

- Paul shares something of his story, as it connects and speaks into Timothy's situation in leadership in Ephesus. What is his story? What is our story?

## What's your story?

- Lovely this morning to have lots of old and friends around:
  - some folk we've perhaps not seen in a long time...
  - others we've never met before...
- **Sharing our stories:**
  - how are you? What's been happening in your life? Where do you come from? What's your story...?

## Paul's story

- What does Paul pick out:
  - servant (v.12)
  - rebel history - blasphemer, persecutor, violent, ignorant, unbelief (v.13), worst of sinners (v.15,16)
  - recipient of mercy (v.13,14) - Damascus Road, pivotal focus of Paul's identity - he is no more, nor no less than he is in relationship with God through Jesus Christ...
  - it comes in Christ Jesus, it comes by grace, it is poured out abundantly...
  - he's been let down, in particular by people who have walked away from faith (v.19,20) - clearly painful, both for Paul, but intriguingly his description focuses on the danger they have put themselves into - Paul, like God, sadly accepts the decisions people make...

## Jesus' story

- Paul's story first of all connects with Jesus' story:
  - Jesus leaving heaven and coming into the world
  - Jesus who is the Christ, the son of the living God, the first born of all creation
  - Christ who shows unlimited patience - for example to Paul
  - whose story is one of salvation, whose name means "Yahweh delivers (or rescues)"
  - who gives to those who will receive him, putting their trust in the efficacy of his sacrifice and their lives into his Lordship, eternal life
  - and who now and forever reigns, as King eternal, immortal, the one due all honour and glory for ever and ever...

## Timothy's story

- Paul writes of his story and Jesus' story with purpose, with intention, with the goal of integrating them into or holding them alongside Timothy's story:
  - in other words, his sharing of something of himself is intended to help and support Timothy in his current role as a leader in the church in Ephesus
- **Timothy too has history:**
  - as well as the wider perspective we looked at last week, with a Jewish mother and Greek father, converted (perhaps through Paul's ministry), a companion and delegate of Paul, and a co-worker in gospel ministry across the Greek and Turkish (Asia Minor) churches
  - there is a specific calling - prophecies that by context appear to have been instrumental in calling him into ministry
  - a calling that needs bolstered - the very fact that Paul is writing and seeking to encourage and support Timothy suggests he's under pressure, perhaps having written and asked for prayer, advice or practical help...
- **And Paul's encouragement is for Timothy to keep going:**
  - to fight the good fight
  - to hold onto faith
  - to keep a clear conscience
  - because he remember's Jesus' story, and the salvation won for him...

- and he remember's Paul's story, of faithful service out of thankfulness for his own redemption

## Our story

- What's your story?
  - what did you say to people you hadn't seen for a while (or ever) this morning?
  - who are you? where is your identity rooted?
  - in your salvation, as Paul's was?
- What's Jesus' part in your story? How can you tell his story in your life?
  - what is going on now that is of him?
- And how does Paul's encouragement to "fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience" apply to you tonight?