



January 2019

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES:
**“False Teachers &
The Work of Christ”** (1 Timothy 1)

2018–19 LCMS Circuit Bible Studies

LEADER GUIDE

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THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

A STUDY FOR DISCOVERY, MEDITATION AND CASUISTRY OF THE BROTHERS.

Every pastor strives to do as Paul exhorts Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

This series of studies has been designed to walk through the Pastoral Epistles in support of your striving toward these ends. Each study will work through these familiar texts with a search and discover mission through self-examination. To facilitate your searching and discovery in self-examination, each text will follow with a template of questions drawn and structured according to Luther’s “A Simple Way to Pray.”¹ “I divide each commandment into four parts, thereby fashioning a garland of four strands.”² These four strands are:

1. **Instruction** – What is God teaching me in these verses about the Pastoral Office and me as one called to this office? (e.g., “What have I learned ... ?”)
2. **Thanksgiving** - What is there in these words of God for which I get to give thanks to the Lord of the Church as I serve in the Office of the Ministry?
3. **Confession** - In light of what I have learned in these words of God, how have I fallen short in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?
4. **Prayer** - Are there things I need to change/improve in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?

Following the template of questions, there is an opportunity to turn what is discovered into prayer.

While this is a time of searching the Scriptures and reaffirming the Lord’s will for the Pastoral Office and those called to this Office, it is hoped that the questions will facilitate a time of casuistry among the brothers. Listening and learning according to Luther’s four strands will also hopefully foster a sharing of struggles and the mutual support and consolation of the brothers in light of God’s Word, of which we are servants and servers.

Sequence of this Series: This series begins with 2 Timothy. While this is the last of Paul’s letters, it is foundational in that it addresses the Pastoral Office more holistically, as well as the means God provides for it and the holder of that office. Second in the series will be Titus, which addresses many aspects of exercising the Pastoral Office in the context of the congregation. Lastly, the series will then look at 1 Timothy as it addresses exercising the Pastoral Office in the midst of a hostile culture and its influences on the congregation.

Leader: Work through the introduction to 1 Timothy to get an overview of the context for both Timothy and Paul. Begin the study with some overview of Paul’s first letter to Timothy. Look for those areas of the intro that touch on the content of Chapter 1.

¹ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 43, *Devotional Writings II*, eds. Gustav K. Wiencke and Helmut T. Lehmann, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 193–211.

² LW 43:200.

INTRODUCTION: 1 Timothy from *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*

First Timothy Introduction

Paul, on his way to Macedonia, has left Timothy at Ephesus with instructions to “charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine” (1 Ti 1:3). Paul does not describe this “different doctrine” systematically; but from his attacks on it in 1:3–7; 4:1–3, 7; 6:3–5, 20–21 and from the tenor of his instructions for the regulation of the life of the church, it is clear that Timothy must do battle with a form of “Gnosticism,” an early stage of that heresy which was to become in its fully developed form the most serious threat to the church in succeeding generations. Gnosticism is not so much a system as a trend or current of thought which produced a great variety of systems, often by combining with some already existing religion. It was therefore present and active as a corrupting force long before the great Christian-Gnostic systems of the second century appeared; we have already seen one example of it in the heresy which threatened the church at Colossae.

Basic to all forms of Gnosticism is a dualistic conception of reality, that is, the view that what is spiritual, nonmaterial, is of itself good and what is material or physical is of itself bad. This view affects man’s whole attitude toward the world of created things. The dreary details of Gnostic speculation on the *origin* of the material universe need not concern us here. It may suffice to note:

- a. that the world is no longer viewed as God’s good creation, as the Scriptures view it (that is, a world which God created, fallen with fallen man but redeemed with man and destined to be transfigured with him, Ro 8:19–22); rather, the created world is viewed as in itself alien and hostile to God because it is matter and not spirit;
- b. that man’s desperate predicament, his alienation from God, is no longer seen as being due to his sinful rebellion against God, but to the fact that he is entangled in the world of matter;
- c. that redemption consists in being freed from the material world in which man dwells and is entangled. This liberation can come about only by knowledge (Greek, *gnosis*, hence the name of the heresy); this knowledge must be imparted to man by revelation from a higher world;
- d. the mission of the Savior-God is to impart this knowledge not to all men, but to a select few who will pass it on to those who are “worthy”;
- e. that those who have knowledge, the “gnostics,” must free themselves from the influence of matter by abstaining from certain foods and from marriage. (Sometimes the negative attitude toward things physical and material had the opposite effect and led to a supreme indifference to things physical and material, so that, for instance, the sexual life of man was considered to be morally indifferent.)

