

God's Household, Part 3: "The Effect of the True Gospel"

1 Timothy 1:12-17

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[SERMON TRANSCRIPT]

Introduction

Hello church! We are now in our third part of our series in the apostle Paul's letter, called "1 Timothy."

One idea that has stuck out especially in this first chapter of 1 Timothy is the word "stewardship." Stewardship is a wonderful word- but it doesn't sound like it at first glance. In English, it just means taking care of someone else's stuff. But it's not just taking care of someone else's stuff, but responsibly and skillfully managing those resources.

So being a good steward of our environment means responsibly and skillfully figuring out how to have enough food and water for all the earth's citizens, finding alternative energy sources, and preserving ecosystems for plant and animal life to also share our planet.

And being a good steward of our health means responsibly and skillfully eating meals that are both nutritious and delicious, exercising consistently, and doing preventative medical health checks.

This idea of stewardship is even more awesome in light of our relationship with God because God entrusts his resources with his people- whether it be money, minds, bodies, energy, time, and relationships. It's an important way to look at our lives because it gives us higher purpose and meaning for the lives we live. And we can actually be partners with God as his stewards!

Scripture Reading

As we've explained, the book of 1 Timothy is a letter written to his disciple, Timothy, as he was sent to the church in the city of Ephesus to straighten out some problems there.

Specifically the problem was the issue of "certain persons" who were teaching doctrine that was not sound. Although we don't know the specific teaching that was in error, the letter does provide some information about it: that they were promoting "myths" (probably mixing religious beliefs from other cultures like Greek or Roman mythology) and "genealogies" (probably over-emphasizing the lineages of Abraham and other important figures in the Old Testament). This was causing people to get confused in "speculation" rather than faithfully stewarding the message of Jesus Christ, the message that was clear, concrete, and truly lifesaving.

So Paul said in verse 11 (right before today's text) that he was "entrusted" with the "gospel of the glory of the blessed God." Now in today's text, verses 12-17, he shares more personally what he means by this. This is God's Word for us today:

1 Timothy 1:12-17 (ESV):

12 I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, 13 though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16 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. 17 To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Proposition

Paul felt this great responsibility and privilege to faithfully steward the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the main message for us as the church today as well.

The “one thing” from 1 Timothy 1:12-17:

Faithfully steward the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Organizational Statement

These are only five sentences, but they are packed! So the flow of this message will go like this as Paul faithfully stewarded the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

1. **The gracious call to serve God (12-13a):** First, he was thankful for the gracious call to serve God.
2. **The overflowing grace of God in Christ (13b-14):** Second, he believed that God’s grace in Christ overflowed for him.
3. **The clear truth of the Gospel (15):** Third, Paul was clear in the truth of the Gospel for himself and others.
4. **The example of God’s patience (16):** Fourth, he himself was an example of God’s great patience towards people.
5. **The glory that belongs to Christ (17):** Fifth, he knew he was repurposed to give glory to Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Let’s pray together before we go any further: Heavenly Father, help us to learn well how to faithfully steward the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives. Help us to grasp who we are in you and the glory that you are so worthy of. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

→ **Transition:** The first reason why Paul faithfully stewarded the Gospel in his life was this...

Sermon Outline

I. The Gracious Call to Serve God (12-13a)

A. Paul was so thankful for the gracious call to serve God.

Verse 12-13a: 12 I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, 13a though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent.

1. Let’s take a close look here at verses 12-13a.
 - a) The first thing I observe here in these verses is simply that Paul overflowed with gratitude! He is very clear to whom his gratitude is directed: *Christ Jesus our Lord*. He thanked Jesus the Christ- the “Messiah” or special, eternal King that God promised to raise up in the Old Testament to deliver his people. And he also said that Jesus is “our Lord”- unquestionably God that Timothy, the Ephesian church, and he worshiped.
 - b) This was an incredible statement for anyone who knew his past (Timothy and the Ephesian church most likely did) because Paul used to hate Jesus and his disciples. He thought Jesus was an imposter and a threat to his religion. Acts 8:1-3 and 9:1-2 describe this version of Paul: He had approved the murder of Stephen, a disciple of Jesus, which

kicked off a great persecution of other disciples of Jesus. Paul was an instigator of this. It was described that he “ravaged” the church: doing raids in the houses of Christians that were gathered together, dragging them into prison, and violently threatening them.

