

1 Timothy 1.15-17 Gospel Demonstration

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Preacher: Dan Morley

[0 : 00] Now, in the book of 1 Timothy, as we've seen, Timothy was left in Ephesus, and he was there, and he was tasked, he was charged to deal with counterfeit teachers. They were teaching false! What they were teaching was a misuse of the law. We want to get really at the heart of the misuse of the law.

But the misuse of the law, it arises from a distorted view of God, and it arises from a distorted view of the gospel. So this is what was going on, and Paul has charged Timothy to deal with these false teachers, to confront them, and to stop the false teaching. And then he goes on to explain that the law is good. There is a misuse of the law, but the law is good when used lawfully. And he explains the use of the law. And from that, we see that the law exposes sin, and in exposing sin, it also shows the sinner's need of salvation.

But the message that he provides doesn't stop there. It's like Paul gets his momentum going, and his momentum doesn't stop, but it continues. And that the law drives to Christ and his glorious gospel.

So we're going to demonstrate through this why law is still necessary, law is necessary, and why gospel is necessary. There are multiple different misuses of the law, but the law is necessary, and the gospel is necessary. So let's take a look. We'll read in 1 Timothy 3 to 17, and our text this morning will be verses 15 to 17. So 1 Timothy 1, starting in verse 3.

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, remain in Ephesus, that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes, rather than godly edification, which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love, from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some have strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor the things which they affirm. But we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has enabled me, because he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man, but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

[3 : 26] And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason, I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering as a pattern to those who are going to believe on him for everlasting life. Now, to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. Our great God, we thank you for your word, that we have supernatural revelation. We thank you, God, the Holy Spirit, that you make the word effectual to us.

We pray that you would do so this morning, that you would illuminate your word, help us to understand it, to grow in truth and understanding, that you would grow us in that which is spiritually discerned, according to our needs, for salvation and godly living and for worship. Pray that you would build your church this morning. We pray that you would forgive us of all of our sins today and help us to free ourselves from distractions with an anticipation to hear from you from your word.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, last week we covered verses 12 to 15, and we're picking up on 15 again and continuing through to verse 17. And what's going on in these verses from 15 to 17 is this. In illustrating the relation between law and gospel, Paul is a demonstration of gospel transformation. So in this text, we'll see a gospel summary, a gospel example, and a gospel doxology. Summary, example, doxology. So first of all, gospel summary, picking up in verse 15. Let's take a look. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. And we're not going to go over all that we went through last week on this verse, but adding to it and building from it as we move to verse 17. So remember the context of what's going on, what I explained in the introduction and what we read in 1 Timothy previously. What we have here in verse 15 is a concise summary of the gospel. It's the main thrust of the gospel. Now, why does he articulate it?

What leads up to it, the context? Remember what's going on is that there is a controversy in the church in Ephesus that Timothy is left to deal with, is charged to deal with. There's a controversy in the church of false doctrine. False doctrine is in the church and needs to be dealt with. And so what the false doctrine is false of, Paul takes what is true, takes what is true, and he makes a concise summary of that truth that is easy to memorize to answer against this controversy. Seems like a pretty good model, isn't it? That when a controversy, the church is faced with a controversy to summarize what scripture says about that and summarize it concisely to respond to the controversy. Seems like a pretty good model. So here we have a misuse of the law. That's the controversy. So Paul responds with a concise summary of the gospel. It's articulated because of opposition to sound doctrine. So it's a faithful saying that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now that he came into the world, what does we need to understand about that he came into the world? It demonstrates both pre-existence and incarnation.

The second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, Christ, was not created, but is eternal. Pre-existed before the incarnation and pre-existed internally as God. And we have the divine nature. But in the incarnation, the divine nature is united to human nature, and the incarnation came into the world. So we have a prior to coming into the world, the pre-existent, eternally existing Son of God, who is the essence of God, incarnate, being united to human nature, assuming our nature, came into the world. He came into the world for a purpose.

