

1 Timothy 1:1-20

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[0:01] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope. To Timothy, my true son in the faith. Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies.

Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work which is by faith. The goal of this command is love which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm. We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God which he entrusted to me.

[1:31] I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength that he considered me trustworthy appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy, so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience, as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

Now to the King Eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever.

Amen. Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some may have rejected and so suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith.

Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. Well, if you want to open up your Bibles, Bible apps back to a chapter that Claire read for us.

[3:00] So if you're just joining, as I said earlier, we're starting a six-week series in this book of 1 Timothy. In essence, this book, this letter, is really about the proper ordering of church life.

How to hold to good doctrine, as we're looking at here in chapter 1, teaching, good leadership, as we'll go on to see, and good relationships within any local church, which Paul describes as the household of God.

We see a stated purpose. You want to flick over to chapter 3 and verse 14. He says, Although I hope to come to you, I'm writing you these instructions so that if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's households, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

And we know, if you go back to chapter 1 from verse 3, Timothy is in Ephesus. The Hapists were there last week. It was amazing. And that is in Western Turkey today.

Ephesus, we know from the book of Acts, had an incredible kind of occult center and occult activity going on. But God did amazing things in that place.

[4:17] As the gospel was preached, lives were changed, people were delivered from demon possession. Those caught up in sorcery gave up that life to follow Jesus, believing there was nothing better than him and what they were discovering in him.

And as a demonstration of the change, they were burning their scrolls, which the scriptures tell us were worth 140 years worth of annual wage.

That's literally millions of worth to them. And they burned them in the public square. And Paul's relationship with the church there in Ephesus is interesting.

We can read from Acts that he popped into Ephesus, at one point left Priscilla and Aquila to help them. And whilst they were there, Apollos appeared and they helped round off his gospel.

You read about that in Acts 18. And then Paul returned to Ephesus for a longer stay. We read about in Acts 19, round about three years, according to Acts 20, 31. And from that sort of central place, the gospel went out, probably out to Colossae, down through to other places that we read about in Revelation.

[5:29] His names are just escaping me right now, but it probably was the center from which the gospel went out. And then Paul, later on, is imprisoned, writes to them from prison, the letter to the Ephesians that is so wonderful, such a powerful letter.

He's so grateful for them and what God is doing amongst them and helps them kind of just remember the new life that they are receiving and encourages them in that.

After his release and somewhere on his journeys within Macedonia, he sent Timothy to help them. Also, as he was passing by, he wasn't able to go into Ephesus, but asked the elders to go and meet them in Miletus and give instruction.

We'll talk about some of that later. But interestingly, so there's this church, this place, has an incredible sort of spiritual history with people popping in and out, God doing amazing things.

And then the Lord Jesus himself addresses the church in Revelation, doesn't he? Chapter 2. And we hear how they endured hardships, that they have dealt with false teaching, helped by Timothy and Paul, as we're going to be reading about.

[6:47] And yet, sadly, that's the church that has forsaken their first love. They're getting many things right, but that fundamental thing of crisis, their first love, well, they've forsaken that.

And all of these things happen roughly in the course of a 40-year period. So that's the kind of time frame that we're talking about from Paul's first contact to them being addressed by the Lord Jesus through the Apostle John.

And as a fellowship, of course, we've been thinking about our 10th year together. And I guess as we sort of think about, you know, what's Cornstone going to look like if the Lord tarries with us and we're still running within 30 years' time?

What do we want it to look like? What do we need to be doing in amongst the roots and the foundations of us as a fellowship to ensure that they are strong? And as the Lord wills, then succeeding generations actually will be stronger in the faith than we, able to hold out the gospel with love and with confidence to whatever, you know, context they face themselves culturally, politically, and so on.

But in order for that to be strong in 30 years' time, then we need to get the foundations right, as we're saying, and the foundations are addressed here in Paul's letter to Timothy.

[8:08] And so, you know, we do well to take on board what is being said. And the first thing that Paul wants to address in Ephesus is the soundness of their doctrine, that they are faithful to the gospel, where doctrine is a little bit of a dirty word in some circles, and it really just means teaching.

Literally, the word in Greek for doctrine comes from the same root that we use for the word hygiene. It is to do, the word doctrine then is to do with spiritual health. False doctrine is going to make the church sick rather than enjoy the ocean of liberty and life that there is in and through Jesus Christ. Signed doctrine, verse 10, that verse 11, conforms to the historic, apostolic, biblical gospel entrusted to Paul and the other apostles recorded for us here in Scripture.