Such a trend of thought would lead inevitably to an utter distortion of all that “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1 Ti 1:11) proclaimed. God the Creator disappears—all the good gifts of food and drink which He gives are suspected and feared; all the salutary orders which He has established in this world (marriage, family, government) are despised and ignored. The Old Testament, which rings with glad adoration of the God who made the heavens and the earth and blesses man within the orders of this world, must either be ignored or have its obvious sense interpreted away by allegorizing “myths and endless genealogies.” The Law becomes the arena of speculation and vain discussions, not the voice of God which calls the sinner to account and condemns him. In terms of this kind of thought, there can be no real incarnation of the Son of God; for how can the divine, which is spiritual, enter into union with matter, which is of itself evil? And when sin is not recognized as man’s guilt, there can be no real redemption either. Where knowledge is made central in the religious life of man and self-redemption by way of ascetic exercise is made the way of salvation, there is no possibility of that pure Christian love that “issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith” (1 Ti 1:5). A narrow and sectarian pride takes its place (1 Ti 6:4, 20; cf. 1:3–7). Where the teaching office becomes a wordy, speculative, disputatious purveying of “knowledge” to a select coterie of initiates, it is bound to become corrupted; it appeals to the pride, selfishness, and mercenary instincts of men, and the teacher becomes that ghastly, demon-ridden caricature of the true teacher which Paul has described in 1 Ti 4:1–2.

Timothy’s task will be to let the fresh and wholesome winds of “sound doctrine” into the house of God, whose air has been infected by the morbid and infectious mists of this *gnosis*. To the demonic denial of God the Creator and the rejection of His good gifts he must oppose the glorious Gospel of the blessed God “who gives life to all things” (1 Ti 6:13), the God whose every creation still has on it the mark of His primeval “Very good!” (Gn.

1:31) and is even in its fallen state “consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Ti 4:5). To “godless and silly myths” he is to oppose the grateful adoration of the Creator. To the Gnostic misuse of the Law he must oppose the right and lawful use and let the sinner hear the fearful verdict of God in order that he may give ear to God’s acquittal in His Gospel (1:8–11).

To the rarefied and unreal Christ of Gnostic speculation he must oppose “the *man* Christ Jesus” (1 Ti 2:5), the Christ Jesus who really entered into history under Pontius Pilate (1 Ti 6:13) and died a real death on the cross for the sins of all men (1 Ti 2:6). He must present this Christ as the whole content of the truth which the church upholds and guards, the mystery of God “manifested *in the flesh*” (1 Ti 3:16). To Gnostic self-redemption by means of knowledge and ascetic self-manipulation he must oppose redemption as the sole act of the Christ who came into the world, not to impart higher knowledge but “to save sinners” (1 Ti 1:15), the Christ “who gave Himself as a ransom for all” (1 Ti 2:6). To Gnostic exclusiveness he must oppose the all-embracing grace of God, and to their narrow sectarian pride he must oppose the Gospel of universal grace (1 Ti 2:4) and thus make of the church a church which can pray wholeheartedly for *all* men (1 Ti 2:1), a church which lives in the “love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith” (1 Ti 1).

To the imposing picture of the Gnostic teachers, these brilliant, speculative, disputatious, and mercenary men, he must oppose the picture of the true teacher. He must, first of all, himself *be* that picture; he dare not let himself be drawn down to the level of his opponents and fight demonic fire with fire; he must do battle, “holding faith and a good conscience” (1 Ti 1:19); he must, as a good minister of Jesus Christ, not allow himself to be infected by what he opposes but must continue to be “nourished on the words of faith” (not knowledge) “and of the good doctrine” which he has followed hitherto. He must train himself, athlete-like, in godliness (1 Ti 4:6–7). Thus he will be able to fight the good fight of faith as a “man of God,” standing in the succession of Moses and the prophets, singly devoted to God’s cause (1 Ti 6:11–12; cf. 6:3–10), taking hold even now of that eternal life which shall be his in fullness at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Ti 6:11–15). He must himself be all that the Gnostic teachers are not; and he is to see to it that the men who oversee the church’s life and administer the church’s charity, the bishops and deacons, are men of like character. They need not be brilliant men; they must be good men. It is enough if a bishop be “an apt

teacher” (1 Ti 3:2); he need not be a brilliant speaker or a captivating personality. The qualifications which Paul sets up for bishops and deacons are singularly sober and down to earth; but the moral standards which he sets up for them are awesomely high (1 Ti 3:1–13). Paul wants men whom the grace of God has “trained,” as he puts it in his Letter to Titus (2:11–12), seasoned, selfless, wise, and gracious men whose faith has borne fruit in their homes, in their marital fidelity, and in the training of their children (1 Ti 3:2, 4, 12).

