

Gospel, Apostle Paul, and Ministry

2 Timothy chapter 1, 2 Timothy chapter 1, verses 1 to 2, 2 Timothy 1, 1 through 2, let us listen attentively to the Word of God. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, a peace from God the Father in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us pray.

In this opening greeting to Timothy, Lord God, we read of Paul reminding him again of his office and how God has equipped him, gifted him, such that, Lord, he can write these letters to direct, to encourage, and even to bless, as we have a little benediction here in verse 2. And as such, Lord, we read how Paul ties the gospel and the ministry and his work, Lord, all together in these opening verses. May we see this in the importance of how you have given, in your wisdom, church officers for the good of the church, especially the minister, with respect to hear the preaching and the good news of the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

So, having sent one letter to the young pastor Timothy, Paul sends this other one. This one letter is probably his last letter. It was sent after his fourth missionary journey around 64 to 68 AD.

He wrote it while under arrest in Rome. The letter calls Timothy to attend to him, we read that in chapter 4, and encourages him in his ministerial work while still at Ephesus. The letter ranges in doctrinal matters from the resurrection to the inspiration of the Bible to meditations upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

With this in mind, let us progress through this book that we may learn more of God's mercies for our lives, beginning here with the office of apostle created by God for the church. So, the first part here, the apostle by the will of God. Apostle Paul, of course, in particular, but all the apostles by the will of God.

Apostle by the Will of God

What does he mean by this? Paul did not take the office of his own power and accord. It was not given to him by mere men or others, but by Jesus Christ himself directly and explicitly. He was chosen by him in a powerful way, as you may recall going back there to the book of Acts chapter 9. Up to that point, Peter was prominent in the literature here.

Luke wrote the book of Acts and he was the one, as it were, almost a spokesman of the church at the time, although all 12 were spokesmen and equal in their own right. Paul comes on the scene here in chapter 9. As you recall, Paul was known as Saul and he hated Christians, brothers and sisters. This is a man who hated them so much he consented to their death.

Acts 9. Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the way, that's what the early church was called, the Christians were called those who were of the way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to

Jerusalem. He had no mercy. Verse 3, And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.

Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he said, Who are you, Lord? The Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads. And so he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what do you want me to do? Then the Lord said to him, Arise and go into the city and you'll be told what you must do.

And thus we read, Paul was instantly overcome physically. Of course, he was blind there and he fell down to the ground and overcome spiritually as his soul was converted. He immediately responded to Jesus himself and obeyed.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ chose him explicitly, directly, visibly, right then and there, by the will of God. Not man's will, not Paul's will. Paul's will was molded, shaped, and redirected to say yes and follow Jesus for the remainder of his days.

Jesus chose Paul to be a church leader. Although later the church confirmed this office, they laid hands upon him and others to be sure. Even today the church grants the office to a man that as we confirm what God has shown in the life of the man who was chosen.

We don't make the office, we don't make the call per se. God does through the power of the Holy Spirit and the providential workings of the man's life and the church recognizes what is already there. Evidence of his calling.

And although a strong personality, clearly he was a rising star in his circles, brothers and sisters. A man of great gifts and ability. Paul, nevertheless, was one of many church leaders, the other apostles, the other disciples that were with Jesus beginning to the end of his ministry.

And his office and all their offices were especially focused upon preaching and prayer, especially preaching. It's called Acts or sometimes known as the Acts of the Apostles. You can say the Acts of God, yes, but it's Acts of God through the human vessels, these men, over and over again and what they've done and how the gospel message spread throughout the Mediterranean era there through the leadership in particular.

And the sermons there over and over again testify to the central function and office of the minister, just like the ministers today, because the apostles were ministers. All apostles were chosen by Christ, as we know, directly and explicitly. The calling of the twelve.

You recall there are three types of followers of Jesus and his ministry there in the Gospels. You read of the crowds and the masses following him, ebbing and flowing and growing in number or sometimes shrinking at times, but they're always there interested in what he had to say or perhaps what in their mind they took as takedowns of the Jewish elite, the Pharisees, and certainly for the food and the goodies and the miracles. That's one, that's the broadest circle, the outer circle.