And so, as he addresses the idea of signed doctrine or teaching that conforms to this glorious gospel, we'll see that gospel sort of just permeating everything that he's saying as he gives a gospel greeting in verses 1 to 2, expresses some gospel concerns, verses 3 to 11.

We see something of his gospel heart in it all in verses 12 to 14. And then he addresses verses 18 to 20, gospel conduct. There's a lot in here and we're tempted to do it in one sermon.

[9:38] We'll not be able to go into everything in depth, but hopefully we'll get the sense of what's going on. So, gospel greeting, especially there in verse 2. But as we get going, there's something of interesting to note in all of Paul's writings, that actually when he writes at the beginning of his letter, quite often he'll give a kind of a hint at what he's going to be addressing.

And this letter is no exception. Verse 1, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the command of God our Savior and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why does he pop that in there, by the command of God, in this particular letter? Well, it's likely that the letter will not just be read by Timothy, but by the whole fellowship, or the many fellowships in Ephesus.

And so he needs them to hear some certain truths. That ultimately, there is a chain of command that God has set up. Paul has been commanded by God here in verse 1, and in verse 18, commanding Timothy to verse 3 and verse 5, command them not to do certain things.

There's a definite chain of command, you know, in this letter that Paul sets up. It's the use of military language, and we see more of that in verse 18, fighting the battle well and so on.

[11:06] And if you've been in the services, then you will know that idea well. But modern culture, we're a little bit uncomfortable with that kind of idea and some parts of it, but actually we're much more familiar with it than we realize, especially in the workplace.

Something comes down from HQ via management to the shop floor to achieve the mission and aims of the company. There's a kind of chain of command that is followed.

But ultimately, what Paul is addressing and helping the Ephesian church to kind of grasp is the idea of authority, isn't it? That ultimate authority for the church and the life of the church and the health of the church in regard to our doctrine, our living, our practice within the household of God is ultimately with God himself.

He is the one who determines how things should be. It's his household. And that is relayed through his word, through the apostles who have safeguarded the gospel for us, now written down for us in scripture.

And so scripture then, for us, is the ultimate authority we use in determining how our doctrine, our Christian life and conduct and so on. Everything, everything needs to be tested against the word.

[12:27] So even if we were visited by an angel and they said something to us, if it's contrary to what's written in here, you tell them just, you know, you're talking rubbish.

If Joseph Smith had realized that, then Mormonism wouldn't exist. So Paul uses this kind of language to kind of make things abundantly clear to help Timothy in his leadership and help the Ephesian church understand where we get, where's the root of our authority.

It's rooted in God ultimately and his word revealed to us. And he addresses Timothy affectionately here, doesn't it? Verse two, he says, true son in the faith.

And you may know well that Paul was from Lystra, which again, modern day Turkey. So, you know, ethnically, he's from that area though he's half Jewish and he was taught the scriptures by his godly granny Lois and his godly mother Eunice.

Maybe he was converted under Paul's ministry and therefore had a sort of special place in Paul's heart and certainly Paul has invested in him, trained him for ministry.

[13:41] And as he writes, we're used to kind of Paul's letter and his sort of customary adaption to a typical Roman greeting which would be something like good health to you.

Rather, he says, you know, grace and peace. But actually, he adds something unique that he doesn't do in any other letters. He uniquely adds the word mercy. It makes this wonderful gospel triad of undeserved love, undeserved forgiveness and a sense peace, undeserved rest with the Lord and right relationship with him.

This is a letter that's full of gospel hope and gospel wonder and gospel truth. But I wonder if he adds mercy, partly because they're going to be talking about the law and we'll do that later, but we'll also see just how that understanding of him being a debtor to the mercy of God fuels his life and his ministry and his understanding of life before God and the wonder of the gospel.

So, sign doctrine, sign teaching, Paul's going to say, revolves around verse 15, the gospel that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

That's the thing, right? Everything else kind of revolves. It shapes here his greeting, but also we're going to see now that it shapes and fuels his concern as he raises gospel concern with them.

[15:11] Because we've noted that whatever is being preached in Ephesus and, you know, we don't entirely know the content of it, but whatever is being preached, verse 11, it is not conforming to that gospel, the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God entrusted to him.

And it's interesting back in Acts chapter 20 when Paul asked the kind of elders to come and meet him in Miletus because he wasn't able to go there. And as he addressed them with tears, in a sense, he seemed to speak prophetically into their situation when he said to them, Acts chapter 20, verse 29, he said, I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come among you and will not spare the flock, even from your own number of elders.