Timothy had a great piece of work assigned to him. And he was a good man for the task. He was both Jew and Greek (Acts 16:1). He had lived with the Old Testament from childhood (2 Ti 3:15). Prophetic voices had assigned him to this “good warfare” (1 Ti 1:18). God had given him the requisite gifts for it (1 Ti 4:14), and his whole history had been one that fostered those gifts. He had been Paul’s almost constant companion for a dozen years (Acts 16:1 ff.). The apostolic “pattern of sound words” (2 Ti 1:13) had become a part of his makeup, and the apostolic example had been constantly before him (2 Ti 3:10, 11, 14). Paul had employed him as his emissary before this, though never for so extended and difficult a mission as this one. When Paul was prevented from returning to Thessalonica, he sent Timothy to the young and troubled church to establish the believers in their faith and to exhort them (1 Th 3:1–2). He had sent Timothy to Corinth during that troubled period when the Corinthians were becoming drunk on the heady wine of the new teaching, to remind them of the apostle’s “ways in Christ” (1 Co 4:17; 16:10). He had sent him to Philippi from Rome during the time of his imprisonment and had commended him to the Philippian church with the finest tribute that can be paid to a servant of God in the Gospel: “I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy’s worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel” (Ph 2:20–22).

If Paul was a fond father to Timothy, he was not a blind one. He knew his beloved child’s weaknesses: Timothy was still young and apparently conscious of it as a handicap (1 Ti 4:12). He was inclined to be timid (cf. 1 Co 16:10–11; 2 Ti 1:7). Besides, his health was not of the best; his stomach troubled him, an ailment not uncommon among sensitive and conscientious young men of God (1 Ti 5:23).

Therefore Paul writes Timothy a letter which sums up once more the oral instructions already given him (1 Ti 1:3). This letter will give his work the sanction

and authority of Paul, “an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope” (1 Ti 1:1). Paul is in effect telling the church of Ephesus what he had once told the Corinthians: “He is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. So let no one despise him” (1 Co 16:10–11).³

God’s Grace in 1 Timothy

Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus to proclaim God’s grace. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul reminds him of the essential elements of this message. “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men” (2:5–6). “He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory” (3:16). “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1:15) and is “the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe” (4:10).

Paul himself found the gospel of God’s grace to be the source of spiritual strength, faith and love (1:12–14). He encourages Timothy to put his trust and hope in the same message.⁴

Luther on 1 Timothy

“This epistle St. Paul writes in order to provide a model to all bishops of what they are to teach and how they are to rule Christendom in the various stations of life, so that it may not be necessary for them to rule Christians according to their own human opinions.

“... he charges that a bishop keep true faith and love and resist the false preachers of the law who, beside Christ and the gospel, would also insist on the works of the law. In a brief summary, he comprehends the entire Christian doctrine concerning the purpose of the law and the nature of the gospel.

“... he gives orders as to how widows and young women should be looked after, and which widows are to be supported from the common funds; also how godly bishops or priests are to be held in honor, and blameworthy ones punished” (*LW* 35:388).⁵

Leader: Read through 1 Timothy 1 with the brothers, pausing as you desire for thoughts or reflection.

READ: 1 Timothy 1

Leader: Work through the following excerpts to further discussion of the text with the brothers. Encourage each to share their insights from previous study of the text.

Commentary Excerpts: 1 Timothy 1 from *Reformation Heritage Bible Commentary: Timothy / Titus / Philemon*⁶

Introduction to 1:1–2 Although Timothy had long been an assistant to Paul in his ministry, he was alone now in his pastorate in Ephesus. He will have to act there without Paul’s presence. This letter gives Timothy authoritative instruction on how to faithfully carry out his pastoral charge for his own sake and that of his hearers (1Ti 4:16). Even though Paul references his apostleship in this letter, as in his others, here he directs both Timothy and his hearers back to the ultimate source of authority, Jesus Christ. The referencing of God and of Jesus Christ is not redundancy, but a confession

of where all true ministry comes from, who it comes through, and through whom it is carried out.

1:1 apostle. Paul uses this term in the narrower sense of those whom the Lord Jesus Christ Himself personally called and sent with His full authority. The very meaning of the word (“sent one”) excludes any idea that it is an office one takes on themselves and of their own authority.

1:1 Christ Jesus. Paul speaks of Jesus first according to His office as Christ, or Messiah, and then according to His name: Jesus. While this is not the usual order, the word change serves to emphasize the authoritative nature of Paul’s calling to the office of apostle, and indirectly, to Timothy’s office as a pastor. This emphasis on authorization serves to provide the pastoral office with both authority to speak and the limitations of what can be spoken authoritatively.