[8 : 27] And that purpose, concisely stated here, is to save sinners. This is the Son's mission, the Son of God, the mission according to the eternal agreement between the Father and the Son, that in the fullness of time, would come into time, into creation, assuming our nature are united to human nature. His mission would be to be the mediator between God and man, by becoming incarnate, by coming in human form, united to, taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being born under the law, perfecting the law, that which man was not able to do, suffered and died to pay the penalty for sin, also that which man was not able to do, suffered and died as a substitute, was buried, was raised in power, and ascended on high, and he will return. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

And then he goes on to say, of whom I am chief. That statement that he tacks on at the end indicates he's not self-righteous.

Christ Jesus didn't come into the world to save those who are righteous. He didn't come into the world to save those who are in conformity to the law. He came into the world to save sinners. Sinners are those who have been lawbreakers against God's moral law, which we looked at previously as he goes through the moral principles of the Ten Commandments, which is God's natural law, which is imprinted innately in man's heart from creation.

Every man across the entire world has God's moral principles innately imprinted on their hearts. We see that in Romans 2, 14 and 15. Furthermore, it's codified or summarized at Mount Sinai, given to Moses in the Ten Commandments.

So we understand the moral principles behind that. And we are breakers of that law, which means we're sinners. As sinners, we need salvation. And this is the work of the law.

[10 : 28] The law exposes our sin. And as sinners, shows us that we need salvation. As there is a distinction between the law and gospel, there is also a harmony with the law and the gospel.

And as the law points out that we are sinners and need sin, we need the gospel. And Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Now notice in this verse, who is being credited?

This statement is in opposition against false teachers who are misusing the law. And we'll get into that a little bit more deeply. But misusing the law. The law is not used to merit God's love.

The law is not used to justify ourselves before God. The law is not used for self-righteousness. So who is Paul crediting in this concise gospel summary?

Who is Paul thanking as he displays himself as a pattern, as a demonstration of gospel transformation? Is it Paul or is it Christ? Is Paul crediting his righteousness for why he is saved?

[11 : 32] Is Paul thanking himself for how righteous and good he is that he would be a child of God? As Paul goes on to explain his, well, how he is a pattern of God's mercy, of his gospel transformation, does he say that Jesus saw how he was fiercely persecuting the church and Jesus thought, man, I really got to get that guy on my side?

No, he doesn't say that at all. Paul's not praising himself in that sense. Or does he say how excellent his performance was that light from heaven shone down all around him and it was, he was in the spotlight of divine light of his performance?

No, that's not how he articulates it. It's not his performance that was being spotlighted. Rather, he says he was the chief of sinners. He was the worst. He was the foremost of lawbreakers.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And Paul credits the exceedingly abundant grace of the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

When he gets to the heart of the matter, it's about the exceedingly abundant gospel of grace, the abounding, the overwhelming, the overflowing grace of God, of the blessed God.

[12 : 51] And his role, it's not that it was a noteworthy performance that needed to be spotlighted by divine light. His role, as he says, was receiving mercy.

He said, I obtained mercy. That was his role in verse 16. So Paul's not being praised here. It's actually quite the opposite. He said praising himself, which he was an expert of the law.

If it had to do with the law, he would have the ability to praise himself. He's not praising himself. He's doing quite the opposite. He's saying, I am the chief of sinners. And then he goes deeper than that.

When he says that he's the chief of sinners and he ascribes the exceedingly abundant grace of God and gospel transformation, he erupts into this doxology. In thanksgiving and in praise of God, he erupts into a doxology.

And he goes deeper than just his subjective experience. Now, his subjective experience is true and worthy of praising God. He obtained mercy. That is true.

[13 : 57] And God is worthy of being praised for it. But his eruption of doxology goes even deeper than his subjective experience. We could go deeper in terms of God's operation in salvation and God's saving him.

But he goes even deeper than that still. While this also is true that God saves sinners and God's operation is worthy of praise and thanksgiving, his doxology goes even deeper still.

So he goes what is beyond those things to the very root of the matter, to God's very essence, to God's very attributes, to who God is. And praising God for his salvation, he praises, adores, and thanks God for who God is.

Rather than the distorted view of God that the false teachers have. So do you see how the contrast is here? A misuse of the law stems from a distorted view of God.