And then those were followers of Jesus, the committed ones like Mary or the 120 in the upper room. People like us. So I want Jesus, even if I'm not healed, even if I'm not given free food, because I need him.

But amongst those, he took a small circle of his disciples with a capital D, that small group that became Apostles, a new office for a new age of the Church of Jesus Christ. The Apostles, the leaders of the New Testament Church, even called the foundation of the Church, the Apostles were chosen to represent Jesus in a direct and a unique way. The word Apostle means one who was sent on a mission with full authority or a commissioned representative.

The word was used in the Greek culture to emphasize the authority of the one who sent the Apostle. So it wasn't about the Apostle, it was about the Apostle's message and the one he represented, of course here, Jesus Christ. You recall Jesus himself is called an Apostle.

He has that title because he represents God. In other words, it emphasized the official commission of the office as derived from God, in this case. And as such, the Apostles were given a unique authority since they were the ones who saw Jesus and were enlisted by him.

Even Paul saw Jesus on the road to Damascus in his earthly ministry. It took a miracle to demonstrate, of course, Paul's commission to the Church. You don't have to take anybody's word for it.

Who is this Paul? This is Paul, come on, this is the guy who's killing us, dragging us off, even women, to prison. And so it took a miracle to wake them up and say, no, this guy's good. This is a man who has been chosen by Jesus himself.

The uniqueness of the Apostles is further testified in the book of Ephesians, where Paul describes them as having a unique function in the foundation of the New Testament Church, where she sheds off the old Jewish ways. Quote, having been built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, end of Ephesians 2. That's clearly unique. You don't lay the foundation again.

They're done. There are no more Apostles. Jesus is done and he's in heaven.

We wait for him to return. As an extraordinary office, it no longer exists today, but still had many vast portions of the Apostles had ordinary functions. They did what the pastor does, they did what a ruling elder does, they even did what the deacon did.

They were taking care of the widows, Acts 6, remember that? That's important because when we go and read about what the Apostles do in Acts or some of the qualifications and the like, the uniqueness therein, that shouldn't distract us from they did so many things that we can imitate, nevertheless, or learn from in their ministry. Just like the prophets of old, they did many extraordinary things, miracle after miracle, prophecies of the future, yet had many ordinary functions like preaching and writing and teaching, and so the Apostles too. In this text, we read about the ordinary and the extraordinary part of being an Apostle.

Specifically, Paul alludes to his call by Christ to the will of God, but the ordinary part is the fact that he wrote this letter, and he wrote the letter unpacking the truths that you and I can read ourselves, and even draw many of these conclusions ourselves if we had the rest of the New Testament. The instruction here was nothing new, there was no new revelation as such given here, but you can find all these doctrines elsewhere, even in the Old Testament, certainly in the New Testament in which he is teaching here. And it's not just the office of Paul or the Apostles, a part of which he was, that is built upon the will of God, but the church proper is built upon the will of God.

It came into existence by his design. The church herself was called by our Lord and Savior, and right after the fall, it came into existence, and Adam and Eve, and some of their children carried on through Abraham and through us today, brothers and sisters. It came into existence, into being, by his will, his will alone.

In other words, the creation of the church is not based upon man. It should never be based upon man. It would never have been based upon man, but unfortunately we have many religions that are based upon men today.

And the church herself being called means the ordinances of the church, and the church officers as well, besides the Apostles, are called by Jesus. They're not man-made institutions like a business or a club which we have freedom to do these things. They have certain rules and certain qualifications, and they come and go over time in different societies.

Nothing like that. This is by our Lord and Savior, and we must go to his will to understand the church, and the church ordinances, and the church functions. The church exists by the will of God, the formation, in particular, of course, the New Testament expression of the church.

Jesus gathered his people there, as we saw in the Epistles, and the Acts, and the Gospels as well, describing these new believers who were Jew, no longer Jew anymore. The Jewishness is done away with. The old priesthood is done away with.

