

# Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Epistle

Knowing Of Whom We Speak

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 20)

Analysis by Timothy Hoyer

1First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. 3This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5For

*there is one God;*

*there is also one mediator between God and humankind,*

*Christ Jesus, himself human,*

*who gave himself a ransom for all*

–this was attested at the right time. 7For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

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**DIAGNOSIS: You're wrong. We need something better.**

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – We don't know**

*what we're talking about...*

Telling someone that they don't know what they are talking about, when you are disagreeing with them, is not helpful. It's insulting and paternalistic. But Paul is not writing to someone he disagrees with, he is writing to Timothy to encourage him in his ministry. Timothy needs encouraging, not just because he is struggling with his parish, but because the gospel itself is being attacked there. The merits and glory of Christ are being maligned. The consciences of believers are being troubled. For instead of proclaiming faith in Christ, certain people in the community are emphasizing the law (1:6). Instead of giving people a good conscience (1:5) and a pure heart (1:5), those certain people are laying down the law for the innocent (the Christ-trusters, 1:9). When the law is laid down on the innocent, instead of being used to compel a modicum of justice in a world full of sinners, or to criticize sinners and "drive" them to Christ, this "third use" of the law undermines the salvation Christ gives to us. This third use is "contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel" (1:10b-11).

**Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem)** – *...because we act ignorantly in unbelief.*

To be contrary to the glorious gospel is to be a blasphemer, a sinner (1:12). A blasphemer denies that Jesus came into the world to save sinners. It is to deny that Jesus is how we are made right with God and given peace with God and given God's mercy. When we do not trust that Jesus makes us right, or not right enough, then we look to other things to make us right. Timothy's parish was looking at myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations. When the law or other things are used to make us right with God, there is constant speculation about exactly what the law requires. Shall we forgive seven times or seventy times seven? Should healing be done on the Sabbath? Should one welcome sinners and eat with them? When have we given

enough to world hunger relief?

Jesus gives us himself as the new way to be right with God. The old way, the law, cannot accomplish that purpose. The law no longer (if it ever did) make us righteous. But we, along with the parishioners of Timothy, do not believe that. And, when we do not place our trust in Jesus, then however way we relate to God (to make ourselves righteous) is ignorant.

**Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem)** – *“You disagree with him, you disagree with me.”*

Finally Timothy and his parishioners are no longer the main disputants. Now the disagreement is between God and his parishioners, between God and us. When we disagree with God, we oppose and disobey God. For us to try to figure out what the law says, at this point, is to worry about the roof leaking when the river has flooded the house. Such attempts to get the law right will only anger and sadden God more as he denies us the life that lasts.

**PROGNOSIS: Jesus is right and all we need.**

**Step 4: Initial Prognosis: (Eternal Solution)** – *Jesus steps between God and us.*

The disagreement is between God and us. And, try as we might, we cannot solve it because we do not trust God. God cannot get us to trust and love God above anything else using the law. So, since we two parties cannot agree on terms, a third party is needed. A mediator is necessary to bring the sides together. Only one person can be the mediator between God and us. That one person is the divine/human Jesus. Jesus mediates by performing the “sweet swap,” exchanging himself for us, putting himself in our place and us into his place. That ransom is to our benefit because Jesus’ place is beside God who loves him. Jesus gives us his worth before God. God valued Jesus so much that he raised him from the dead. That is what Jesus’ mediation and ransom does

for us: It settles the dispute between God and us, because all parties are in agreement about the value of Jesus.

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution)** – *Wow! Is that so? Well, I believe you.*

The value of Jesus has been given to us. Having received such wealth, we act as wealthy people. We no longer live in the ignorance of unbelief. We live in the knowledge of the truth that God desires to save all of us, all sinners, and that God has saved us by sending Jesus (1:15). Therefore, myths and genealogies, allegorical or legalistic interpretations of the Bible, and the law are no longer needed to save us. Jesus has done it all. To look elsewhere for a relationship with God is to say that Jesus has not saved us, has not ransomed us by his cross and rising, and that God has not approved of Jesus by raising him from the dead. Consequently, when we wonder about what is right or pleasing to God—whether healings should take place on the Sabbath, how many times we should forgive, etc.—the answer to all that is simply Jesus. Only Jesus is what is right to God now.

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution)** – *“I will show you a still more excellent way.”*

Paul suggests that when Timothy meets with his parishioners, instead of saying, “I told you so,” and insisting on being right, the more excellent way of the gospel is to share the goodness of Christ with them. Paul tells Timothy that one important way to give that goodness is to pray—supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings (v. 1). Pray for all in government, president, judges, mayors, town council members, and police officers. Not only does this demonstrates that Christians are not subversive, but such prayers preserve creation, which God desires (v. 3), so that everyone is kept safe in order to hear the good news of Jesus. Give thanks for the goodness that happens to others. Bless those who curse you.

By giving Christ to one another, we comfort each other's conscience and give each other a good conscience. Conversely, when we insist on being right, we reject conscience (1:19) and ruin faith. To be a teacher in faith and truth (v. 7) is to give Jesus to the hearers, to give forgiveness, mercy, and the presence of Jesus. For this we are appointed as heralds and apostles.