Paul corrects it with the right view of the gospel and praises God for who he is, a right view of God. So he's addressing the issue and has this concise statement, which is a summary of what is true doctrine in response to the false doctrine.

[15 : 23] Now when we see it in further context, remember that Timothy was left in Ephesus. First of all, he would have to contend against the uprising of Ephesus, of the pagans, against the Greco-Roman pagan outcry.

If you remember, there was much pagan worship and temple worship and that there was much controversy because of Christianity, because even the industry of idol making was suffering because people were turning to Christ and they weren't making money on selling idols.

So there's this outcry. So even from without the church, Timothy would have opposition. He would have opposition without, and he also had opposition within, the counterfeit teachers within.

So there was certainly much opposition for Timothy to have to contend with in this setting, in the context, where we have this response of a concise statement of the gospel.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. Now if these counterfeit teachers, the opposition that Timothy was facing within the church, if these counterfeit teachers thought that because of their illustrious and elaborate genealogies demonstrated that because of their Jewish ancestry, they should be teachers of the law, if that's what he was having to confront, if that was their thinking, if they thought that they should be teachers because of their illustrious genealogies, what would that say about young Timothy, whose father was a Greek?

[17 : 08] If these counterfeit teachers are saying they should be teachers because of their Jewish ancestry, that doesn't look very well for Timothy, whose father was a Greek. But these false counterfeit teachers, is their method the right pattern for the church?

Is the pattern according to the adherence of the law, which was the false doctrine, their misuse of the law? Is the pattern according to adherence to the law?

Is the pattern according to a purebred genealogy and exemplary ancestry of Jewish ethnicity? Or is the pattern something else?

So, this is very important. It was important at this time and it's important today. And this brings us to our second point. Paul functions as a pattern of gospel conversion displayed in the chief of sinners.

Paul functions as a pattern of gospel conversion in the chief of sinners. So, secondly, gospel example. In verses 13 to 16, we're going to reach back a little bit into last week's text.

[18 : 22] In verses 13 to 16, we have a distinction made of formerly and presently. Paul compares who he was formerly with who he is presently and formerly, but I.

And it's centered around his regeneration. And there's a, I'll try not to lose you here, but there's verses 13, 14, 15, 16.

In verse 13, there's a triadic formula of who Paul was formerly, a soul. And that's blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent. And then in verse 14, we have a triadic formula of the presently of Paul.

When I say presently, I mean like as a historical narrative of who he was then. Presently, Paul is perfected in holiness and the state of glory. But in a historical narrative, presently, in verse 14, there's the triadic formula of his conversion, which is grace, faith, and love.

So the formerly triadic formula, blasphemer, persecutor, insolent, is then summarized in verse 15, the chief of sinners. And then the presently triadic formula after conversion of grace, faith, and love is summarized in verse 16, I obtained mercy.

[19 : 44] So formerly, a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent, the chief of sinners, he was dead in sin. Presently, grace, faith, and love, he obtained mercy, made alive in union with Christ.

So, why does Paul explain this? Why was Paul saved? Why was somebody who was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man, regenerated, who the chief of sinners received mercy, obtained mercy?

Paul goes on to explain. He says that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering as a pattern.

To those who are going to believe on him for everlasting life. That in me, as a pattern. So the reason why, he explains, is that so he can be as a pattern of gospel demonstration, of gospel conversion.

He's an example. That is a demonstration of God's grace to his people. In other words, what he's saying is that if Paul of Tarsus, who was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man, then you also can obtain mercy.

[21 : 03] If Saul of Tarsus can obtain mercy, so can you. So in me, as a pattern. A pattern for what? A pattern for Jesus Christ.

This is speaking to redemption accomplished. And where the Son of God, this is a little bit of repetition, but the Son of God came in human form for a purpose.

And that purpose included suffering and dying to pay a redemption price. To pay the price of the sins of his people.

To purchase a people for his own possession. Redemption accomplished the shedding of the blood and the pouring out of his life on the cross as a substitute.

Redemption was accomplished that he may be a mediator between sinful man and a holy God. Of course, he did not remain in the grave, but was raised from the dead in power, ascended on high, and he is seated with all power, with all authority, as our mediator.

