

2 Timothy 1:1-14      Persuaded  
October 5, 2025

The refrain of the closing hymn this morning that we will sing before we share Communion, makes the reciting of this text singable, or at least one verse of it, and accompanies it with the following sets of lines, largely about the ways in which we live without knowledge, knowledge about the nature of salvation, sometimes knowledge about everyday life. The affect is to enhance our confidence before God.

I know not why God's wondrous grace  
to me He hath made known,  
nor why, unworthy, Christ in love  
redeemed me for his own.

I know not how this saving faith  
to me he did impart,  
nor how believing in his word  
wrought peace within my heart.

I know not how the Spirit moves,  
convincing men of sin,  
revealing Jesus through the Word,  
creating faith in him.

I know not when my Lord may come,  
at night or noon-day fair,  
nor if I'll walk the vale with him,  
or meet him in the air.

Much of life *is* characterized by what we don't know and don't understand. Just yesterday I read an article about singularity, defined as the point at which computers become smarter than human beings. There are some arguing that it will happen in the next three months, others in a matter of decades, perhaps the beginning of the next century, and others that it will never happen. One of the things we don't know is the future. There may be certain kinds of intelligence that machines cannot attain.

The Pastoral Epistles are among a small number of letters from the Apostle Paul written not to the churches but to individuals, associates who had in the later years become separated from Paul, thus the correspondence by letter. They are known by the recipients; two to Timothy, one to Titus.

They are situated later in Paul's career, perhaps in the years of captivity when he was awaiting a hearing before the Roman emperor, or perhaps even later *after* the events described in the Acts of the Apostles. For someone like me, they carry an interest simply because of their historical value; what kinds of things would Paul say privately to his co-laborers when he might not suspect there would ever be a public reading?

No one is really sure when these letters were written, or even exactly when Paul died, or what the next few decades were like for the believers who were left behind and lived them. We know that around that time there was a war that the New Testament never

mentions directly, though there are allusions to it from time-to-time.

In that war, called the Jewish War. Roman armies conquered once again the Jewish homeland and destroyed the second temple, the magnificent one that had been largely expanded by King Herod the Great and his descendants.

Accompanying this destruction, which began during the reign of Nero in the sixties of the 1st Century, were the dynamics, begun before the war, in which the believers in Jesus separated from the followers of Judaism who did not accept Jesus as the Christ. At one point there was a general decree that expelled the believers in Jesus from the Synagogue, creating two religious movements rather than one.

Also during this time, much of the New Testament was composed, the epistles before the war mostly; and the gospels, Acts, and the Apocalypse in the decades after it. Additionally, the Hebrew Bible we know as the Old Testament was standardized and its canon closed, which means that the collection of books was finalized in its present form.

In most of the world, even for most people subject to the Roman Empire, the happenings and goings on of the Jewish people and this small sectarian group known as Christians were out-of-sight, out-of-mind.

They settled into their own places and tended to the issues there that kept them busy; living out their day-

to-day lives, fussing and fighting, taking care of each other. The development of the organizational structures and theological traditions that would become the church, were quietly happening, not a great deal is known, however, about the details.

It is in or around the time of this war that Paul's letters that are known as Pastoral Epistles are situated. At the beginning of this letter we find Paul charging Timothy, and encouraging him with these words, let us think of them as a , "thought for the day,"

" . . . Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able, to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

In addition to the personal challenges one finds in life, one also experiences the world's pain in all its variety, both because we suffer it and because sometimes we participate in it. We share this life experience with every generation of believers, and with them, the anxiety common among all people. The Bible is the literature of these circumstances.

One circumstance involved Paul himself. He was a part of a division among Christian believers over the Gentile question. That conversation spilled over into the larger Jewish context. Paul believed God had accepted the Gentiles without reservation. Others thought they needed to fully submit to the demands of Jewish Law before they could be acceptable to God.

The circumstance was so severe that when Paul appeared in Jerusalem, he was assaulted, arrested, and thrown into jail. In the course of the attempts to sort things out he appealed to Caesar and began the longer journey to Rome. It all led to a two year incarceration waiting for the hearing. While he was waiting, or sometime after, this letter is situated. Times were uncertain.

Whatever the specific circumstances, they eventually faded, although not before some life and death ordeals. New situations emerged. It is important to see Paul's faith, which was for him and is for us the *only* adequate source of security and of confidence, and of meaning, in the face of all that is unknown.

What he says is not the result of a survey of the best possible answers, from which he selects the least troubling; it is not the result of a study or research project of some kind, scientific or historical, or otherwise, it was the result of grace producing faith.

“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able, to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

There was and is nothing that happened to shake that faith, that confidence. Paul writes these words near what was for him the end. He was beyond earthly hope, but not beyond the power of God's grace.

Neither are we.

Let us also be persuaded of this grace, and encouraged by the faith that has been by it established in us.

We have read it. We have heard it, let us now sing it.

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