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The decree of Cyrus. The character of false teachers.

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Transcript

Ezra chapter 1. Let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel. He is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred up to go to rebuild the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem. And all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was freely offered. Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the Lord that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods.

Cyrus king of Persia brought these out in the charge of Mithradath, the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazer, the prince of Judah. And this was the number of them, thirty basins of gold, one thousand basins of silver, twenty-nine censers, thirty bowls of gold, four hundred and ten bowls of silver, and one thousand other vessels. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand four hundred.

All these did Sheshbazer bring up when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record some of the history of the Jews following their return to the land. Within them we read some of the last events recorded in the Old Testament canon.

While Daniel chapter 11 prophesies many events that would occur within what has been termed the intertestamental period, in these books we have the last historical accounts of the period prior to the advent of Christ. 2nd Chronicles, the book immediately preceding Ezra in our Bibles, even though Ezra precedes the book of Chronicles in some Jewish ordering, not least in that implicit in the Gospel of Matthew, ends with the following words in chapter 36 verses 22 to 23. so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also puts in writing, Ezra, which begins with the decree of Cyrus, recorded in similar language, has a seemingly resumptive character to it.

It is taking up the story where Chronicles left it off. Gary Knoppers observes some of the ways in which Ezra connects with the book of Chronicles. Ezra begins by recalling the prophetic word of Jeremiah the prophet, who is an important figure at the end of Chronicles.

The end of Chronicles is an account of going into exile. The beginning of Ezra is an account of return, a reversal. Nebuchadnezzar took the items of the temple into exile in Babylon and destroyed the temple.

In Ezra chapter 1, the items of the temple are restored to Shesh-baza, the prince of Judah. Chronicles ended with the destruction of the temple and the city. Ezra begins with rebuilding.

Ezra then is continuing the history of Chronicles, taking it forward past the exile. As Andrew Steinman claims in his discussion of the question, there is little consensus on the question of the authorship or dating of Ezra and Nehemiah, or on the question of whether they should be understood as one book or as two. The literary and thematic connections between Ezra and Chronicles invite hypotheses of common authorship or editing.

Various opinions have been advanced on the question of authorship, among others, that Ezra largely wrote or compiled the material of Ezra and Nehemiah, and perhaps Chronicles too, that Ezra wrote Ezra and Nehemiah wrote Nehemiah, that some unknown person wrote Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, or that a later editor assembled earlier

texts into these books. Ezra is characterized as a scribe, and so traditionally he was often identified as the writer of Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles, drawing upon various sources in his writing. Both Ezra and Nehemiah contain first-person material, and Nehemiah 1.1 introduces words that follow as the words of Nehemiah, which lend strong support that they both played some part in the authorship of their respective books, or at the least, of sources used within them.

On the other hand, the shift between first- and third-person material might suggest that they were not the final authors and compilers of the books. Steinman argues that chronological issues raise some difficulties for hypotheses of Ezra's authorship and compiling of the books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, as certain figures named in the genealogies would seem to post-date Ezra's time. The theory that the books all had a common author or compiler, not Ezra, but some unknown figure commonly known as the Chronicler, has been popular, but it's not without problems, and its popularity has declined after being robustly challenged by Sarah Jafet.

Steinman also lists some of James Newsom's arguments against the supposed theological commonality of Chronicles and Ezra and Nehemiah. Newsom argues that the theological emphases and framing of the narratives of Chronicles and Ezra and Nehemiah are rather different, and if they were by the same author, it should surprise us to see prominent features of the theological vision of the author of Chronicles, such as the importance of the monarchy and the Lord's direct guidance, so neglected in Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra and Nehemiah have often been treated as two parts of a single book, not least in the Jewish canon.

The antiquity of this view is an argument in its favour. Questions about dating are also important here, as according to the dating of the books by many more contemporary scholars, it's hard to read their material as sequential. The narrative of Ezra begins in the first year of Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, after his defeat of Babylon, around 539 BC.

The first year, then, would be 538 or 537 BC. This is not the first year of his reign as king of Persia, which was back in 559 BC. This is the first year of his imperial rule, as it were.

Cyrus encouraged the return of groups to their homelands. Isaiah 45, verses 1-6 speaks of the special purpose that Cyrus, a pagan king, who is nonetheless referred to as an anointed figure or messiah, will play in the Lord's purposes. I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron.

I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hordes in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. For the sake of my servant Jacob and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name. I name you, though you do not know me.

