

# OpenTheo

## March 29th: Proverbs 27 & 1 Timothy 1:1-17

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Iron sharpens iron. Timothy, Paul's son in his ministry.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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## Transcript

Proverbs 27. Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring. Let another praise you, and not your own mouth, a stranger, and not your own lips.

A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both. Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy? Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

One who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet. Like a bird that strays from its nest, is a man who strays from his home. Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.

Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near, than a brother who is far

away. Be wise my son, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me.

The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it. Take a man's garment when he has put up security for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he puts up security for an adulteress. Whoever blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, will be counted as cursing.

A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome wife are alike. To restrain her is to restrain the wind, or to grasp oil in one's right hand. Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who guards his master will be honored. As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man. Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man.

The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and a man is tested by his praise. Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle, along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him. Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever, and does a crown endure to all generations.

When the grass is gone, and the new growth appears, and the vegetation of the mountains is gathered, the lambs will provide your clothing, and the goats the price of a field. There will be enough goat's milk for your food, for the food of your household, and maintenance for your girls. Proverbs chapter 27 continues the gathering of Solomonic proverbs by Hezekiah's men.

The meaning of proverbs can be enhanced by a new setting, and we encounter some examples of that here. The opening verses deal with the subject of boasting and praise. It is dangerous to be overconfident and boast about your plans.

While we should have considered purposes, our destiny is not finally in our own hands. Proverbs chapter 16 verse 9, the heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps. Similar points are made in James chapter 4 verses 13 to 16.

Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town, and spend a year there, and trade, and make a profit. Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time, and then vanishes.

Instead you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. As it is, you boast in your arrogance, all such boasting as evil. Recognising the Lord's sovereignty over all of our actions, we will be much less inclined to boast about future plans.

Our inability to control the future, or to know fully what is expected in the future, has two

sides to it. On the one side it humbles us before the Lord's sovereignty, and on the other side it throws us upon the Lord's provision. It curbs our boasting, but it can also, as Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount, relieve our anxieties.

Recognising his providential rule over the future, we can cast ourselves upon the Lord. Self-praise is of little worth, and praise from family members and close friends is also of little value. Far better to be modest in all our speaking about ourselves, and allow other people who are strangers to praise us.

Praise from such a source will carry a great deal more weight than anything that we could say about ourselves. A stone is heavy and difficult to bear, as is a great quantity of sand. Worse than either of these is the anger of a fool.

Those who have to suffer it will find it very difficult to endure. However, if wrath and anger are difficult to bear, jealousy is so much worse. Michael Fox writes, The force of rage is hard to withstand, but it does not compare to that of sexual jealousy, because the latter includes anger and much else.

Jealousy embraces the shame of betrayed love, the affront to personal honour, and in the case of sexual love, the insult to sexual prowess and more. Their combined force is irresistible, both to their possessor and their target. For jealousy enrages a man, he will not relent in the day of vengeance.

Proverbs 6.34. In cases where the love is not betrayed, the jealousy is directed at anyone who might intrude in the couple's bond. Then the jealousy is infused with the power of love itself, and is insuperable. Verse 5 works with the seeming contradiction between rebuke and love.

Of course these things are not contradictory at all. If you love someone, you will be prepared to rebuke them. However, rebuke is not pleasant, and it can often be mistaken for something opposed to love.

It is far better to give an open rebuke from love than to remain silent in order to be nice. The open rebuke may wound, while the hidden love, while it may shrink back from offending the other person, falls far short. Verse 6 continues on the same theme.

The true friend who is prepared to wound his companion and tell him what he really thinks, when he thinks that his companion is going astray, is faithful. Perhaps counterintuitively, it is the person who will shower their companion with kisses and affirmation and give them all sorts of flattery that is the real enemy. They are concerned to be liked for their own selfish purposes.

They are either too cowardly or too driven by self-interest to tell their companion what he really needs to know. It is good to deal candidly with people, to avoid hiding matters that need to be dealt with openly. All of this should be done in love, and for the sake of

love.

We can see this principle in Leviticus chapter 19 verses 17-18. You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. Dealing openly and swiftly with one's neighbor, rather than allowing bitterness to fester in your heart, is an important practice to ensure that love is not compromised. Both the appetite of the person who overindulges in honey and the appetite of the person who starves himself are unhealthy and unable to discriminate between foods as they ought to.

