

Paul's and Timothy's Ministry (1 Timothy 1:12-20)

1. (vv. 12-16) Paul's Past and Present Ministry: Paul reminds Timothy of where he was when he came to faith in Jesus. Paul was a blasphemer and a persecutor of the church. That is, he made fun of it and openly rejected it. He was a loud protestor against it. He was willing to commit acts of violence to prove its lack of worth. His zeal drove him to hurt and have many Christians thrown into prison. But Paul describes his own position in the present as one who has "obtained mercy." God allowed Paul to meet the Messiah Jesus and to become a believer of the very faith he persecuted. Paul calls himself the "chief" among sinners because he outrightly fought against the cause of Christ. But Paul's sins were no match for the grace of God.
2. (v. 17) A Doxology to the King: Paul stops for a moment when describing God's mercy towards him to celebrate the Lord who is the "King of eternity, immortal, invisible, the only wise God." He could not go further in the letter without honoring the one who chose to save him from his works against him. How much more should we do the same when we consider the great salvation the Lord has brought into our lives.
3. (vv. 18-20) Preamble to Paul's Instructions for Timothy: Paul will begin his formal instructions for Timothy in the next chapter. These will be the dictates which will guide him in his ministry in Ephesus. Prior to that, Paul reminds him of why he is in ministry in Ephesus in the first place. Timothy is there because of God. God had spoken words of prophecy over his life. Thus, God had anointed him for the work. Through the hands of Paul and others, the Lord demonstrated that Timothy was the Lord's chosen for the work in Ephesus. It was necessary for him to fight well. The challenge before him was tremendous but he was well-suited for the work God has set in front of him. Others had made the work harder. Hymenaeus and Alexander, we are unaware of who they are but we know they are mentioned again in 2 Timothy, were making the task of ministry more difficult. We are unaware of the specific things they taught but we know they were just like Paul prior to being in Jesus. They were fighting against the faith as blasphemers. Thus, Paul, using his apostolic authority, handed them over to Satan so that God could correct them. This action suggests the authority to have someone tormented by the devil until they come to believe again (see 1 Cor 5:1-5).