[22 : 05] So, that in me, first, Jesus Christ, understanding Christ's work of redemption accomplished and as a mediator. Jesus Christ may show all longsuffering as a pattern to those who are going to believe.

To believe means to have faith. Faith, understand what it is, faith isn't merely a wishful thinking. Where it's, you know, do you think God's real and he'll save his people?

Well, I certainly hope so. That's not faith. Faith isn't wishful thinking. Faith is knowledge, assent, and trust. Knowledge of the word of God, knowledge of the gospel, knowledge of God's promises, assent of it, that is agreement, agreeing, yes, this is right, this is true.

So, it's not just knowledge, not just agreement, but also trust. Having confidence in the trustworthiness of God and of his gospel promises. To those who are going to believe, to know, to understand, to agree, to assent, and to trust, to have confidence and trustworthiness of God and his promises of salvation.

As a pattern to those who are going to believe on him for everlasting life. So, whose work is it? This gospel example that occurs in Paul, whose work is it?

[23 : 26] Why does Paul use the phrase, came into the world to save sinners? Why did the Son of God have to come into the world to save sinners?

Why did God not use somebody who was just man? Why did the Son of God have to come in human form?

Because of total depravity. Because of the fall, because of sin, because of Adam's first sin, all of Adam's generation, all of his offspring, is born with sin, is born sinners, and does actually sin.

And what the law requires is perfect, exact, entire, and perpetual obedience. And none of us can do that. So, there's something that's required that remained undone.

It still needed to be accomplished. But because of our depravity, we are unable to perfectly obey the law. So, the Son of God came into the world to save sinners.

[24 : 32] Also, because of being sinners, we have a debt. And that debt is death, and upon death, condemnation, and eternal wrath. Eternal torment, the wrath of God, because of God's righteousness, because of divine justice.

That debt needed to be paid. So, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, because man is a sinner, and needs to be saved.

So, why came into the world to save sinners? Because mankind couldn't do it, because of our depravity. Therefore, man needed divine intervention.

So, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And who does Paul thank? If we look back a little bit, who does Paul thank for enabling and appointing him?

Does he thank himself? He thanks Jesus Christ because of human inability. Sinful mankind does not have the ability to do what is required.

[25 : 40] And that is the work of God. And then third, how does the gospel cause someone dead in their sin to be made alive in Christ?

Paul said he's not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God to salvation. Also, Romans 10, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

So, what is it about the gospel that causes someone who is dead in sin to become alive in Christ? It is effectual calling. It's the work of God's spirit convincing us of our sin and misery.

That is recognizing that we are sinners, that we have sinned. To say, I am the chief of sinners, and as a sinner, I am in need of salvation. Enlightening our eyes.

And enabling us to receive Christ. The effectual calling is the work of God's spirit taking the gospel, the external call, and the internal call is the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit making the gospel effectual and applying redemption to the dead sinner, that they may be made alive in Christ.

[26 : 57] So, that brings us to our third point. Paul bursts out into the only fitting response to God's glorious gospel of grace to the chief of sinners. And that is gospel doxology.

Doxology means an expression of praise or giving glory to God. And in verse 17, we have this doxology, this expression of praise, giving glory to God.

We have an address, an ascription, adoration, and affirmation. So, if you look in verse 17 with me, the address is to the king.

And if we recall, you would have seen that in Psalm 145 this morning, which was our call to worship. To the king, the king eternal is timeless sovereignty.

Ascribing to God sovereignty as king over all of creation, which is timeless. He governs all of creation. He governs everything. He has dominion and rule and power.

[27 : 59] He's lord of all things. He is sovereign over every earthly king. And this is not a temporal reign. He doesn't just address God as the king. It's not a temporal reign, but it is eternal, without end.

To the king eternal. And then, the ascription of attributes. So, to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, God who alone is wise.

Now, that word eternal, it means without beginning, without end, and without succession. Sometimes, we might be inclined to think of eternal as being just a timeline in either direction with an arrow on it that doesn't have a beginning or an end.

But God's eternity is not merely that he always existed for as far back as you can go or think. And not that he will exist for as long as time shall continue.

God's eternity is that he is outside of the bounds of time. He fills all space and time. He is unbounded by time.