Men will arise, they'll distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard.

Leaders will arise, wolves who will teach falsely, live falsely, who rather than feeding the flock, will feed off the flock. These are wolves, if you like, in sheep's clothing, actually shepherds or pastors or elders, leaders in sheep's clothing, bringing a false gospel.

And what Paul sort of foresaw, we'll see coming true here. And Paul's really clear, isn't he, that those who are teaching these false things need to be taken, they need to be stopped from preaching.

[16:47] It's strong language, isn't it? Verse 3, command certain people not to teach false doctrine, false teaching, involving myths and endless genealogies.

And then he gives a reason why. Ultimately, because as we've said before, Paul knows that the church will be killed off not by persecution, but by false teaching and false preaching.

Actually blinding people to the truth, preaching people into hell rather than heaven. And so he's desperate to command people, stop them from teaching these false things, help them to see the true gospel.

I wonder if we can begin to sort of glean the essence of what they're saying and what they're doing from these verses.

Well, from verse 7 we can see that it's to do with the law. They want to be teachers of the law. Basically, they haven't a clue what they're doing with the law, but whatever it is that they're doing, they're talking very confidently about it.

[17:53] And folks are like, oh, that sounds about, I must be right, they're speaking so confidently about it. Myths, verse 4, could refer to experience. You know, that experience that a certain person has had and then it's passed on and oh, this person had this experience of God and it's just spurious.

And then whole branches of theology are based on a massive distraction that leads to, verse 4, endless speculation. speculation about things that are just way out of the realm of biblical experience and understanding.

It's spiritual sounding. Yes, they're confident, they're eloquent and they talk of higher experiences, profound teaching. But ultimately, Paul's saying, it's just gobbledygook.

It's not Christianity. It's false. Be on your guards. So those two central ideas that are, whatever it is that they're teaching, they're emboldened.

Speculation, it's creating controversy, it's dividing the fellowship, which is leading away from what he thinks should be the main focus of this and every church.

[19:02] Of verse 4, advancing the work, advancing the kingdom, which is done by faith, which is seeing people in accord with the very command of God's, becoming disciples, growing in their discipleship, growing in mission and maturity.

So the goal, Paul says, is don't get distracted by that nonsense. Stay on task. Stay on mission. But all the while, as you do that, Timothy, as we do that as the people of God, be checking your motives.

Be checking your motives. As elders, I've said before, we're reading through a chapter at a time in each of our elder meetings, a book called Powerful Leaders Question Mark.

It's all about avoiding the abuse of power. It explores and encourages the readers to explore not just what they're doing, how they're doing it, but why they're doing what they're doing.

thinking about not just the what, but what are your motives? What is your heart? What are you really trying to, who are you really trying to serve?

[20:20] And so here, Paul addresses their motives in particular. And actually, he will see him repeat some of the ideas that he raises here in verse 5 and verse 19 about how we're to operate in

the ministries that God has given to us, whether we're teaching in the Sunday school or with the youth or we're out in street pastors or we're involved in student ministry or whatever it is that God has called us into, that we do it from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

How do we do that? How practically do we maintain that pure heart and conscience and sincere faith? Because the reality is that we know that all of our, you know, the very best of our motives are mixed or tainted by all manner of things.

But I wonder if a number of things need to be in place in order to help us with that. Firstly, of course, a vivid and honest walk with the Lord where we're asking him to kind of help us to kind of say, I mean, with our motives, show us our sins, show us where we are, that we are sinful in the things that are motivating us to do the things that we're doing.

Are we using them to prop up our ego? Are we using it to kind of look good in front of others? Are we using it to kind of demonstrate just how well we know the scriptures and what deep understanding we have of writers?

Or are we looking to serve others rather than serve ourselves? What are our motives? How are they influenced by the big three whether it's sex, power, or money?

[22:03] So you need, first of all, close relationship with the Lord that is honest and open.

Secondly, you need a close fellowship with others. If we're single, then good friends that we can talk through things with open.

Say, I just, I doubt myself here. Just why it is I'm doing this. And we can have an open conversation over married, a husband, a wife. Usually a good check and balance on us as you share your hearts. But maybe also, in addition, have, you know, friends who are the same gender who might be, you're allowed to speak into, you give permission to speak into your life as well. So that in the midst of all that, we have good, honest, spirit-filled, faith-filled, Christ-centered, word-grinded fellowship.