³ Walter R. Roehrs and Martin H. Franzmann, *Concordia Self-Study Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 2:216–18.

⁴ Robert G. Hoerber, ed., *Concordia Self-Study Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 1847.

⁵ Hoerber, *Concordia*, 1847.

⁶ Mark W. Love, *Reformation Heritage Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 9–28.

1:1 command. It is very likely that Timothy will share this letter with other pastors and congregations beyond the churches in Ephesus. Having had to defend his apostolic authority before with other congregations, Paul steps up his terminology here to stress his apostolic charge from God the Father and God the Son (Ac 26:15–18).

1:2 mercy. When Paul writes to the churches, his greeting is “grace to you and peace”; writing to Timothy, he adds “mercy.” Having mercy follow in the wake of grace, Paul emphasizes the tender quality of grace, especially toward the unconverted and hostile. Only by being a constant recipient of God’s mercy is anyone able to faithfully carry out the ministry of the Gospel.

1:3 remain at Ephesus. Timothy had come to Ephesus to meet and join Paul, who had just set out from Rome on his fourth missionary journey. Paul was heading to Macedonia as he promised in Php 2:24. Seeing the situation, Timothy believed they both needed to stay and stifle the false teachers and, further, to teach the faith and spread the Gospel. In all his missionary journeys, Paul had stayed the longest at Ephesus. Led by the Holy Spirit and his familiarity of the situation, Paul has Timothy stay. Through the exercise of his pastoral office, Timothy is to stop those who were teaching false doctrine, devotion to myths, and other such things that obscure the Gospel and lead to speculation. The key to this was a clear and constant proclamation of both God’s Law and His Gospel. There is nothing to suggest that Timothy did not want to stay and take the charge when Paul initially gave it to him. Now something has changed, and Timothy believes that he is able to move on. Whether it is to go and be with Paul, or to pursue some other missionary endeavor, we do not know. Paul learns of this and turns Timothy back to his initial calling given to him in Paul’s charge to remain. False teachers and perverters of the Gospel persist, and Timothy must continue in his calling to stop them with biblical doctrine for the sake of the elect.

1:3 charge. While the term seems to carry a stern tone, the basis and the aim of it is love (v. 5). What the Lord says has absolute authority (1Co 7:10). This authority is the basis of Paul’s charge, and it is the basis of both Timothy’s charge (1:3–4) and the charge he as pastor would give to the false teachers, the widows, and the rich.

1:4 stewardship from God. Everything in the Church is to be directed toward distribution of God’s two great words: the Word of the Law and the greater Word of the Gospel. The purpose for this faithful distribution is for the salvation of all: those in the Church and those yet

to be converted. Christ Himself gave this stewardship to the Church in the Great Commission (Mt 28:19–20). These false teachers and their mythical embellishments take the eyes and the energies of the Church off the Great Commission. They attempt to have the Church take up matters and agendas not given them by Christ or the Gospel. Whenever people, even in the Church, take to themselves responsibilities and teachings not given to them by God, they will only get in the way of the work God has given them to do.

1:5 our charge. Their charge has a purpose totally other than themselves and their welfare. The fact that everything they were to do had *love* as its goal was entirely bound up in the eternal benefit and blessing of others. This is no mere romantic or emotion-based care and concern. The word for “love” in the Greek used here is “agape.” It is a love that flows from God in Jesus Christ and aims all things toward the eternal welfare of those in need. Having given them this charge with the aim of love, God gives them the means of reaching their aim of love by giving them His Word, which is God’s expression of love, and thus God’s work of love. Their goal was the conversion of the lost and the building up of the saints. The only means to this is, as Paul says in Ephesians, “speaking the truth in love” (4:15) in Baptism, Absolution, the Lord’s Supper, preaching, and teaching. Paul contrasts their selfless, love-for-neighbor mission and ministry with the self-seeking and self-aggrandizing ways of individuals whose motive is love of self. What follows in this letter is an exposition of this charge and its aim—love.

1:5 from a pure heart ... sincere faith. We know what it is to have a guilty conscience, as well as a want to ease our conscience by doing something good in the hope that we might “make up for our wrong.” Paul is making it clear that everything he says and does has no such self-serving motive. Every pastor is to preach the Gospel from such a clean conscience, cleansed in the forgiveness of Christ to teach, preach, speak, and serve for the good and eternal welfare of the Church and the world. Such purity and sincerity of faith can come only through faith in Jesus Christ. Of some who would argue that Paul places greater emphasis on love than on faith, Calvin wrote: “They who are of that opinion reason in an excessively childish manner; for, if love is first mentioned, it does not therefore hold the first rank of honour, since Paul shews also that it springs from faith” (27).