[29 : 05] So, his eternity is that he does not undergo the succession of change that time is. Eternal and immortal.

Immortal, he is unlike creatures. He is unlike man. And he is distinguished from that which is corruptible. Man is corruptible and therefore mortal.

He is distinguished from man, distinguished from creatures. He is not like nature as man, as creatures. He is distinguished from corruptible. And he is not subject to suffering.

He is not subject to passions or to death. He cannot die. God is immortal. Eternal, immortal, invisible.

God is spirit. It's not merely that just God is a spirit, as though there is a multiplicity of spirits and there is one which we call God. But God is spirit. That in which his essence is.

[30 : 06] He does not have a body. God is spirit. And he dwells in inaccessible light. He dwells in inaccessible light that mortal eye cannot see. And he cannot be depicted in visual images.

The essence of God is incomprehensible. Eternal, immortal, invisible, and wise. God is infinite wisdom.

It's not that God harnesses wisdom that is external to himself. But God himself is wisdom. Infinite wisdom. And it is from God that all wisdom is derived.

Eternal, immortal, invisible. God who alone is wise. Eternal, immortal, invisible, and the only God. This speaks of monotheistic, as in numerically one.

To say something is generically one. To say something is generically one. You could say the human race is generically one. That's not how we say that God is one, but that God is numerically one.

[31 : 13] One in essence. And this isn't much in response to the Greco-Roman world in which Ephesus was in its context.

So in contrast to polytheism in the Greek and Roman world, the only God. Now remembering that Ephesus had been predominantly influenced by the Greco-Roman pagan worship, with their temple worship and their myriad of gods which they worshipped, and their idol production, as I mentioned before, with the rise and the growth of Christianity, there was an outcry because there was a loss of income in the idol-making trade.

So there was quite the outcry. And Christianity greatly disrupted the culture and the religion and the idol industry.

And it was a culture that thought the more gods, the better. That's why there was such an income of idol-making, because the more gods, the better. But Christianity was quite different.

Christianity was that there is one God, exclusively one God. Christianity demands monotheism, exclusive worship of the one only, the living and true God.

[32 : 37] Deuteronomy 6.4 Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

There is but one only, the living and true God. Next, we have the admiration and adoration statement. Be honor and glory.

Ascribing honor and glory to God. It's not that God has a deficit of honor and glory and needs his creation to ascribe it to him. But it's the ascribing to God of which he is, and which is due to him by his creatures.

Be honor and glory. And in Revelation 7.12, it says, Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever.

Amen. So back to verse 17. Now to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory.

[33 : 41] The ascription of praise, of worship to God. Be honor and glory. And then we have a statement here that is the affirmation. The affirmation is forever and ever, amen.

It's a wholehearted approval of truth. When we give our amen. Be honor and glory forever and ever, amen. So, some concluding uses to take from this.

We see a certain flow or a rhythm of what Paul is doing here and presenting himself as a pattern of gospel transformation. And that rhythm is of the gospel movement.

In verse 15, we see this concise gospel summary. That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. And there's a rhythm of the gospel movement which can be broken down into three parts.

That is guilt, grace, and gratitude. Guilt, grace, and gratitude. And the Orthodox Catechism, which we worked through, and there's copies in the back.

[34 : 46] And also the Heidelberg Catechism. And question number two lays out this three-part rhythm of guilt, grace, and gratitude in a question and answer.

By asking the question, What do you need to know in order to live and die in the joy of his comfort? So, this is quite fitting with our text because these counterfeit teachers were asserting a misuse of the law.

And the proper response to that opposition is a concise summary of the gospel. So, what do you need to know in order to live and die in the joy of his comfort?

The answer is this. Three things. First, how great my sin and misery are. Second, how I am set free from all my sin and misery.

Third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance. Guilt, grace, and gratitude. Paul presents not only the law, but how the law points out sin.

[35 : 48] And his response to that is that he is the chief of sinners. He was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man as a chief of sinners. To guilt and second, grace.

How am I set free from all my sins and misery? Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief. Exceedingly abundant grace. The glorious gospel of the blessed God.