This proverb would seem to encourage moderation, enjoying good gifts but not overindulging. The man who strays from his home is compared to a bird that has left its nest. Such a person has abandoned his station and vocation, and as a result is dangerously unsettled and perhaps even not to be trusted.

Sirach chapter 36 verses 29-31 speaks of a man without such a station, without a home, in similar language. He who acquires a wife gets his best possession, a helper fit for him and a pillar of support. Whether there is no fence, the property will be plundered, and where there is no wife, a man will become a fugitive and a wanderer.

For who will trust a nimble robber that skips from city to city? So who will trust a man that has no nest but lodges wherever night overtakes him? It is good and healthy to have a station and a vocation in life, something that ties you down, a wife and a home that you are serving. The wise man prizes truthful counsel, and the counsel of a good friend is one of the greatest forms of counsel of all. The true friend knows you, he is concerned for your good, and he is prepared to speak honestly to you.

He has a good idea what you need to hear, and he is prepared to tell it. As his concern is your good, he is not trying to advance himself over you, and he will also be discreet in the way that he exposes your faults. Such a friend is a very valuable thing to have, and if you have such friends, be prepared to rely upon them.

While it may be tempting only to rely upon one's family, if you are in distress, you will often find that a good friend is nearer to hand than a brother. In such cases you should go to them. Indeed, asking a favor in such circumstances may even strengthen the relationship that you have with your friend, rather than compromising it.

The wise son is a cause of strength for his father. Faced with his adversaries, the man with wise sons will find himself more confident. He has the support of his sons behind him.

Verse 12 largely repeats chapter 22 verse 3. The simpleton is someone who pointlessly

runs into trouble, whereas the prudent person sees it in advance and gives it a wide berth. Verse 13 repeats chapter 20 verse 16, another warning about a situation of giving security. However, in contrast to chapter 20 verse 16 which speaks of foreigners, in this translation it speaks of an adulteress.

We might recall the story of Judah and Tamar in chapter 38 of Genesis. When thinking about speech, it is important to recognize that speech itself is an action. It is not just the contents of the words.

It is also the way that we speak that matters. The person who blesses his neighbor loudly in the morning is waking him up before he has had a full night's sleep. Whatever the words may say, it is an unkind act.

This principle can be applied quite broadly. We might think about situations where people claim to be delighting in telling the truth when it is clear that they delight primarily in provocation, just as getting our brother up early in the morning with an ill-timed blessing is not an act of love. So it is possible for a man to tell truth to his neighbor in a way that functions as a falsehood and a curse.

The misery of a house with a quarrelsome or nagging wife has been the subject of a number of proverbs. A wife is likely to be a man's greatest source of delight and strength or his greatest source of misery and weakness. Choosing carefully is very important.

The quarrelsome wife is described as a figure who wears down a man, like the continual dripping of rain, perhaps a leak in a roof. Your home should be a place of shelter, but here it is described as a place that has a storm within. It contains the wind.

She is like oil in a man's right hand. The right hand, the hand of strength, is compromised in its ability to grasp and master things, because the oil of the quarrelsome wife causes things to slip through its fingers. The meaning of verse 17 has been debated.

Michael Fox suggests that it refers to magnetized iron. Iron joins to magnetized iron, and when man joins to the face of his fellow, this would refer to the attraction of companionship and fellowship. However, given the period that Proverbs was written in, magnetized iron would probably not have been well known.

More likely this refers to the sharpening effects of iron and the word face is playing with its two meanings, the face of a blade and the face of a man. Just as the hardness of iron renders it suitable to sharpen another piece of iron, so a candid and intelligent friend can sharpen the wits of his companion. A servant taking concern for the well-being of his master, guarding and serving him, is compared to the gardener who tends a fig tree.

His concern for the fig tree means that he will be blessed from it. Likewise with the faithful servant of a human master. As he ministers to his master, he will be blessed by

him.

Verse 19 makes a comparison with the way that water reflects the face of a person, although there is much debate about what the comparison in question is. Fox lists a number of possibilities. Perhaps a community of feelings is what is in view, or maybe it is insight that gives greater knowledge, or introspection into one's own soul, maybe its fellowship as you turn to another, or the exposure of hearts in such fellowship.

It might also refer to a recognition of others' feelings. Bruce Waltke suggests that given the context which is concerned with friendship, it means that a person can recognize his own character by looking to his friends. In their compliments, their criticisms and their counsel, a man can gain from his friends a clearer idea of his own character.