A vivid and fertile place in which God can minister to our hearts, our consciences, as we seek to conduct the ministries that he's given to us before him. So Timothy's role here, Paul is making clear in a church or ministry, leadership, whatever ministries we're involved in, will have an element where we are involved in protecting the gospel, asking people to stop in order to protect the fellowship or the ministry.

And as we do that, in large or in small ways, we speak the truth in love. It might be a young believer. I remember, I think I've told this story before, I just was fresh out of the, you know, out of the box in terms of faith.

[23:39] I'd just gone to study engineering at Napier in Edinburgh and we were going around the halls of the prisons doing evangelism and a kind of events week. And I was keen as mustard.

Somebody, I was at a meeting once and they said, oh, you Christians, it's like they're on crack cocaine. I'm just so excited about the Christian. You know, and that was me. I was, I would have told a lamppost about Jesus if it had listened.

And we're going around the door and I was going around, actually, my pal Dave, who became my pal Dave Todd, and I was my best man. And we were young and going around and the girl answered the door or the person answered the door and I was trying to explain the gospel.

I said, yeah, so first of all, in the gospel, you know, they kind of tried to get right with God by good works, but then that didn't work. So God then sort of tried something else and sent Jesus. And Dave taking me aside, I said, that's not quite right, mate.

That's not how it works. How does it work? Okay, right, next door. You know. We can do it in small ways, gently, the truth in love, or sometimes it is in bigger ways, isn't it?

[24:54] In verse 8, we get to the nitty-gritty of the issue that they have totally misunderstood the place of the law. Most probably because he uses the phrase not for the righteous, they believe that the law is to be obeyed.

a little bit like I thought in order to be saved. For them, it was law plus gospel equals saved.

Law plus gospel equals saved. Well, that's just not right because actually the formula, if you like, is the gospel plus nothing.

Nothing. we can't add to it by any good work, any good deed, any other thing. It is the gospel alone that saves. And of course, then we understand as we go on that the law then is a guide to godliness.

It doesn't save us. It helps cultivate the new life. Put it in more theological terms, that they were thinking that our justification was not by faith alone, but required that kind of justification by God

plus our sanctification, our good works, and that would equal salvation.

[26 : 11] But the gospel is that we are justified by faith alone. Paul makes that abundantly clear in Romans chapter 1. And then that what comes from that is salvation and the ongoing sanctification, the sanctifying work, changing work, transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

That we are not, the Bible is really clear, saved by good works, but we are saved for good works, Paul tells us in the future, that God has prepared in advance for us to do.

So the law, a right understanding of the law, to quote Eric Alexander, is that the law reveals sin, it restrains us from sin, and reproves us when we sin, but ultimately cannot save us from our sin.

Somebody once said the law is like a mirror, it can show you that your face is dirty, but it lacks the power to wash your face. Only the gospel can make us clean.

So no wonder Paul reaffirms that at the very heart of this passage, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. That in a sense is the beginning and end of our gospel.

[27 : 25] That is what it is centered upon and everything else flows from that. And it's interesting that he then goes on when he talks about the law, the list that he gives, he breaks in a sense into two sections.

There's rebelling against God and rebelling against neighbor. He's listing in a sense or summing up the two tables, the two halves of the Ten Commandments. The first commandments in verses one to four about loving God, the second, the rest of the commandments are about loving our neighbor. He then goes on to list particular ways in which that Roman culture, but not just that Roman culture, was transgressing the laws of God. Note that when he refers to sex, he's talking about sexual acts, not orientation.

That was the issue. All of these things, they're not the product of the Christian life. They're not accord with sound teaching and not to be practiced in the Christian life.

But of course, there is the opposite error in use of the gospel. There is the first of the law. There's the first use that is to kind of justify it by our good works.

[28 : 44] If we obey the law, God will love us and accept us. That is not the gospel. We are accepted in Christ and therefore, we then go on to kind of desire to please him and to live before him because he's already pleased with us.

But the opposite error with the law is of course that the law is completely irrelevant in the Christian life. That actually, because of the power of the cross and we're justified by faith alone, actually, it means that, you know, we can sin all the more so that grace may superabund.

Paul addresses that in Romans chapter 6, doesn't he? That actually, the first error is legalism, the second error is a kind of libertarianism. And Paul says, God forbid that that would be the way that we think, that we would have that attitude.

and it may well show that we haven't actually grasped what the gospel is and may not actually be believers, which is solemn. But he says, no, actually, when we think about the law, verse 8, the law is good because it reflects the very character of God, the God that we love and therefore helps us to cultivate this new life that we're receiving.