- c) This is why what he wrote here is so significant: In his previous life, he thought he was serving God, but he was actually God’s enemy- a *blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent*. But now Jesus had done a powerful 180-degree transformation in Paul’s life! He was now on Jesus’ team and serving God for real this time!
 - d) Paul said- in the New Living Translation of v. 12- that Jesus “considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him.” Maybe Paul wondered how God could trust him- but he loved, believed in, and worshiped Jesus Christ now and he was so thankful for the privilege to now truly serve God!
2. **Principle #1:** Being thankful for the gracious call to serve Jesus Christ is why we want to faithfully steward the Gospel.
- a) It’s obvious Paul saw his calling to serve Jesus as a privilege. We might have warped perspectives about what this means. It can be being in “full-time ministry” (like Paul) but it’s not only that. For most of us we think it’s only being involved in some ministry in the church (like Timothy), but it’s not only that.
 - b) Being honest now, how many of us feel that “serving” Jesus like this is can become a burden? It feels like an unpleasant duty in which it’s hard to see the benefits and experience joy. So we might choose to go through the motions of serving- we “serve” to save face, to not disappoint others, or to just avoid people questioning us.
 - c) But let me share with you now what serving Jesus really means. It’s surrendering our own desires and ambitions to his. It’s doing everything we do- in word and deed- for his purposes and glory. Now you may be saying to yourself, “Pastor, that’s just not possible in every area of my life.” And that’s true- it’s actually impossible outside of God’s power. But here’s the secret to cultivating the heart of gratitude to serve God like how Paul did.
 - d) Remember the story we talked about from “The Main Thing” from Luke 7:36-50? Jesus was sharing a meal at the home of a Pharisee named Simon. During the meal a woman with a reputation as a “bad sinner” came in: with her tears and hair she washed Jesus’ feet and poured expensive perfume on them. This was what Jesus said about her in Luke 7:47 (ESV): *Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven- for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.*
 - e) Therefore, the way we cultivate a heart of gratitude to Jesus is to keep remembering that we’ve been forgiven much by Jesus. Then the very process of allowing God to work through our selfish desires and unsundered idols helps to convince us that we’ve been forgiven much by Jesus.

→ **Transition:** We faithfully steward the Gospel because of the gracious call to serve God. Now the second reason why Paul faithfully stewarded the Gospel in his life was this...

Sermon Outline (continued)

II. The Overflowing Grace of God in Christ (13b-14)

A. Paul believed that God’s grace in Christ overflowed for him.

Verse 13b-14: *13b But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

1. Let’s take a close look here at verses 13b-14.

- a) This was the life-changing experience that led him to be so thankful. The word “but” is always important when you study the Bible- here is one of the biggest “buts” of Paul’s letters. Even though he used to be such a terrible enemy of Jesus and his church, he received mercy from God. “Mercy” can be defined as not getting what one deserves; Paul knew that he deserved God’s eternal punishment for what he was before.
 - b) But he received mercy! He was someone who knew that his great sins were forgiven! He wasn’t trying to excuse himself when he said, *I had acted ignorantly in unbelief*, but he was just stating the fact that he was hopelessly lost and in the dark.
 - c) This next phrase in verse 14 is huge. Paul said that God’s grace “overflowed” for him- that word is crucial. This isn’t a normal word- Paul kind of combines a couple words into one to best describe what God’s grace is like: it overflows or it “superabounds.”
 - d) Illustration: God’s grace “superabounding” in our lives can be thought of like how it was at the resort that Nickey and I had our honeymoon (after our wedding). This resort “all-inclusive,” which meant that all the food and drinks were included in the price of our stay. So every meal we ate our fill: breakfast, lunch, and dinner we had superabounding steak, pasta, seafood, and desserts. Not only that, there were things like smoothie stations and snack bars open all day. Every 100 meters or so I could eat a plate of tortilla chips and guacamole (which I did) or drink a new tropical smoothie (which I did)- and it never, ever ran out. I seriously gained 2-3 kilograms being there just for several days! In the same way, Paul believed that God’s grace in Christ overflowed: he could always get filled with more as he needed it and he knew that God’s grace would never, ever run out.
 - e) If mercy is defined as not getting what one deserves, grace is defined as getting what one does not deserve. The New Living Translation says v. 14 like this: “He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus.” So Jesus’ grace overflowed in giving Paul faith to trust Jesus. Paul would never have trusted Jesus by his own ability- remember he was lost in his ignorance! Even believing is a gracious act of God in a person’s heart. This is mind-blowing if you think about it: even faith is part of the gift of God’s overflowing grace! Thus we be sure that God will not take it away- he refills to the top eternally; it never runs out!
 - f) Jesus’ grace also overflowed in how he loved Paul. Paul was not lovable (because of his sin) at all- he didn’t deserve to be loved by God. But God’s grace overflowed and Paul was showered with an endless supply of love- God’s committed, loyal, zealous, holy love. Paul was thankful because he had received this kind of overflowing grace- that empowered him to have genuine faith in God and that allowed him to be totally secure in God’s love for him.
2. **Principle #2:** Believing in the overflowing grace of God for us in Christ is why we want to faithfully steward the Gospel.
- a) I’m seeing in my own life that I operate with shame constantly over me like a dark cloud. I confess that I am afraid to disappoint others and God, so I have this tendency to get very down on myself and to be very insecure in my relationships with God and others. And I think that a lot of us are like this as well.
 - b) But the truth is that in Christ, God is undeservingly going to fill us with more of his grace! The truth is that in Christ, God’s undeserving grace for us never, ever runs out! If faith is a gift of God’s overflowing grace, then we know that God won’t take it away- it refills to the top eternally; it never runs out- God’s grace will cause us to keep trusting him! We may not be lovable, but we are beloved because God’s love is committed, loyal, zealous, and holy for us.
 - c) Don’t worry if you feel like your letting most of God’s overflowing grace spill out over the sides! Faithfully stewarding the Gospel is catching even a few drops of it and