The insatiability of human appetite is the subject of verse 20, compared to the insatiability of the grave itself, and perhaps no less destructive. Testing people and improving people are the subject of verses 21 and 22. The first concerns the man that is tested by his praise.

As you pay attention to the way that people speak of someone, you will get a good measure of their character. Pay attention to who says things about him, and what they say. Fools will be attracted to folly, and so those whose praise is always on the lips of the simple should be suspected of folly themselves.

The fool can be impervious to improvement in education, while grain can be improved through the mortar and the pestle, and simpletons who are receptive to wisdom can become wise through education. Such processes are wasted on the fool. He won't respond to them.

Once again we are supposed to be alert to the unteachability of certain people. The final verses of the chapter talk about the blessings and the sustainability of a subsistence lifestyle. Riches and social honors can easily pass away, even a crown does not endure forever.

However, the riches of the land and the riches of good livestock can increase and continue over time. Pay close attention to such property in your possession, and take good care of it, and it will provide for you in the very long term. Some commentators have seen in this a reference to the duty of the king, arguing that this is addressing by analogy the one who is the shepherd of the nation.

A question to consider. Once again in verse 22 Proverbs brings up the character of the unteachable. What are some of the distinguishing traits of the unteachable person? 1 Timothy chapter 1 verses 1-17 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope.

To Timothy, my true child in the faith, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and

Christ Jesus our Lord. As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that 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, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. I thank Him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to His service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor and insolent opponent, but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I receive mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.

Amen. The book of 1 Timothy is the first of what have been called the pastoral epistles, including 1 and 2 Timothy and the book of Titus. The status of these books has been considerably debated.

Some have argued that they are 2nd century texts, what are called pseudepigraphical texts, presenting themselves as being written by the apostle, but actually written by other hands. Various arguments have been advanced for this position. Some have argued that after the second coming failed to occur in the 1st century, there was a need for a more accommodated Christianity for the longer term, and the pastoral epistles answer to something of this concern.

They address structures of church leadership, which are largely absent in the undisputed Pauline texts. Jugentile issues are no longer looming in the same way in the background. The style of the letters also seem to differ quite considerably from that of the undisputed Pauline texts.

And besides this, there is the challenge of fitting them into the chronology that we know of Paul from the book of Acts and his other epistles. Many of the challenges to Pauline

authorship rest upon questionable theological prejudices, the assumption for instance that the apostolic church was a far less organised body, with more charismatic structures of leadership. Others imagine that some later figure lost the nerve that Paul had in his more radical teaching, retreating to the more patriarchal form of society that we see in chapter 2. Many of these sorts of challenges can be answered by showing the consistency between Paul's teaching in the books of Timothy and Titus, and the teaching that we find elsewhere in the Pauline epistles and in the book of Acts.

The claim that it is a late text, and the fact that it is absent from Marcion's canon, can be addressed by recognising that Marcion may have had motivations for leaving it out of his canon, which had more to do with his heretical convictions than with strong arguments against the authenticity of the pastoral epistles. Besides this, the pastoral epistles are recognised as genuine Pauline epistles from at least the beginning of the 2nd century. The fact that they are cited by various people and attributed to Paul leaves those disputing Pauline authorship with the challenge of explaining why they became so widely accepted from so very early on.

Various responses have been given to the challenge of contrasting styles between the pastoral epistles and the undisputed Pauline texts. It is worth bearing in mind, for instance, the fact that various other hands were involved in the writing of the Pauline epistles. All scholars accept, for instance, the role of an amanuensis in the writing of many of Paul's epistles.

Then there is the consideration of co-authors in a number of cases. In reference to the pastoral epistles, I. Howard Marshall has raised the possibility of what he calls allonymity, another hand gathering together, organising and editing genuine Pauline material into these letters. If we accept, as I believe we should, that the Apostle Paul was the author of the pastoral epistles, we are left with a number of challenges, one of them being the question of where to fit these in within Paul's ministry as we can piece it together from various other sources, particularly the Book of Acts.

Philip Towner suggests that one of the most promising junctures is that found in Acts chapter 20 verses 1 to 3. After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews, as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

I think Towner is right to identify this brief window of time as the most likely period for the writing of 1 Timothy. The epistle of 1 Timothy begins with a characteristically Pauline introduction. Paul introduces himself and declares his commission.

He is an Apostle of Christ Jesus, by command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope. The letter is addressed to Timothy, Paul's true child in the faith. Paul first



encountered Timothy at Lystra.