I am the Lord and there is no other. Besides me there is no God. I equip you, though you

do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me.

I am the Lord and there is no other. Perhaps we should see this remarkable prophecy as lying behind Cyrus' decree. He has become aware of this prophecy that calls him by his very name.

A prophecy that declares the Lord's gift of dominion to him and earlier on in chapter 44 declares that he will be the one to establish the temple. One can imagine Cyrus welcoming such a prophecy and seeking to fulfil it. In authorizing the building of the temple and presenting him as the fulfilment of this prophecy, he has his kingdom and his rule over the Jews authorised by the Lord himself.

The precise chronological order of the return to the land and the different stages of rebuilding are much debated however and it is not entirely clear from the text. Haggai and Zechariah also record events of this period. While Ezra speaks of some building on the temple occurring in this initial period, Haggai chapter 1 verse 1 dates the beginning of new rebuilding efforts to the second year of Darius who reigned after Cyrus' successor Cambyses around 520 BC.

James Jordan has argued that Artaxerxes is a throne name and that Artaxerxes in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is Darius I who reigned from around 521 to 486 BC. He bases this claim largely upon internal textual evidence in the book such as the lists of returnees. In chapters 10 and 12 of Nehemiah we have similar lists of names of priests and Levites, one of persons returning with Zerubbabel and the other of those signing the covenant.

With the short chronology Jordan suggests, these events would have been 34 years apart. With the longer chronology that many others propose, the gap would have been around 90 years, making it impossible that the persons in question were the same. And the number of similar names stretches credulity even on the recognition that the same names often recurred in the same family.

However, other commentators account for these similarities by arguing that many of the names are not of individuals but of ancestral priestly houses. Other internal evidence includes the succession of high priests. The external supporting evidence for Jordan's position is much weaker and more disputed though.

Most scholars believe that with the aid of the external evidence we can date Nehemiah's governorship to the time period of around 445 to 432 BC and that this can be done with quite a high degree of certainty. For theologically conservative readers, dating of relevant events will also play into our interpretation of Daniel's 70 weeks of years in Daniel chapter 9. On Jordan's chronology, Ezra and Nehemiah largely covers the period from 538 to 490 BC. On more mainstream chronologies, however, it stretches from 538,

the decree of Cyrus in Ezra chapter 1, to around 428 BC, around 60 years later than Jordan's dating.

Cyrus' decree is a sort of proto-Great Commission. Indeed, the Great Commission seems to be an intentional allusion to it. Compare verses 2 and 3 of this chapter.

To the Great Commission of Matthew chapter 28, verses 18 to 20. The similarities between these two statements should jump out at us. The dominion of Cyrus is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 44, verses 24 to 28, along with the opening verses of chapter 45, which we've already read.

Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb. I am the Lord who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish, who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, she shall be inhabited, and of the cities of Judah, they shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins, who says to the deep, be dry, I will dry up your rivers, who says of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose, saying of Jerusalem, she shall be built, and of the temple, your foundation shall be laid. The focus of Cyrus' decree in this chapter is specifically upon the rebuilding of the temple, not upon the reestablishment, resettlement and re-fortification of the city of Jerusalem.

However, within the prophecies of these events, those things are also in view. This matter is debated as it has some bearing upon the dating of the beginning of the period of Daniel's 70 weeks. Is Cyrus' decree the decree that initiates their numbering, as Jordan and various others have argued? Or is it a different decree concerning the rebuilding of the walls and the re-fortification of Jerusalem almost a century later? The Lord instigates the entire process of return and rebuilding.

In verse 1 of our chapter we see that the Lord stirred up Cyrus' spirit. In verse 5 we see that the Lord stirred up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, the priests and the Levites, and many others to return to rebuild the temple. The Lord is driving everything, stirring people up to act willingly to fulfill the word of his prophets.

We might see this as similar to the way the Lord stirs up the Valley of Dry Bones in Ezekiel chapter 37. There's a national resurrection occurring here. There is also a clear set of parallels to be observed between Cyrus' instructions and the people's return.

Gordon Davies describes this as a sort of call and response. The people are responding to the Lord's stirring, but also to the charge of the man whom the Lord stirred. There is no Davidic king here, but the Gentile king Cyrus, and the willing people take the place that the Davidic king once occupied.