The old offices are gone. Prophet no more. He created new offices for the new expression, and new ordinances as well.

The ordinances exist by the will of God. The things given to the church to help the saints. We cannot make new sacraments, for example.

Christ can, and Christ did. He created the Lord's Supper right after the Passover. It's like, this is done.

Now I have something new here. This is the blood of my covenant, the new covenant, to express the change of the people of God from a Jewish mold into something now is international. And, of course, baptism, replacing circumcision.

And Jesus gives us that explicitly in the Great Commission of Matthew 28. Things have changed, and changed in many wonderful ways, but can only have changed if Christ made

the change. Not the Pope or anybody else, not pastors coming along, making up new offices, and new powers of the church.

Church discipline also comes under church ordinances, as it's called. Not just anyone can express and implement excommunication, for example. And, of course, here, lastly, to tie it back to the Apostles, church officers exist by the will of God.

Pastor, ruling elder, and deacon come from Him, and not from my imagination, or your imagination, or rather, shouldn't. And they are given, like the Apostles, for the good of the church. And the pastor's connection to the Apostle, and with respect to the ordinary office, that there's an overlap there, and their function, is made pretty clear in Ephesians 4, as you recall.

I'm not going to go there, but Ephesians 4 describes Jesus ascending up on high, the picture of a king triumphing over the enemies of God, and giving gifts to men. And that list of gifts is what Apostles, evangelists, and pastors, and teachers have been given to the body of Christ for the edification, for the growth, for the maturation, for all of us. And if we don't believe this to be from God, that they're governed by His will, and His will alone, for our good, then we will not have the blessings attached to having such men in the church.

For they are given gifts by God for the good of the church, not just to have somebody lord over you. That's not the point. Now, you're not an Apostle, probably not a church officer, but you have a job as well.

And I know the word often used today is ministry. You have a ministry. And that's fine, if I understand what you're saying.

Often, I find it confuses people. You have a job. You have a responsibility, a vocational calling in God's kingdom, brothers and sisters, wherever you are in life.

A father, a daughter, a grandfather, a grandmother, a mechanic, a mayor, an engineer, it doesn't matter. And whatever you do, you should do the full glory of God above, to follow His law, His ways, to depend upon Him and His grace. And therefore, you are an example to others of what Christianity is about in your life.

And people may talk and ask you questions, as we went over in Sunday School class in 1 Peter 3. You, therefore, should equip yourself to be able to give an answer of the hope that's within you with all gentleness, understanding and accommodating to their weakness as unbelievers who don't understand the first thing about Christianity. It takes time and patience on your part, brothers and sisters. But you, too, have this responsibility to represent Jesus in that sense of working in His kingdom.

So you shouldn't feel bad that you're not this or that, but you are where God has put you in His work to fulfill and to help in God's work in His kingdom. The second point, apostles according to the promise. So, he ties what he is of Jesus Christ, representing Him, working for Him by the will of God and no other.

Apostle According to the Promise

According to, for this purpose, and tying it to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. So I ask you, what is another word for the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus? One simple word. Gospel.

Yeah. Amen. Lots of ways to describe the good news, what the word gospel means.

Paul was an apostle made for this end, for the promise, for the good news of Jesus Christ. It's part of the call of the church officers in general. Matthew 28 19.

Matthew 28 19 is the Great Commission. And here, in the Great Commission, we read, Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Amen. Their office created for the sake of the gospel, the Apostles were, not for the sake of themselves. Baptism is a public act in the name of the Trinity.

And what's the point of the name of the Trinity? It's the good news of God in Christ by the Spirit. That's the point of labeling the Trinity. They're completely involved in our lives and drawing us into the fellowship of the church, of the body of Christ, is what baptism represents, in bringing full redemption to the lost, teaching the world, discipling them, instructing them, calling them, is what they are called to do.

In other words, the Apostles and other church officers were created to assist both directly or indirectly, in combination thereof, the good news. Our Lord and Savior could have spoken from heaven, as he did, as the Father did with respect to his Son at his baptism with John the Baptizer. Remember that? John the Baptist.