He was held in high esteem by the Christians in the region. He was the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father. This would likely have provoked some disapproval in some more observant Jewish quarters, although many of the Jews would have been more relaxed about it.

The problem was not chiefly an ethnic one, but a religious one. Intermarriage with people outside the covenant was seen as a very serious matter in many parts of the Old Testament. In 2 Timothy 1.5 we learn that both Timothy's mother and grandmother were faithful persons and that he was taught the scriptures from a young age, so we should not suppose that Timothy's mother was indifferent towards her Jewish faith.

We can speculate over whether or not Timothy's father was a God-fearer associated with the synagogue. However, the fact that Timothy had not been circumcised raises the possibility that his mother's marriage was less than ideal. Perhaps it was arranged by an unbelieving father.

Timothy's religious status would have seemed rather ambiguous and perhaps a cause of scandal to some people. Timothy himself is a living example of a Jew-Gentile union. And considering the obstacle that Timothy's ambiguous status might provide for the mission, Paul had determined it was best to circumcise him.

This presumably was undertaken for the cause of the mission, so that Timothy would be more effective in Jewish contexts. In circumcising Timothy, Paul played the part of a father to him. Timothy would come to be immensely important in Paul's later ministry.

He served as Paul's personal representative. Timothy is Paul's shaliach, the one who personally represents Paul where Paul himself could not be. As such, Timothy participated in the exercise of Paul's apostolic ministry.

He was the co-author of a number of epistles, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, Philemon. He was Paul's personal emissary, as we see in Acts 19, verse 22, and here in 1 Timothy. He also served Paul so that Paul could give himself to his primary task of preaching without any distraction, as we see in Acts 18, verses 1-5.

Paul and Timothy were a pair, bound together in a single apostolic mission. On occasions, the distinction between them is made plain. Only Paul is the apostle proper, while on other occasions their alignment is stressed.

Timothy is a co-worker, a helper, a sharer in Paul's calling. Relative to the churches to which they were ministering, Timothy was to be treated as a bearer of Paul's own authority. However, relative to Paul, Timothy was a subordinate.

He was without an independent commission of his own. He rather shared in Paul's. The relationship between Paul and Timothy is exceptionally close, and Paul speaks of Timothy as his son, his child, in the Gospel.

The language is not merely that of emotional closeness, but of representation. The son represents the father, his authority, his presence, and his interests. Such father-son language also points to a relationship similar to that which pertained between Old Testament leaders and prophets and their shaliacs.

In Numbers, chapter 13, verse 16, we see that Joshua's name was given to him by Moses, who also laid his hands on Joshua. In Deuteronomy, chapter 34, verse 9, a similar relationship existed between Elijah and Elisha. Elisha received a double portion of Elijah's spirit, the inheritance that was appropriate to the firstborn.

And as Elijah was taken into heaven, Elisha addressed him as his father. Matthew Colvin observes that Timothy is a virtual copy of Paul, is underlined by 1 Corinthians, chapter 4, verses 16-17. I urge you, imitate me.

For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church. The charge to imitate Paul is accompanied by the sending of Timothy toward the fulfilment of this end, as the son is the pre-eminent imitator and representation of the As a participant in his father's ministry, and as Paul's right-hand man, Timothy had immense authority to wield, even being given the commission to choose and appoint church officers as Paul's representative. As the apostolic ministry was temporary, upon Paul's death, Timothy would likely have ceased to be the Apostle's apostle, and would presumably have become a bishop, or occupied some other similar position within the early church.

The greeting that Paul gives to Timothy here is grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. Throughout the Pauline corpus we see that the terms grace, mercy and peace are theologically freighted terms. They bear the greatest weight of meaning.

This is not just a throw-away greeting, but is a communication of the full wealth of the blessings that are given to us in the gospel. This epistle is sent to Timothy to confirm him in an existing commission. While going on to Macedonia, Paul had commissioned Timothy to remain at Ephesus and deal with some issues in the church there.

As I've suggested earlier, this was most likely at the beginning of Acts chapter 20. Ephesus was a sizeable city, probably larger than Corinth, perhaps even the third or fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. Paul first visited there in Acts chapter 18.

There were certain troublemakers in the church at Ephesus. They seemed to have been

teachers teaching false doctrine, a teaching based upon speculation and esoteric texts and beliefs, rather than upon the clarity of the gospel message and the faith that corresponds to that. Timothy and Paul had the task of stewardship in the household of God and the proper behaviour of people within the household of faith was threatened by such speculative doctrines.