experiencing God's grace refreshing our souls again and again. We're learning how precious it is and how superabounding it is, so we don't waste those drops!

- **Transition:** We faithfully steward the Gospel because of the gracious call to serve God and because of the overflowing grace of God in Christ. Now the third reason why Paul faithfully stewarded the Gospel in his life was this...

Sermon Outline (continued)

III. The Clear Truth of the Gospel (15)

A. Paul was clear in the truth of the Gospel for himself and others.

Verse 15: 15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

1. Let's take a close look here at verse 15.
 - a) Now Paul goes beyond just personal testimony and went on to say here. What did Paul mean when he said that he is the "foremost" of sinners? In one sense, the word means "first" qualitatively- so in this situation he said that he was the "worst." Paul didn't necessarily think he was the "GOAT" (greatest of all time) sinner, but that his past as literally a persecutor of Jesus was pretty high up there. In another sense, the word means "first" in a series of events- so in this situation, Paul was the first to be saved by Jesus that led to Gentile sinners to also be saved by Jesus (like Timothy and the other believers in the Ephesian church).
 - b) Paul brilliantly and simply encapsulated the core message of the Gospel: *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*. There's so much clarity and truth stated in these nine words! First, look at the words "Christ Jesus": As we stated before in the first point, Jesus was the promised King that all the Scriptures pointed to as the focal point of God's story of salvation.
 - c) Second, look at the words, "came into the world": God who was invisible became flesh and was now visible. Jesus taught God's heart and did miraculous acts that were signs pointing to who he was. God entered our world, walked in our shoes, and lived the life we should have but failed.
 - d) Third, look at the words, "to save sinners": Jesus went to the cross to pay for people's sins and resurrected to defeat sin and death. He died for Paul and saved him; he died for Timothy and saved him; he died for the Ephesian church and saved them.
 - e) These nine words highlight what Paul was to steward. Paul was entrusted by God to be clear regarding these truths for himself and for others like Timothy and the Ephesian church. They needed to keep preaching this to themselves everyday so that these simple truths could soak into every fiber of their lives.
 - f) And Paul also knew what was at stake with these false teachers that Timothy had to deal with in order to protect the church. They had to be crystal clear regarding what was true about the Gospel message and they had to be crystal clear regarding what was not true about the message of those false teachers.
2. **Principle #3:** Being clear in the truth of the Gospel for ourselves and others is why we want to faithfully steward the Gospel.
 - a) We need to develop crystal clarity in the Gospel and the centrality of the Gospel in our doctrine (for doctrine to be sound, it needs to be based in the Bible and centered in the Gospel)- this is for own sake because we must know what we're staking our entire lives

upon! Isn't this true? If we're basing the hope of our whole lives on earth and for eternity on this message, you'd better have crystal clarity on it!