1:6 Certain persons. Paul narrows the group of those Timothy is to stop to those who have departed from the

three things Paul lists in v. 5, love (*agapē*), a pure heart, and a sincere faith. To be dedicated to, and do all things for the eternal welfare of others would require a denial of self they were unwilling to make. This insertion of self into the ministry taints the conscience that must justify and serves to justify or clear the conscience. To achieve this tainted and impure end, they have to trust in tainted and impure teachings.

1:6 vain discussion. When the Gospel is modified for any reason, it ceases to be the Gospel, the pure gift of God and His complete and total means of saving the sinner. It may sound good, even godly, and its goal may be lofty and holy, but, having become the word of man, it becomes vain because its goal is not love; its means is not the love and grace of God and neither is it a faith in Christ alone. Such talkers become like some of the friends of Job with whom the Lord said: “My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has” (Jb 42:7).

1:8–10 This passage is the source of the “uses of the Law,” which became so important to the Reformation theology of Law and Gospel. Chemnitz wrote:

Luther in a very learned way sought the foundations of this doctrine in the Epistle to the Galatians, and divided the use of the Law into one aspect which was civil and one which was theological. Likewise in Galatians 5 there is one use of the Law in justification and another for those who have been justified. From this Luther constructed the threefold division of the uses of the Law (8:805).

1:8 the law is good. This statement is not one of mere opinion on the part of Paul. Paul is speaking of God’s Law, which is good in and of itself because it is the divine will of God. While one’s use of the Law cannot take away from its intrinsic goodness, one can use it in a way that is contrary to God’s purpose in giving it. The Law of God is always in service of the Gospel, to lead people to a realization of their sinfulness and prepare them for the Good News in Christ. For Christ came not to get rid of the Law, but to fulfill the Law for us and for our total salvation (Mt 5:17–19). Timothy was going to have to correct those who were using the Law in service of their own heresies and agendas. As pastors, Timothy and Titus were not to argue about the Law (Ti 3:9) but speak it in all its truth and fullness that it might make their hearers ready for the Good News of the Gospel.

1:9–10 What follows are six couplets corresponding to the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1–17) that labeled a

person according to his or her own sin. The first word of each is followed by its consequence. These couplets progress from the general to the more specific types of lawless persons. While the Law shows us God’s holy will for us and our lives, it cannot show us this without also showing us where we are not right with His will. In this way, the Law serves as a mirror with which we examine ourselves and our doings. Where we are not right with the will of God as expressed in the Law, there is sin, and there is lawlessness. It is here that Law serves its intended purpose of working contrition (sorrow or regret) and repentance (a turning away from the sin) to the mercy and grace of God offered us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1:9 law ... for the lawless. Apart from Christ, the only basis for a relationship with God and one’s neighbor is the Law. The only means of insuring a right relationship is by everything being measured, weighed, and checked. Where it is lacking in any detail, the relationship is not right (it is unrighteous), thus the person has been, and is, lawless. For the relationship to be saved, something has to be done to make every detail of the relationship right again. Having lost much of the Law and a right understanding of it due to the fall into sin, the Law is laid upon the lawless so that they might know themselves and their relationships to God and their neighbor according to the will and judgment of God. God’s Word, both Law and Gospel, names everything as God names it, so that we might know ourselves as our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier knows us. The lawless do not know themselves as God knows them, and the Law serves to show this to them. This is why Paul names them (vv. 9–11) and names the judgment upon them for being lawless. Only in this way will they be ready to hear the Gospel as the blessed good news of a new relationship with God, according to Christ rather than the Law.

1:10 sound doctrine. To refute and correct these false teachers, Timothy’s teaching (doctrine), like that of all pastors, has to be sound (healthy). Only this way can false teachers be corrected and refuted in a manner that is aimed at their conversion and the further spiritual growth of the Church. Healthy faith, hope, peace, and trust all require healthy teaching. How does a pastor work to ensure that his doctrine (teaching) is sound (healthy)? By limiting his teaching to God’s Word, and his exposition of God’s Word, to the full testimony of Scripture in accordance with the Gospel (v. 11). Paul, Timothy, Titus, and all pastors, as undershepherds of Christ, are servants of His Word, not their own. John

admonishes believers to “test” every spirit—that is, every word of teaching put forth as God’s Word—because false prophets have gone out (1Jn 4:1). The only right way to test any teaching is to put it against the Word of God to see if it is of God. Timothy and every pastor preaches and teaches for the sake of sharing and strengthening the faith of their hearers. As servants of the Word, they are to take the lead in testing their teaching to ensure that what they teach and preach as God’s Word in service of the Gospel is God’s Word and not their own word or the word of another person.