And then third, gratitude. How I am to thank God for such deliverance. We see that Paul gives thanks to God and then he erupts into doxology. Praising, praising God.

Second concluding use is the relation between law and gospel. In this context, there was opposition against the proper use of law and gospel.

The proper distinction of law and gospel. And a reform distinctive is having a right understanding of the law and gospel distinction, which is also harmony.

[36 : 46] Now, more appropriate in our day would be legalism and antinomianism. Legalism would be either an attempted use of the law to merit favor in God's eyes.

I'm going to win God's love through my obedience of his law. Or a making up of a human law, thinking that it will earn merit before God. So there's legalism.

And legalism is a misuse of the law. And as a misuse of the law, it's a distorted view of God and a distorted view of the gospel. And then we also have antinomianism. Antinomianism, nomian, namas is law.

Anti is against law or no law. Antinomianism is an idea within Christianity that the moral law no longer applies to those who have been saved because Christ has fulfilled the law and they have been liberated.

And so they say they are liberated from the law. This also is a distorted view of God and his attributes. And it is a distorted view of the gospel. So both these problems, they're both a distorted view of God.

[37 : 54] They're both a distorted view of the gospel. So essentially it's the same problem. And that problem is a misuse of the law and a distorted view of the gospel. So the proper relationship of the law and the gospel to understand the distinction, but also the harmony, is that the law is necessary.

It's not that the law no longer functions. It's not that there is no law anymore. The law is necessary. And the law is good. The law restrains evil in society.

The law points out our sin. The law drives us to Christ in need of salvation as sinners. And the law is also a rule for those who have been saved to walk in holiness. The law is good.

The law is necessary. And then the gospel is that the law doesn't save. The gospel saves. Sinners are saved in Christ Jesus coming into the world to save sinners.

So in our day, legal and antinomianism are our current misuses of the law. The law is necessary and the gospel is also necessary, but understanding that relation and the harmony between the two.

[39 : 12] A third concluding use is that the gospel of salvation in Christ is made personal by reception. Paul said that he obtained mercy. He received mercy.

The gospel of salvation in Christ isn't earned. It's received. And this results in doxology. To understand the overwhelming, overflowing, abundant, exceedingly abundant grace of God as recipients in receiving grace and obtaining mercy results in much doxology.

The gospel is received by grace. It's received. Christ is received by receiving Christ and resting on Christ alone in faith.

Remember, faith being knowledge, assent, and trust. So salvation comes from knowledge of the gospel, agreeing with the gospel, and trusting the gospel, receiving and resting on Christ alone for salvation, not on works of the law.

And then finally, this transcendent and infinite God, which is praised in this doxology, has come into the world. The second person of the Trinity has come into the world in human form to save sinners.

[40 : 30] And this is to the praise of his glory. Now, do you see yourself before God according to what you have done? As we make in our minds this distinction between the law and the gospel, and the misuse of the law which was facing the church in Ephesus that Timothy was to deal with, and in our current day, the different misuses of the law in our day, Do you see yourself as righteous before God according to what you have done?

This would be a misuse of the law. Or, do you see yourself as the chief of sinners? Paul presented himself as a pattern of gospel transformation.

It wasn't how well he knew the law. It was that he was a chief of sinners, and he obtained mercy. Do you see yourself as the chief of sinners? Paul said he was the chief of sinners, but you're probably thinking Paul was wrong, because you're the chief of sinners, but I'm thinking you're wrong, because I'm the chief of sinners.

And that's what I think it's getting at when Paul was indeed a terrible sinner. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor, an insolent man.

But remember, he says, I am the chief of sinners. And reception of Christ is an admittance of being a sinner. It's an admittance that we are lawless, we have broken God's law, and we are in need of salvation.

[42 : 01] Do you see yourself as the chief of sinners? If not, you may not be a Christian. So don't leave here this morning without carefully considering where you stand before God.

If you think you stand before God in a right and justified standing because of your adherence to the law, you will be condemned.

It is only being in Christ, in Christ's perfect, exact, entire, perpetual obedience to the law, which is our only hope and our justification. Our justification is a pardon of our sins and Christ's righteousness imputed to our account.

And this, again, is received by faith alone. Let's pray.