The source of the speculative doctrines in question seemed to have been Jewish myths and fables. The endless genealogies referred to suggest that some of the material might have arisen from speculative Jewish texts about people before the flood, for instance. Such material can be read with interest, but it mostly produces dubious lines of reasoning, rather than the certainty and the clarity of true faith.

There are definitely interesting features to be pursued in the shadowy corners of the biblical text and even in the penumbra of extra-canonical Jewish literature there are many worthwhile things to be read. However, this is certainly not where our faith is founded. Our faith must rest upon the clear revealed things of God and the more that we abandon that clarity for speculations and fables, the more we are in danger of undermining our own and other people's faith.

The centre of gravity of Christian teaching is in clearly revealed things, things that any careful reader of scripture should be able to see. These things encourage faith which is based upon the surety and the clarity of truth. Myths and speculations cannot provide a sure foundation for such faith.

Such true faith gives rise to a genuine love. The conscience and the heart that have been purified by faith and the work of the Holy Spirit yield love towards God and his people that fulfills the law. Meanwhile, those who have abandoned the clarity of the word of God in the gospel and implicitly the faith and love that correspond to that have given themselves to interminable vain discussion, empty speculations about the law.

They fancy themselves to be teachers of the law but they don't have a clue what they're talking about. Paul here might be speaking not just as a Christian apostle but also as someone who was advanced in the knowledge of the law more than any of his contemporaries. Paul was enough of an actual expert in the law to recognise dabblers when he saw them.

The law is fulfilled in love that proceeds from a true faith that responds to the clarity of the gospel. Paul writes in Romans chapter 13 verses 8 to 10, The law, Paul stresses here, is good but it needs to be used in the right way. The law is primarily for the exposure of sin and as such it's not primarily for the just but for rebels and sinners.

Paul lists a number of figures for which the law is written in verses 9 to 10 and we can see he loosely follows the order of the ten commandments. The lawless, disobedient, ungodly, sinners, unholy and profane refer to the first four commandments. Then there

are those who strike their fathers and mothers which relates to the fifth.

Those who are murderers, the sixth. The sexually immoral and men who practice homosexuality, the seventh. Enslavers, you shall not steal, the eighth.

Liars and perjurers, the ninth. There is no explicit allusion to the tenth. Elsewhere in Romans Paul talked about the tenth commandment as that which exposed sin to him.

The tenth commandment which reveals the problem of the heart is also the negative commandment that most clearly corresponds to the positive injunction by which the law is fulfilled, loving your neighbour as yourself. The law, for Paul, represents the sort of negative space around the positive space of the gospel message. The law is concerned with ruling out and identifying everything that is contrary to sound doctrine.

However the positive message of the sound doctrine is found in the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. The gospel is that in which God's actual glory is revealed. In these verses Paul makes a lot of use of faith-related words.

The word entrusted in verse 11, the word faithful in verse 12, the word faith in verse 14, the word trustworthy in verse 15 and the verb to believe in verse 16. All of these are related in the Greek. Paul has been commissioned as one faithful to bear the gospel.

The faithfulness of Paul here should be considered as the effectiveness of Christ through him and the contrast between the former Paul, Saul of Tarsus, prior to his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, and Paul the apostle is a stark one. It presents Paul himself as a worked example of Christ's grace in the gospel. Paul both bears the message and represents the message in himself.

As a recipient of such extreme mercy he is well placed to declare that mercy to others and also to provide an image of what that mercy is like in practice. He presents himself as the foremost of sinners but as the sinners he has been made an example of the extent of Christ's salvation. If the foremost of the sinners, a violent man who persecuted the church, can be saved then there is no reason why anyone else can't be.

Paul's personal testimony is thoroughly bound up with his broader message of the gospel. Paul concludes this section with a doxology proclaiming God's reign, the fact that he is the immortal creator beyond human vision, the only God who dwells in unapproachable light and one who will receive honor and glory throughout all generations. From a declaration of what God has done in history and most particularly in his own life the apostle moves quite seamlessly to a proclamation of God's eternal glory.

A question to consider, Paul's personal testimony here is very naturally connected to his proclamation of the gospel more generally. How can we tell our testimonies in a way that connects them more fully with the great story of God's work in Christ and history?