The story of Ezra also continues several Exodus themes, which will be apparent as we work through it. At various points in both pre- and post-exilic prophecy, the return to the land is cast as a form of new Exodus that is awaited. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are framed in ways that invite comparisons with that earlier story, although as Joshua Williams observes, the pilgrimage character of Exodus is far more to the foreground here.

There is not the same Pharaoh figure. Indeed, Cyrus, king of Persia, could be seen as an example of what Pharaoh could or should have been, had he not opposed the Lord and his people. Ezra chapter 1 verses 4-6 is a good example of a feature of the return to the land that recalls the original deliverance from Egypt, and the journey to the land in the Exodus.

Chapter 12 verses 35-36 of Exodus describes the people of Israel's plundering of the Egyptians. The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewellery and for clothing, and the Lord had given the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

Much of the material for the tabernacle and the riches of the Exodus generation largely came from the Egyptians, so the material for the restoration temple and the riches of the generation of the return from exile largely came from the peoples around them. Likewise, the emphasis upon free will offerings recalls the building of the tabernacle in Exodus. In several respects, Ezra is a new Moses figure.

He leads a group of Jews from a foreign land by royal decree, being assisted by resources taken from Gentiles in order to establish a dwelling place for the Lord among his people, and to build a temple or sanctuary. The concluding verses of this chapter give an inventory of the temple vessels restored to Shesh-Baza. There is a glaring problem in that the numbers don't add up.

The enumerated items of verses 9 and 10 total to 2,499, whereas the total given in verse 11 is 5,400. Some propose that either the list or the total was corrupted at some point in the transmission of the text. Others see the list as a mere selection of items within the larger inventory.

Yet others think that the discrepancy might have something to do with the silver second bowls referred to in verse 10. Steinman notes that 1 Ezra 2,12-13 inelegantly tries to solve the problem by translating 2nd as 2000, yielding a total of 5,469, now well in the ballpark of 5,400, even if not the same figure. Other possible solutions have been proposed, but we may not be able to determine the correct one with any degree of certainty.

A question to consider. Comparing and contrasting the figure of Cyrus in this second

exodus with the figure of Pharaoh in the first, what might we learn concerning the Lord's purposes for the relationship between Gentile rulers and his people? 1 Timothy chapter 6 Rather they must serve all the better, since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these things.

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of the world.

But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction, for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith.

Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time. He who is the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.

To him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen. As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.

Grace be with you. 1 Timothy chapter 5 mentioned two groups of persons who needed to be accorded honour, the widows and the elders. Chapter 6 begins with a third group, masters need to be honoured by their bond servants.

The teaching of verses 1 and 2 here could be related to the household codes that we find in places like Ephesians chapter 5 and 6, Colossians 3 and 4 and 1 Peter 2 and 3. In contrast to those other places, this is not a more comprehensive teaching about masters and servants, husbands and wives, children and parents, but only deals with how slaves need to treat their masters. Presumably the Christians in Corinth already were familiar with household codes, and the teaching here is more occasional in character, addressing a particular problem that had arisen in the congregation. Unruly servants would have been a cause of disrepute for Christians within the society, if slaves, presumably emboldened by the dignifying teaching of Paul's gospel, a message that presented them as standing on the same level ground before God as their masters, started to shrug off their responsibilities of service, non-Christians in the society might see the church as fundamentally opposed to social order, a destructive and revolutionary force undermining its social institutions.

Paul's concern in verse 1 is quite manifest, he does not want the name of God and the teaching of the gospel to be reviled. Elsewhere in scripture, prophets challenge the people of God, telling them that the nations blaspheme on account of them. Their openly sinful and rebellious behaviour causes people outside of the people of God to despise the truth that they stand for.

To address this concern, and to avoid the gospel coming into social disrepute, Paul instructs the bond servants to treat their masters as worthy of honour, recognising the social institution of slavery. However, in the way that he treats the duties of servants, there are elements to be seen that might surprise us. Paul especially addresses the relationship between believing servants and those masters who are also believing.

In such situations there will be an especially keen temptation to treat the masters as social equals on account of the gospel, rather than truly as masters. Paul's understanding of unity and a sort of equality in Christ do not, however, depend upon the equalisation of social structures, even though they may have some implications for them. Paul's reasoning in verse 2 is a surprising one.