- b) Like the well-known saying goes: "The best way to learn something is by teaching it to others." As we talk out, explain, and discuss the Gospel with your ourselves and with each other in church in the various life situations we find ourselves in, the truths of the Gospel will get clearer and clearer. Also, the more we talk out, explain, and discuss the Gospel with people outside of the church, the truths of the Gospel will get clearer and clearer.
- c) I want to give an example of how it clarifies the Gospel in various situations and relationships we're in from the book "A Gospel Primer for Christians" by Milton Vincent.
 - o "A Cure for Distrust: Every time I deliberately disobey a command of God, it is because I am in that moment doubtful as to God's true intentions in giving me that command. Does he really have my best interests at heart? Or is He withholding something from me that I would be better off having (Genesis 3:4-6)? Such questions, whether consciously asked or not, lie underneath every act of disobedience.
 - o "However, the gospel changes my view of God's commandments, in that it helps me to see the heart of the Person from whom those commands come. When I begin my train of thought with the gospel, I realize that if God loved me enough to sacrifice His Son's life for me, then He must be guided by that same love when He speaks His commandments to me. Viewing God's commands and prohibitions in this light, I can see them for what they really are: friendly signposts from a heavenly Father who is seeking to love me through each directive, so that I might experience His very fullness forever (Deuteronomy 5:29).
 - o "When controlling my thoughts as described above, the gospel cures me of my suspicion of God, thereby disposing me to walk more trustingly on the path of obedience to His commands." – Milton Vincent, "A Gospel Primer for Christians"
- d) The pastors recommend this book as it processes the Gospel into bite-sized chunks to "rehearse" for yourself and together with others. While it's a short book, we also have the book summary and book excerpts available in a PDF document- we'll make it available to LG leaders.

→ **Transition:** We faithfully steward the Gospel because of the gracious call to serve God, because of the overflowing grace of God in Christ, and because we are clear in the truth of the Gospel. Now the fourth reason why Paul faithfully stewarded the Gospel in his life was this...

Sermon Outline (continued)

IV. The Example of God's Patience (16)

A. Paul himself was an example of God's gracious patience towards people.

Verse 16: 16 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.

1. Let's take a close look here at verse 16.
 - a) Paul developed his train of thought more as he wrote in v. 16. This wasn't a random "rabbit trail" he was going on, but his point was that one of God's purposes for receiving God's mercy and grace was: *...that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example...*

- b) Once again, Paul was the “foremost”- the worst and the “first in a series” of disciples-making-disciples among the church in Ephesus. And God’s purpose was that Jesus’ perfect patience could be on display in Paul’s life for the Ephesians and other churches. Paul was an example of the power of God to save and transform a person. If God could do this life-transformation in Paul’s life, he could do it in anyone’s!
 - c) Paul needed this for himself: he was a human being with his own struggles, as he shared in his various letters. He broke relationships because of his impatience with others (like in the case of Barnabas over Mark). He struggled at times with not doing what God wanted him to do and doing exactly what God didn’t want him to do (in Romans 7-8). He had a “thorn in his flesh”- something that exposed his great weakness- that he begged God to take away (in 2 Corinthians). He experienced a sense of loneliness and abandonment at times (as he wrote to Timothy). It was good news to Paul’s soul that God was infinitely patient with him- as he always was! God’s grace was more than enough- to fill him with faith and to fill him with the security of God’s love for him.
 - d) Paul needed this also as he considered the situation at the Ephesian church and other ones like this. He was entrusted with the Gospel- to protect Jesus’ church from any other message that differed from the biblical message of salvation through Christ alone, by God’s grace alone, by faith alone. He also could still be hopeful that those who had deserted the faith- the false teachers or others that they had influenced- were not beyond the saving grip of God’s hand. God could save anyone and would patiently work on his people.
2. **Principle #4:** Seeing God’s gracious patience towards people- ourselves and others- is why we want to faithfully steward the Gospel.
- a) I have an old friend whom Jesus saved when he was in university- this was really hard for him because he comes from a Jewish family that was really against him becoming a Christian. Like all of us, he went through his ups and downs, yet God was gracious and patient in his life. He got married, but he made some big mistakes and ended up divorced. At that point he really drifted away from Christ and we didn’t talk for a long time. Recently on a trip back to the US I reconnected with him and he shared how God worked to bring him back. He joined a “running” group and really got immersed in running and that community of friends. But he shared that when he would run, he couldn’t help but pray as God dealt with his heart. He eventually returned to Christ and God graciously and patiently redeemed and restored a lot of his life: for example he has a family now, he serves as an elder of his church and we rejoiced together as he shared all of this with me.
 - b) My point in sharing this is that this is example of this truth in two ways. For all of us who follow Jesus, we can have hope that God is patient with us- as we deal with all the issues and junk and mistakes and consequences of those mistakes in our lives. Not just the past stuff, mind you, but the stuff right now too and the stuff that is to come in our lives. God’s grace overflows and God’s patience does as well!
 - c) And this is the case for others around us too! There are difficult people in our lives that seem hopeless- so much so that we don’t even want to try anymore to serve them, share with them, and pray for them. But we can be patient in how we minister to people because God is patient and can work in them! Friends, as we seek to make disciples that make disciples, we have to be patient! We’re in the long-term game with our spouses, children, parents, and siblings. We’re in the long-term game with friends, coworkers, and church people too!
- **Transition:** We faithfully steward the Gospel because of the gracious call to serve God, the overflowing grace of God in Christ, the clear truth of the Gospel, and the examples of God’s patience in our lives. Now the fifth and final reason why Paul faithfully stewarded the Gospel in his life was this...