The law and the gospel are not enemies, they're friends. The Puritan, Samuel Bolton, in his book on the true bounds of Christian freedom said this, he said, the law, well, it sends us to the gospel that we may be justified.

[30 : 10] And then the gospel sends us to the law again to inquire what is the duty of those who have been justified. Just like Jesus said, if you love me, you'll keep my commands.

And as we do that, of course, it is the evidence of the new birth that we've received that is bringing us into conformity with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And as he reflects on, as he thinks about the law, and as he thinks about the state of those who are, you know, condemned by the law, he cannot help but think of his own life.

As he thinks about blasphemers, he remembers that is exactly what he once was. And as he does that, we see something moving on from his gospel concerns about the false teaching to his gospel heart and really the foundation of his faith and his life.

And what we're going to see is that the foundations are fueled by two things. I think Pete mentioned them in prayer. I think we've sung about them.

Those two things are grace and gratitude. as he gives testimony. Those are the things that come to the fore and all the glory, he says, goes to God.

[31:32] Verse 12, I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. There's a sense of amazement in Paul, isn't it, that God would do that as he remembers who he was and what he had done and that God would choose him, transform, turn his life around and then use him for this great and mighty task.

Even though, he says, verse 13, I was once a blasphemer. I broke that first table of the law and a persecutor and a violent man breaking the second table of the law, dragging Christians as they did to prison, standing by whilst others stoned them to death.

And so, in his mind, he's thinking, God had every, every, every right to absolutely throw the book at me when it came to the courts of heaven. But instead of throwing the books at him and condemning him, he was shown mercy.

He was given divine pardon. He says, I devised, in a sense, he's saying, I deserved the worst of condemnations but unbelievably received the most unbelievable of mercies.

Undeserved, forgiveness and pardon from the king of kings himself. Because I acted, he says, in ignorance and unbelief. In verse 14, and the grace, the undeserved, unmerited love of God was poured out on me abundantly along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

[33:10] You know, as he describes himself, we can put ourselves there as well, can't we? in our experience of the abundant grace of God that though he deserved to throw the book at us for what we had done, he decided in his grace and his goodness to show us mercy.

I could do that because of the cross. To give us the divine pardon, to set us free into life in him. grace and gratitude.

These are the things that undergirded his life, but actually all our lives, aren't they? Cut us and we bleed a loud hallelujah.

I'm saved by the grace and mercy of God. Should be in the very DNA of us as believers, shouldn't it? I wonder just in all that you're facing at the moment, whatever that might be, have you lost sight of grace and gratitude?

Have you lost sight of these things at the very foundation? Whether it is that we're on the mountain top, whether we're in the valley, irrespective of where we are, we're in the midst of the storm or in the midst of the sunshine.

[34:34] These things are still true. Grace we are receiving in abundance and there is place for gratitude even in the valley.

Verse 15. And so he says that here's a trustworthy saying, deserves full acceptance. Here's the thing where we're centering all this sign doctrine, teaching that I'm talking about. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst.

But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me the worst of sinners Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

I wonder if you've come along this morning, you're here, you may be a seeker, you're listening online and thinking well here's a thing, you might have saved Paul, you might have saved those folks here, but there's no way you could ever save me.

Not after I have done. And Paul, Paul is shouting down the centuries to say this thing that cannot be true, that cannot be true because he saved me, the very worst of sinners.

[35:53] Here, here in these pages, the mercy, the great and abundant mercy of God, never-ending patience of God, the grace of God calling out to us saying come, receive mercy, receive salvation, come in repentance and faith into new life if you're not a believer yet this morning.

Receive him and know his divine pardon over your life. His power, his cross is able to save, Paul says, the worst of sinners and there's few if none worse than him.

And then, of course, as he delights in the truths of the gospel, as his soul just resonates with its glory and wonder, he comes out with this great doxology of praise.

Doxology, it's just two words, doxos and logos. Doxos means glory, glory words. Verse 17, to him be all the glory for what he has done, our king, eternal, immortal, immortal, invisible, and be honor and glory forever and ever and ever.

Amen. Paul's gospel heart shines through, doesn't it? And as it does, as he moves from greeting to concern, then he, gratitude, moves on to, finally and briefly, gospel conduct.

[37:24] Timothy, we'll see in chapter 4, verse 12, is someone who perhaps struggles. You know, he's not necessarily a natural, strong leader, maybe because of his age.