He speaks of the slaves' relationship to their believing masters in language of benefaction, language that was typically applied in a person of higher status' relationship to someone who was of lower status. Philip Towner observes some of the parallels between Paul's teaching here and that of Seneca, his contemporary. He quotes from Seneca, There are certain acts which the law neither enjoins nor forbids.

It is in these that a slave finds opportunity to perform a benefit. So long as that which he supplies is only that which is ordinarily required of a slave, it is a service. When he supplies more than a slave need do, it is a benefit.

It ceases to be called a service when it passes over into the domain of friendly affection. And just as a hireling gives a benefit if he supplies more than he contracted to do, so a

slave, when he exceeds the bounds of his station in goodwill towards his master by daring some lofty deed that would be an honour even to those more happily born, a benefit is found to exist inside the household. Jesus employs a similar sort of logic in the Sermon on the Mount when he instructs those who have an item taken to give even more to those who would take from them.

Rather than being a passive victim or a person imposed upon by another, in going over and above expectations in such a manner, the Christian becomes the benefactor and the person of greater agency within the situation. The person who would try to take from them, or in this case the person to whom they owed service, is now placed in the position of being the recipient of their benefaction. The Christian slave can thereby enjoy agency and dignity within his situation.

There is a parallel that can be drawn between the opening verses of the letter in chapter 1 verses 3 to 20, and the closing section of the letter, which Towner points out. Chapter 1 verse 3 contains a command to Timothy to instruct, which corresponds to the second half of chapter 6 verse 2. Chapter 1 verses 4 to 7, there is a description of the false teachers and the theme of love, and here in verses 3 to 6, again we have the false teachers and the theme now of godliness. In chapter 1 verses 7 to 10, the misunderstanding of the law is addressed, and then in this chapter, verses 5 and 6, the misunderstanding of wealth is addressed, with the following critique of an ordinate desire for it.

In verses 11 to 16 of chapter 1, there is the contrasting model of Paul that is provided, along with the work of Christ in his life. And then here, there is the model of Timothy in verses 11 to 15, again with the example of Christ brought in as part of it. Both chapters have a concluding doxology, in verse 17 of chapter 1, and in verse 16 of this chapter.

After both doxologies, there is a repetition of Timothy's commission. The end of verse 2 should be taken with the verses that follow. Paul charges Timothy to perform his task of teaching.

In performing this task, he will have to deal with the false teachers. The false teachers here are defined by those who teach different doctrines, apart from the one that has been taught in Christ. The true doctrine agrees with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and is a teaching that accords with godliness.

The true teaching will produce a certain character of life, which we might call godliness. The reference to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ might perhaps be a reference to our Lord's own words, or maybe it's a reference to the words concerning him. Implied here is a doctrinal and a moral test.

The doctrinal test is conformity with the teaching of the tradition, and the moral test is the fruit of godliness. Paul goes on to explain something of the psychology of the false

teachers who will fail these tests. Such teachers are driven by pride, but are fundamentally ignorant.

They seem to have a deep-seated need for controversy, and want to argue about minor matters. While the person who is not a perceptive reader of other people's emotions might imagine that the false teachers are genuinely concerned about the issues that they are ostensibly arguing about, Paul wants Timothy to be aware that this is not the case. They argue because they need to argue, not because they genuinely care about the issues.

For them, it is more likely a game of status. Finding things to argue about is a way to avoid submitting to others, or showing any sort of humility. It's a way to vaunt their own authority and importance over those to whom they should be listening.

It is essential that a leader recognize the character of such people within a community, and deal with them truly. By their very nature, such persons are fractious, and will cause all sorts of problems in a community where they are allowed free reign. Because they are ultimately driven by pride and conceit, they treat the truth as something to be used for their own advantage and advancement.

They teach in such a way to increase their income, flattering and pandering to the wealthy, and fleecing the flock. We might also see a connection between their divisiveness, their pride, and the way in which they are driven by a desire for gain. They want to form their own following, and to do that, they need to drive people away from others.

They sow divisions, suspicions, slanders, and other things that consolidate their own support, and turn their followers against faithful teachers of the gospel. To the behavior of such false teachers, Paul contrasts the faithful teacher of the word of God. For such a person, godliness with contentment, or self-sufficiency, is great gain.

The faithful teacher is not using godliness. He sees godliness as an end in itself. It is a great gain to be conformed to the character of Christ, and to know contentment with that, the self-sufficiency that allows you to enjoy peace of mind, and satisfaction in all sorts of material conditions, is a considerable blessing.