This is my beloved Son, and whom I am well pleased. But he doesn't, does he? He simply doesn't. He has deigned to use you, me, and our own callings, invocations in life, to walk it, to be able to give an answer of the hope that's within us.

That's how he brings the good news. And so you assist in that way, and pastors assist in a different way, and ruling elders and deacons all have their place. That's how he's deigned it, to use these human vessels, men and women with feet of clay, that is, we are sinners, we are weak, we fall down before people publicly, that is, sin, transgression with our words, with our actions at times, our omissions.

People see these things, and we feel the weakness of it, and we wish at times we had a miracle. People will wake up and see this and praise the Lord, but he doesn't do it that way. In his infinite wisdom, he says, I'm going to do it this way, through ordinary providence, open your mouth, live a godly life, because the world is watching.

That's how he does it. And officers fit into that mold as well. They are unique, they are given by God, but they are not extraordinary like the apostles.

We are but ordinary men who use the best of our ability to persuade others into the truth. We all help in our own ways. The good news goes in two directions in the Great Commission.

I know often we read the Great Commission as simply and only out words. It's easy, I can appreciate, it's easy to read it as, in our modern context, as though, okay, leave Israel and go to India, otherwise there's a problem. No, they still have to preach to the Jews, don't they? They need to hear the good news there in Israel, or maybe just a little bit further south into Jordan, or into Egypt.

It doesn't have to be the whole other side of the world. You've got lots of work to do in your own backyard. They had lots of work to do in their own backyard, as we see in the Book of Acts.

They had lots of conversions by God's grace, and a great revival where thousands were converted. It's amazing to see and to read this. They are in Acts 2 and elsewhere.

So there's an outward part of the Great Commission, that is with respect to the church herself, to the lost and unbelieving world, they need to hear the good news. We used to be one of them. There's also an inward part, which is illustrated by whom? Paul himself, in the letters to the churches.

It's an inward work, that is, it's the gospel for the church herself, not just the gospel for the unbeliever, it's the gospel for the believer. You never outgrow the good news, brothers and sisters. You need the redemptive power of Jesus Christ and the preaching therein, and the instruction of this truth.

You need repentance, you need faith renewed, sure. You have it as a gift, that's true. God gives us these officers and one another, of course, Galatians 6.1, to bear one of those burdens.

In this way, inward, is how I describe it. The letters are towards the pastors, are towards the churches, people in the church. There's not a lot of talk about missionary work, if you notice, in the epistles, in 1 Corinthians.

I'm not saying, therefore ignore them, I'm just saying, let's not put things out of proportion. It depends on where we are and what we can do. And this is what Paul does here in his ministry, is help the churches of God, even as he does outward work, outward facing work to the unbelievers at Mars Hill, for example, in Acts 18.

He's still working in zealous for God in the inward work of the people that we will grow thereby. So he directs and helps Timothy here, a young pastor, showing how many of the functions of the young pastor are still applicable for us today in these epistles. But what else did the apostles do? Acts 6, as you recall, they were doing diaconate work, helping the widows.

And they said, we can't keep doing this, because our ministry is what? The word and prayer. Or preaching and prayer. The apostle of prayer.

Apostle of Prayer

Now verse 2, we read, to Timothy, a beloved son. We know he wasn't his biological son. He speaks spiritually, right? 1 Timothy 5, your brothers and sisters in the Lord, and treat your older as older fathers and the younger as younger siblings in the Lord.

Spiritually speaking, with proper integrity of course, and meekness. But it's a lovely thing to be described in the faith as beloved son. Timothy was dear to Paul, although he had nothing miraculous about him, he wasn't an apostle, he was a pastor like me.

And he had a mentor in Paul. Now Paul's prayer at the beginning of this second epistle is grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father in Christ Jesus our Lord. What's another word for this? Preached on it last week.

It's a benediction. Bene means good. It's a good word.