1:11 entrusted. While it may sound like Paul is pulling rank here, that is not what he is saying. Having been called and charged by God as His apostle, Paul seeks to be faithful to his charge, and he seeks that same faithfulness on the part of Timothy and all pastors according to their calling and office as servants of God’s Word. Paul does this by humbly acknowledging that this calling and charge were not of himself but from God in service of the Gospel. All sound (healthy) doctrine (teaching) depends on faithfulness of the pastor in the exercise of the office, according to his divine call. Only in this way will believers have a sound (healthy) faith.

1:12–17 While it seems that Paul is patting himself on the back, he is doing something much more significant. By naming himself for what he was in unbelief, prior to receiving mercy and grace in Jesus Christ, Paul radically differentiates himself from all the would-be teachers in the entire Ephesian Church. With regard to one’s standing before God, Paul makes the case that he is the worst of sinners. In contrast, the would-be teachers made the case that they were the best of God’s people. When identifying the basis of God’s calling and charge to him as an apostle, Paul points to the same grace of God that saved him. The would-be teachers point to themselves, their experience, their ancestry, and their masterful eloquence. This radical difference points directly at the radically different nature of the God of the Gospel, against the god of the false would-be teachers. The living God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—doesn’t save or call the qualified, He alone qualifies the lost in Christ. He does this so that they might be saved, thus giving them qualities for the service of the Gospel. All this God does out of the pure love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1:12 judged me faithful. Paul knows full well that he was not sufficient of himself for the faithful discharge of his calling as an apostle of the Lord. “Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made

us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant” (2Co 3:5–6). Since the Lord Jesus made Paul a new creation in Himself, He considered Paul to be faithful because of the faithfulness He gave him and would work through him. While there are many qualities that make for a good pastor, faithfulness to the whole Word of God is absolutely critical if the people those pastors serve are to know God and His salvation in Jesus Christ.

1:12 service. Having called Paul to the office of apostle, the Lord Jesus was putting Paul in His own place, to speak what Jesus has given him to speak through the Holy Spirit. To be in the Lord’s service is to be about the Lord’s Word and work.

1:14 When it comes to the salvation of the lost, God’s mercy and grace might be likened to the two sides of the same coin. They are inseparable. Where God’s mercy deals with us according to what is lacking, His *grace* undeservedly and freely does for us all we cannot do to be holy and right before Him. In light of the reality of Paul’s past, it is undeniably clear that the motive and reason for God doing this to save him lay completely in God and His grace.

1:14 overflowed. In his attempt to describe himself prior to his conversion, Paul lists his “big” sins. As one made alive in Christ, he has become more aware of the totality of his sinfulness. Every believer has some measure of his or her sinfulness, the seeming limitlessness of it in shape, size, quality, and quantity. We have this measure by revelation of the Word, and we know it in some degree because we have experienced it. In the face of his mountain range of sins that went beyond memory and sight, the grace of God is constantly given in an amazingly abundant manner to Paul and to every believer. This grace brings low every mountain of sin and goes beyond every range of sin to remove sin as far as the east is from the west (Ps 103:12). This is often doubted by many because the memory and awareness of actual sin lies heavy on the heart and mind. What is forgotten is that the grace of God is not a one-time gift but is an ongoing work of God alone in which we live every day through faith in Jesus Christ.

1:15 I am the foremost. These words are true in and of themselves, for Paul was a murderous persecutor of the Church. They state the subjective truth that applies to Paul alone, according to his understanding of himself. Putting himself forth as the worst of sinners, and backing it up with some measure of truth, would create only the question in the hearers as to how he could possibly have become an apostle and leader among the saints—a question that he will answer.

1:16 I received mercy for this reason. Paul is a living example of the greatness of the love and mercy of God for all who are in Jesus Christ. He is a living message that no one is beyond the power of God's mercy. He can change sinners of all kinds, remaking them anew as saints in the one Lord Jesus Christ. Having described his radical sinful opposition to Christ and the Church (vv. 12–13a), Paul is confronted by something radically unexpected. Rather than receiving the justice he deserves for his sin and evil, Christ blesses Paul with what he does not and could never deserve: mercy. Not just any mercy, but radical mercy that works a radically complete change in Paul. He who was the worst sinner (v. 15) is changed into a holy saint, all by the power of God's mercy and grace in Jesus Christ.