Paul already spoke of the surpassing value of godliness in the preceding chapter, in verses 7 and 8. Have nothing to do with irreverent silly myths. Rather, train yourself for godliness. For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life, and also for the life to come.

One of the things that Paul is revealing here is the connection between a commitment to the truth, and one's management of one's fundamental loves and passions. The person who is driven by pride will always have a tendency towards division, and a desire for

wealth and status that makes him a source of conflict. These fundamental disorders of the heart will lead such persons in the direction of false teaching.

If the faithful teacher wants to avoid being led astray in such a manner, he needs to master his own heart. He needs to deal with the pride and conceit that makes him resist learning the truth, or that leads him to want to be the centre of the stage, the head of the movement. Paul reminds Timothy that we will bring nothing out of the world, just as we brought nothing into it, and consequently, the contentment with the little things that we need for our continued life, with godliness, is a great thing to enjoy.

The extreme desire for more, those desires that tether us to this present age, are a source of all sorts of temptations, evils, traps, and have been the cause of the downfall of many. Job expresses some of the contentment that can come with godliness in chapter 1, verse 21 of his book. And he said, Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return.

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Jesus also teaches on this matter in the Sermon on the Mount, teaching his disciples that the more they invest their hearts and their energies and their resources in earthly treasures, the more that they will find their hearts trapped by those things.

Matthew chapter 6, verses 19 to 21 Having signposted all of these dangers, Paul charges Timothy to flee from them. The statement here, to flee from something and to pursue something else, can also be found in another form in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 22. Paul addresses Timothy as a man of God, a man who has committed to the things of God, ought to be a godly man, a man characterised by the way of godliness.

Paul depicts the way of godliness using a number of different terms, righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness. Righteousness is moral uprightness. Godliness refers to a form of life and character that conforms to the God that has called us.

Faith, love and steadfastness might be related to the three theological virtues of faith, love and hope. To these must be added gentleness, whereas Timothy's opponents are characterised by a love of quarrels and conflict and division. Timothy must be gentle in the way that he treats people, a peacemaker, a reconciler, a man whose humility leads him to put other people's interests ahead of his own.

This gentleness does not entail a lack of strength. He is to fight the good fight of faith. This may be a more military metaphor, or it may be working with the athletic metaphors that we've had in preceding chapters.

He has been charged with a mission, and he must lay hold of eternal life, just as he once confessed the name of Christ before many witnesses, presumably at the time of his

baptism. He needs to carry through with this commitment, standing firm and contending till the end. Once again, Paul charges Timothy in front of the whole heavenly assembly, before God and of Christ Jesus, and he gives the example of Christ Jesus as one who stood firm to the end.

His faithful and unwavering commitment to his mission before Pontius Pilate is an example that the Christian should follow. In a similar manner, facing the time of greatest testing, the Christian like Timothy should stand firm, holding firmly and without compromise to the commission that he has been given, and to do this until the time of the appearing of Jesus Christ. Paul concludes this section with a doxology, in which he expresses the incomparability of God.

The language here perhaps underlines the way that the Lord has claimed to Timothy's loyalties over all others, and that pursuit of godliness in relationship to such an incomparable God is to be valued over everything else. Before signing off the letter, Paul gives Timothy some instruction concerning the rich of this age. We find various forms of such teaching elsewhere in Scripture, not least in the Sermon on the Mount, as already mentioned.

In James chapter 1, verses 9 to 11, for instance, Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat, and withers the grass, its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Recognizing the limited and fleeting character of earthly riches, the rich Christian is advised to invest his resources well, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share. By investing his riches in the service of the poor, he is storing up treasures for himself in heaven. By such investment of his riches, he is laying hold of that which is truly life, not just the apparent life of earthly wealth.

Paul concludes by drawing Timothy's attention to the many people who have wrecked their faith by turning aside and abandoning the charge that he has been given. He is not to be ensnared by the so-called knowledge that so easily entices those who are proud and puffed up. Rather, in humility, he must remain faithful in his calling, guarding what has been committed to him and faithfully discharging his commission to teach it to others.

The concluding greeting, Grace be with you all, addresses a plural you, not just Timothy. Perhaps Paul also has the Ephesian believers in view here. A question to consider.

Within this chapter, Paul says rather a lot concerning riches. In verse 10, he makes the famous statement, For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. What are some ways in which the love of money can serve as a root of various kinds of evil?