which he was given that authority, to humbly serve God's people, right?

To serve God, their savior, the God of their hope, and to serve his people on his behalf.

So Paul establishes his authority, but he does so in a humble way.

And then he encourages Timothy here in verse two, to Timothy, my true child in the faith.

You know, we saw in Acts 16 that Timothy's father was Greek and his mother was Jewish.

So because of this racially mixed background, his pastoral authority was frequently questioned and challenged, especially from the Jewish community.

They were like, who are you to tell us, right?

You're at a Greek father.

And that's why Paul circumcised him in Acts.

in Acts there before bringing him on his missionary journey.

It wasn't because he needed to be circumcised in order to please God, but it was also to remove any barrier for people accepting him as their pastor and leader.

So Paul's encouraging Timothy in the truth, right?

That in Christ, there's no Jew, no Greek, no slave, no free.

And Paul calls Timothy in a beautiful way here, his legitimate child in the faith, reminding him that what matters most in the household of God is not bloodlines, it's not how sound our physical family is, but what really matters is God's call and the unity that we have as we trust and hope in God's salvation.

which is why Paul draws that hope and salvation to Timothy's attention as he blesses him in verse three.

He says, I'm sorry, second half of verse two, grace and mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is a simple but beautiful blessing.

It's a threefold blessing.

They have grace, which is really a play on words.

The Greek word for greetings was karein,

And the Greek word for grace is charis, right?

So Paul takes hello in Greek and puts a Christian spin on it, right?

Puts a godly, Christ-like spin on it and just says grace, right?

Instead of saying hello.

Peace is a typical Jewish greeting for shalom.

So Paul's usual greeting in all of his letters were grace and peace, right?

which is a reminder of how God unites Jews and Greeks and unites all people in Christ, right?

That he brings together the shalom, the people that use shalom, and he brings together the people that use karein or grace, right?

But he adds here in a unique way, like nowhere else in any of his letters, he adds mercy.

This is grace, mercy, and peace.

Mercy here carries a sense of God's special grace to those in need, right?

It's like chesed in the Old Testament.

Chesed carries this idea of steadfast, dependable love.

A love that doesn't run away.

A love that sticks with you through the highs and the lows.

Rock solid, dependable love.

Again, reminding Timothy that in his weakness, even in the face of opposition, even when others are telling him that he's not worthy to speak on behalf of the Lord, right, and to lead his church, he's made strong.

So Paul commands, encourages, and blesses Timothy to continue to instruct believers on how they are to behave in the household of God.

I think what we need to see here, especially in these first couple of verses, is that the most valuable attribute in the household of God is humility and a sense of neediness.

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What ought to impress us most in God's house is not charisma or being dynamic or strength or power, but rather dependence, a recognition of our own weakness and dependence.

If we value humility and neediness, it's at least expressed in our prayer life.

It'll be expressed in leadership, especially in a dependence on God to speak through his word.

The Spirit that indwells us will confirm what the Spirit put in writing for us.

There's ways every week that we need to stand firm, and Timothy needed to stand firm and strong in the truth.

But Paul, even as he's encouraging Timothy to exercise strength and to stand firm in the truth and to lead faithfully, even as he's telling him to do that,

he does so in a way that is very Christ-like.

He does it reminding him of his neediness by reminding him of his dependence.

He's not telling him, hey, you got this.

You're great.

You're wonderful.

He's like, God called you.

Remember who called you.

Yeah, you're weak.

Yeah, you're needy.

Yeah, you're facing opposition.

But remember who called you, who put you there, and who's speaking through you week in and week out.

This is the same kind of humility and meekness and service that our Lord demonstrated to us.

We would expect those who follow in Jesus' footsteps and being under shepherds of his church to reflect that same kind of meekness and service that we witness in the Lord as he laid his life down for us here.

And that's that same meekness and service that we celebrate at the table today.

Let's bow our heads and pray as we remember what Christ has done.

Heavenly Father, you, our God and Savior and our hope, in coming to earth in the flesh, told us that you came not to be served, but to serve and to give your life as a ransom for many.

Lord, you did not come trampling on people who really deserve to be trampled on, Lord.

You didn't come exacting vengeance and justice and righteousness this first time.

Lord, but you came washing feet and you came healing and speaking truth in a kind and gentle way.

And Lord, even as you demonstrated meekness and kindness, you also demonstrated great strength in defeating sin and death on our behalf.

So Lord, as we remember and as we look in awe and wonder again as we come to the table today, we ask that you would work in us that same meekness and strength, strength to stand in faithfulness to your word,

and the instructions that you have given us, but, Lord, a meekness and a love that looks to display that truth and the beauty of that truth to others.

So, Lord, as we come and we behold, we also ask that you would proclaim through us the glory of your death and resurrection.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.