1:16 display His perfect patience. Paul is inspired to describe the patience God displayed in his life as perfect. He does this not so much to express the quality of God's patience but to express that God's patience achieved God's goal with Paul—his conversion. God's patience is perfect in itself because it is His; its perfection is displayed in us as we are converted. Thanks be to God that He does not give us what we deserve in the very minute we have earned it by sinning. Instead, God patiently allows time for each of us to come to the knowledge of our sin for the hearing of the Gospel, so that all might repent and believe in Jesus Christ (2Pt 3:9, 15).

1:16 example. The radical change that Jesus Christ worked in Paul's life was living testimony as to how and what God will do for all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:18 charge. What is given in v. 3, defined in v. 5, and expounded upon through v. 17. The charge will involve the rest of this verse and the first part of v. 19.

1:18 prophecies. This refers to the work of the Holy Spirit through Paul by which the Spirit set apart or identified Timothy as the one to be appointed to previous pastorates, and now to the pastorate at Ephesus. Each of these was a divine call mediated by Holy Spirit through Paul. Now at Ephesus, Paul, by the work of the Holy Spirit, administers to Timothy the divine call (prophecy) that he is to serve there as pastor. The same kind of prophecy happened in Antioch when the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul for work the Lord had called them to do (Ac 13:1–3). Chrysostom explained: “What is ‘by prophecy’? By the Holy Spirit. For prophecy is not only the telling of things future, but also of the present. ... To elevate him, and prepare him to be sober and watchful, he reminds him by whom he was chosen

and ordained, as if he had said, ‘God has chosen you’” (NPNF1 13:423).

1:18 by them. Here, Paul speaks to the doubts that would arise in Timothy's heart about whether he was the right one to carry out the pastoral charge given him. These prophecies—this work of the Holy Spirit that called Timothy to the pastoral office—would answer such doubts and set Timothy free to focus on fighting the good fight of the faith, according to the divine charge, or call, given him.

1:18 good warfare. Timothy's charge to stop false teachers, and those teaching, preaching, and practicing what is contrary to the Word of God, would involve much conflict. As pastor, Timothy would have to enter this conflict for the sake of his hearers, whether it be false teachers or those listening to them. The goal of the conflict is not defeat but conversion and salvation for all. How well Timothy, or any pastor, fares in such conflicts is not determined by the outcome but by the means he uses. There are two marks of such warfare that make the waging of it good. The first mark is that every aspect of it is fought for the sake of those it is waged against. The second mark, perhaps the most critical, is that the means of such warfare are limited to the means God has given to wage it: His Word and Sacraments. Such warfare and such means as God provides will include suffering. Where the war is waged without these, it is a personal fight waged in God's name, apart from His purpose.

1:19 holding faith and a good conscience. When waging this spiritual warfare seems to be unending, there is always a temptation to turn to other means than those that God has given for faith and salvation: His Word and Sacraments. As a pastor, Timothy would need to correct, rebuke, and stop false teachers by these God-given means. To do this would require that he have full faith in their ability to do God's will and work, when and where the Lord sees fit. To lose faith in God's means of salvation causes harm to one's own faith in God for personal salvation. When a person lets go of God's means of salvation in favor of any other means to wage spiritual warfare, that person sins against the conscience that God has made alive through His Word. Keeping faith in God's means (His Word and Sacraments), and using them to wage all spiritual warfare, provides for a good conscience. It is affirmed and strengthened through the use of God's means.

1:19 this. God's means of waging the spiritual warfare, His Word and Sacraments.

1:20 handed over to Satan. While thought of in terms of judgment, this is an exercise of spiritual discipline, with the goal of mercy. Hymenaeus and Alexander were examples of those who, while professing a faith in Christ, openly and unrepentantly taught and practiced what was contrary to faith in Jesus Christ. Their publicly unrepentant false teachings and practices were in open conflict and rejection of what they verbally confessed about Christ. This being the case, Timothy, on behalf of the Church, is to excommunicate these men. Excommunication does not condemn anyone, but it does declare to them that because of their persistent unrepentant teachings and practices, the Church can no longer assure them of their salvation. Such men have, by their own unrepentance, handed themselves over to Satan. Timothy is to confirm this to them in the hope that they will be awakened to the severity of their sin, and repent and thus be saved (cf. 1Co 5:3–5, 9–13).

1:20 learn not to blaspheme. Everything these two men, and all the other false teachers, were doing is defined as blasphemy. If these men were to be saved, they would have to learn the contents of the true faith, according to the Word of God alone, and put their full and undivided faith in it alone. The goal of their excommunication is not their damnation but repentance and true faith, that they might be saved and reclaimed for the kingdom of God. While this seems extreme, how much more extreme shall it be for that sinner who is left to eternal damnation in the name of compassion. This is perhaps the time when the warfare is the worst because the fight, for the pastor, is often within himself, and the conflict between ease for himself by letting the sin pass, and loving the sinner enough to suffer the long journey with them until they might come to repentance and faith (cf. 2Co 2:5–11).