We know he's prone to stomach troubles, maybe because of fear, anxiety, 2 Timothy 1, 7. And the firmness that Paul is advocating that is going to require him to go and to stop these certain men from preaching these things doesn't necessarily come naturally to him.

I'm not sure it comes naturally to most people. But Paul, gently but firmly, encourages him to see it as part of the commission.

In keeping with the prophecies about him and the command of God to stand firm, to fight. And the word there, it's not the same word as he uses elsewhere about fighting the good fight and so on. It's actually the word strategize. You might manage things well, not losing sight of how the gospel shapes your conduct, not using fleshly or worldly strategies, Machiavellian levels of subterfuge, but rather with a good conscience, with a loving heart, in faith.

[38:52] In other words, in accord with the work of the Spirit in you, leading you forward. And actually, we know that as the writer of the Hebrews writes about Timothy, that in 11 chapter of Hebrews 11, 23, Timothy himself spent some time in prison for the faith and was released.

So God was at work as Timothy was encouraged by Paul in these things and maybe it helped him later as he faced even harder things. So there are those in Ephesus who are learning that are rooted in wrong teaching and they don't understand the working of the Spirit.

They're working in accord with the flesh, trying to attain their salvation by the law. They may well be worldly in their manner and godly, taking advantage of their position, lording it over others.

And ultimately, as they have stepped away from the gospel, they have shipwrecked their faith. They have abandoned the faith. In verse 20, two such men are named Hymenaeus and Alexander.

They're probably two amongst those who are leading, promoting the controversies, the meaningless talk, that were speaking blasphemy. And that kind of, because they were, it was public error, was leading to this public acting.

[40:22] Stay away, says Paul, from these men as he warns the Ephesian church as well as Timothy. They are a real danger. They have undermined the authority of God as gospel.

They're leading people astray. They're blinding people to the truth. They're preaching through the preaching of this false gospel. And that, in Paul's mind, is a real sort of millstone around their neck using sort of Jesus imagery.

And so Paul, he says, hands them over to the one who's ultimately behind all the confusion that they have been causing. He uses the phrase here that he's handing them over to Satan so that they might not blaspheme.

What does that mean? Well, he uses a similar idea with the Corinthians where someone has been sexually immoral and the Corinthians haven't exercised church discipline and removed him, 1 Corinthians 5.2.

So Paul makes the judgment from afar and delivers this man over to Satan, as he says, that he might, as an individual, be delivered from himself, from his flesh and ultimately saved.

[41:31] In a sort of form of excommunication, I guess, ultimately. And the aim in Corinthians, very clear of such judgments, is that the consequences of sin are not ignored, but ultimately that that person who is restored to the Lord that they might be saved and ultimately then restored to the fellowship of God's people.

Such discipline is not punitive, it's always restorative. And in a shepherd flock analogy, sometimes a wolf has to be removed so the sheep can breathe.

It's an act of love for the church, a wake-up call also for the offender. These are solemn things, aren't they? But as we go to the table, actually, the mercy is that these things are relatively rare amongst us.

And whilst the church leadership is called to consider our own gospel and others through these verses in Timothy and so on, we can all come back to that truth that we delight in, that central thing that kind of binds us together is that we ultimately, because Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, our lives are founded in grace and gratitude.

And that is the point that I wanted to land as we come to the table, as we remember just how the way in which and the manner in which and the lengths which God went to so that you and I today, debtors to mercy, delighting in that undeserved grace and mercy that just fuels our gratitude, that is ours, a mercy that's ours in abundance in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[43:30] So we remember that on the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took the bread. On the night that he was betrayed, he took the bread and he broke it and said, this is my body.

It's going to be broken for you. In the same way also, he took the cup saying, this cup represents the new covenant that I'm going to establish in my blood for you.

So the apostle Paul says, as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine, what are we doing? We're proclaiming the Lord's death and the glories and the wonder of it until he comes again to take us home.

So come, eat, drink, and remember this is the Lord's table. It is for all those who love the Lord's. And if you're thinking this morning, I'm not sure if I should be taking, I'm not a Christian, that's fine, just pass the elements on.

If you're thinking, there's other reasons why I'm not going to take it this morning, that's fine, just pass on the elements. Nobody minds. But come do business of your heart with the Lord. If you need to be taken back to that place of grace and gratitude, then go there.

[44 : 47] There are other things that the Lord has been speaking to your heart over the week or this morning. Then come, bring that to the table, bring that to the foot of the cross. Let him speak into your heart and your life.

So come, eat, drink, and remember.