A good speaking. A good prayer. A prayer for blessings.

Paul loved to bless his readers, brothers and sisters. Even though he was direct and pointed at times, he always had a shepherd's heart. A zeal for his people.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father in Christ Jesus our Lord, we read here. Not at the end of the letter, but at the beginning of the letter. Because a prayer of blessing can be used at any good time.

No magic formula, just at the end of the books. And again, not a magic formula only for pastors. And so although at the end of the sermon I give the benediction, and I raise my hands, and I do that not because it's magical.

I do that to remind you something happening here, which is a public officer is praying for you. In the capacity of a leader, of a pastor, of a preacher. And not just a private citizen.

You can give these prayers for one another, in other words. Understanding of course, you're not a pastor, you're not a preacher, you don't do it in a public way that way. But it's the same prayer.

It's the same heart. It should be. So Paul giving this prayer isn't just uniquely an Apostle's prayer, it's all our prayer.

And the parts of the prayer we have here, the first part, grace, unmerited favor from the Lord God through Christ's work, always tied to the gospel, always tied to the covenant of grace. And mercy, which can often be used as a synonym for grace. Compassion for undeserving sinners.

And then peace, that is a reconciliation with God, first and foremost of course, and secondarily with one another. We are reconciled and drawn close to one another in the body of Christ. It's a short prayer to be sure, with a longer list of good to fix to it.

He's not saying just this specific type of grace or mercy or peace. He means all that's encapsulated in the good news, the fruit of the Spirit, all good things Ephesians 1 tells us, that are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. But it's a short, simple prayer with lots of depth.

As we heard last week with the benediction of 1 Timothy 6.21, grace be with you. Amen. The prayer of church leaders as a good thing of course, as all Christians indeed are called to pray for one another.

And it makes sense that pastors would pray publicly in public worship and in public events. We've had that for a long history in the West, in early America for example. They expected the pastor to be there to give a sermon and to pray there for the militia even, the local militia.

Like we want the blessings of God upon us, so let's use a godly man. It makes sense. We're all called nevertheless to pray and have a prayer in our lives for one another.

Privately, publicly you can pray in so far as you know, pastor isn't there, you guys have a gathering together of women, of friends, of family, at a birthday party or whatever. Pray. Usually it's the, I think properly in most cases, the head of the household who does the prayer.

And indeed we should continue to pray for worship and adoration of our God above, which he does here. Grace, mercy, and peace. From whom? From my good works, from my baptism, from my good intentions, but from God the Father in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He is the origin, he is the source of all good blessings, both material and spiritual in our lives. And we too should pray with such prayers of worship and adoration. This is a form of adoration although it's a prayer request, a desire that these good things come upon us.

We know part of it is a thanksgiving, thank you Lord for Jesus our Savior who has given us grace, mercy, and peace. For our needs in life, to pray for the things that we require, Jesus gives this in the Lord's Prayer. Pray for daily bread, simple things in life, for shelter, for protection.

Church officers in God's grace, indeed is glorious news of the redemption we have in Christ Jesus, spread by any Christian. Right? I can't do it all for you, it's only one guy, me. But God has chosen some to especially equip them in a public way to preach and declare the good news of our Lord and Savior.

And not just Paul or the Apostles, but ministers and pastors today. And we thank God for the Apostles' work in the early church who wouldn't have these letters. And the miracles that testified, said things have changed, you're no longer Jewish, forget the temple.

But focus on Christ and what he has done now, and the future now of the new age. And keep praying, brothers and sisters, for the Lord to raise more godly and bold men to preach the good news according to the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God above, as we read this benediction of grace and mercy and Paul's description of his office coming from you, we thank you, Lord, that you've given us other offices besides the Apostle. In your wisdom you say it's sufficient, we don't have miracles, we have simple men. God, and even one another as we have our callings and vocations in life.

Equip us thereby, and equip the ministers especially, Lord, to stand firm upon your word and grant them, we pray, favored by your grace, to have bountiful ministries for the glory of the kingdom of God, we pray. Amen.