CITATIONS: 1 Timothy 1 in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*⁷

Leader: Use the following citations taken from the 2017 Catechism to further explore and examine the text under review. Discuss how the citations address the question and support its answer.

1 Timothy 1:8–11:

The Sixth Commandment

76. What does the Bible say about same-sex marriage?

God created us as male or female and established marriage as the lifelong union between a man and a woman. Because of their differences, a man and a woman complement each other and are able, wherever God wills it, to bear children and nurture them. Same-sex marriage rejects God's intention and is not true marriage.

Read **Leviticus 18:22** and **1 Timothy 1:8–11**.⁸

1 Timothy 1:9–10:

The Ten Commandments

18. How does God use the Ten Commandments in our lives and the lives of others in this world?

God uses His Commandments (the Law) in three ways. We call these the three uses of the Law.

First, for the good of His creation, God uses the Law to limit or prevent coarse outbursts of sin, thereby helping to keep order in the world (*a curb*).

41 1 Timothy 1:9–10 The law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.⁹

1 Timothy 1:15:

The Lord's Prayer — The Fifth Petition

278. Why is forgiveness important for my own life in Christ?

B. God's forgiveness enables me to forgive others, freeing me from anger and resentment toward them.

Read **Genesis 50:15–21** about Joseph forgiving his brothers; **Matthew 18:23–35** about the unforgiving

⁷ Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

⁸ Luther, *Small Catechism*, 102.

⁹ Luther, *Small Catechism*, 54–55.

servant; and 1 Timothy 1:15 where Paul says he is the greatest sinner.¹⁰

982 1 Timothy 1:17 To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.¹¹

1 Timothy 1:17:

The Lord's Prayer — The Conclusion

290. *Why did the Early Church include these words at the end of the Lord's Prayer?*

God our Father

C. is exalted as the one true God.

1 Timothy 1:17:

The First Commandment

37. *What are some of God's attributes?*

E. God is eternal (without beginning and end).

90 1 Timothy 1:17 To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.¹²

FOR REFLECTION & MEDITATION

Leader: At this point, use the questions to walk back through the text to glean answers. Note that there may not be an answer to every question and responses will vary due to each brother being in a different place in their pastoral ministry. Encourage the brothers to write down their own answers to these and share them as they feel comfortable.

Leader: Here is where the gleanings are turned into prayer and praise. This part of the study may be left to the brothers to do privately. It would be a blessing to ask the brothers to share something from their lists that could be included in a final prayer to close the time of study.

What is God teaching?

1. What is God teaching me in these verses about the Pastoral Office and me as one called to this Office?
 - a. About Himself – Father/Son/Holy Spirit?
 - › About His work?
 - › About His promises/gifts?
 - b. About me/others?
 - › What have I been given?
 - › What I am supposed to do/not do?
 - › How am I to do what is given me to do?
 - c. About faith/belief/unbelief/doubt?
 - › What is it that I am given to trust in about myself?
 - › What is it that I am given to trust in as I serve in the Pastoral Office?
 - d. About the Pastoral Office?
 - e. About the congregation I serve?
 - f. About engaging the communities (civil/cultures) in which I serve?

Praying God's Word

Lord of the Church, grant that I may be mindful of ...

Thanksgiving

2. What has the Lord told me for which I can give thanks to the Lord of the Church as I serve in the Office of the Ministry?

Praying God's Word

Lord of the Church, I thank you for ...

Reflection and Repentance

3. In light of what I have learned, how have I fallen short in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?
 - a. Is there something God would have me to do that I have failed to do?
 - b. Is there something God would not have me do that I have done anyway?

¹⁰ Luther, *Small Catechism*, 266–67.

¹¹ Luther, *Small Catechism*, 279–80.

¹² Luther, *Small Catechism*, 63–64.

Praying God's Word

Lord of the Church, I confess to You that ...

Petitions in Prayer

4. In all that I have learned, what needs to change/improve in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?

What and/or How ...

- a. I have been thinking, saying, or doing that I need to change/improve?
- b. I have been thinking, saying, or doing that I am able to rejoice in doing well?

Praying God's Word

Lord of the Church, grant the work of Your Holy Spirit that I may ...

“This the Spirit will grant us and continually instruct us in when, by God’s word, our hearts have been cleared and freed of outside thoughts and concerns.”¹³ May it ever be so Lord! Amen.

¹³ LW 43:209.