Sermon Outline (continued)

V. The Glory that Belongs to Christ (17)

A. Paul knew he was repurposed to give glory to Jesus Christ.

Verse 17: *17 To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

1. Let's take a close look at verse 17.
 - a) This ending seems a little bit random (like, how is this related to the Gospel?), but it's really not! Paul is naturally led to this doxology about Jesus Christ: *To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.*
 - b) Remember from last week: The law reveals God's character, so as God's people meditated on the law, it was supposed to lead them to worship of God (in his infinite excellence). The law exposes people's sinfulness, which leads them to the Gospel- as Paul explained in vv. 8-11 and connected to his life in vv. 12-16. This led him to worship here as well.
 - c) We can see a whole lot of who Jesus is in this doxology: Jesus is *the King of the ages* who reigns supreme forever in the universe. Jesus is *immortal*, which means that he is everlasting and unchanging. Jesus is *invisible*, now in heaven until his second coming. Jesus is *the only God*- an astounding claim that Jesus is God himself.
 - d) Paul shows Timothy and the Ephesian church that the fifth way to faithfully steward the Gospel is to give glory to Christ with your whole life. Paul is now not his own, but he is a subject and steward of the King. He was repurposed after he was saved: now he was doing what he was created and saved to do, which was to give glory and honor to God.
 - e) This showed up in his words of worship of course, but it also came out in his life. He didn't just say those lofty words about who Jesus is- he lived like he believed it. He was able to give God glory when he faced persecution, hardships, disasters, betrayals, and personal trials. He lived not for himself but for advancing God's mission to make more disciples and declared the message of Jesus to people who didn't know him. He was convinced of that. The stewardship of the Gospel wasn't a burden, but a joyful privilege!
2. **Principle #5:** Giving the glory that belongs to Jesus Christ with our whole lives is why we want to faithfully steward the Gospel.
 - a) So we serve Jesus with our whole lives- we give him the glory and honor not just with words but in whatever happens in our lives- in all of our own persecutions, hardships, disasters, betrayals and personal trials. Are we resolved to serve Jesus no matter the price? It can definitely be in something radical like becoming a missionary like Paul. But for all of us, it means radically doing the everyday things in our lives. As he wrote to the Ephesian church as well:

Ephesians 4:1 (NLT): *1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*
 - b) Specifically, it's what Paul has been talking about in this passage: in the way we fight to be thankful for this gracious call to serve God; in believing that God's grace in Christ overflows for us; in having clarity in the truth of the Gospel for ourselves and others; in seeing those examples of God's great patience towards us and others; in knowing that we are repurposed to give glory to Jesus Christ with our whole lives!

→ **Transition:** So, we've seen these five reasons to faithfully steward the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives. As we conclude, we have to ask ourselves...

Conclusion

VI. Life Application

A. What are the next steps that we can take as a "life application" from today's sermon?

1. Keep preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to yourself and others.
 - a) Process the Gospel by studying the Bible together within your families, discipleship relationships, and LIFE groups. Let Jesus' own words dwell richly and let the Word of God reverberate! I'm not great at this, but the more I try to verbalize it with my kids or with people I'm meeting from church, I'm slowly getting better. I'm realizing how there's so much in my personal life, relationships with wife and kids, and counseling of people that needs to get more Gospel.
 - b) Here are some questions to ask as you keep preaching the Gospel to yourself or others:

How does this situation or relationship point to my heart issues and my need for Jesus Christ?

How am I handling this situation or relationship with an incorrect view of God, myself, or others?

How should God's overflowing grace and patience influence my view on this situation or relationship?

How can I glorify and honor Jesus Christ in this situations or relationship as I apply the Gospel to it?
 - c) Lastly, serve Jesus by serving pre-Christians with the words and deeds of the Gospel. Don't lose heart- God is patient and can save anyone!

→ **Transition:** We'll return to our live Sunday Celebration and respond to God's Word together now.

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This manuscript has been lightly edited and formatted. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript conforming to an established style template. Should there be questions regarding grammar or theological content, the reader should presume any error to be with the transcriber/editor rather than with the original speaker.