

1:1a *An Apostle of Christ Jesus*

TIMOTHY.

CHRYSOSTOM: In his first epistle, Paul said that he would send Timothy with the letter, ¹² but now he associates Timothy with him. Why is this? Evidently Timothy had already accomplished his mission and returned to be with Paul. Having been for some time in Asia, they had crossed into Macedonia, from which he wrote this letter. By associating Timothy with himself, Paul increased respect for him and displayed his own great humility, since Timothy was far less well known than Paul. But love brings all things together.

HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 1.2.13

1:1b *With All the Saints*

THE CHURCH AT CORINTH.

CHRYSOSTOM: Once more, Paul calls the Corinthians a church, in order to bind them together, and “saints,” implying that if anyone is impure he is not included in this greeting. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 1.2.15

ALL THE SAINTS.

DIDYMUS THE BLIND: Paul does not always mention other people besides himself in his salutations. I think that he does this when one of his associates is well-known to the intended recipients. “With all the saints” is ambiguous. Either it means all the saints who were with Paul, or else it means all the saints who were at Corinth. PAULINE COMMENTARY FROM THE GREEK CHURCH.¹⁶

1:1c *The Whole of Achaia*

NEEDING THE SAME REMEDY.

CHRYSOSTOM: Why does Paul address the Christians of the entire province, and not merely those of the city? The reason, I think, is that they were all involved in a single, common problem and were therefore all in need of the same remedy. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 1.2.17

1:2 *Grace to You and Peace*

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

DIDYMUS THE BLIND: The works that the Father does the Son also does, and the gifts that the Father gives, the Son also gives. It is to be understood from this that although we know God as Father, we are still servants of Jesus Christ. We do not call him “brother” but Lord. For he is the only begotten Son by nature, not by adoption, and is Lord of all those who have been made children of God. PAULINE COMMENTARY FROM THE GREEK CHURCH.¹⁹

1:3 *The God of All Comfort*

THE SOURCE OF MERCY.

DIDYMUS THE BLIND: God alone is holy and good, sanctifying others and making them good. He alone is blessed, because he gives blessing and does not receive it from someone else. Likewise, he is the Father of mercies by nature, because he is the source of all mercy and not because he has acquired this from anyone else. PAULINE COMMENTARY FROM THE GREEK CHURCH.²¹

SHARED GLORY AND HONOR.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For in the thought of God, let the thought of Father be included, so that the glory which we ascribe to the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit may be perfectly free from difference. For the Father has not one glory and the Son another, but their glory is one and the same, since the Son is the Father’s sole-begotten. When the Father is glorified, the Son shares in enjoyment of his glory, because the Son draws his glory from the honoring of the Father. Again, whenever the Son is glorified, the Father of so excellent a Son is greatly honored. THE CATECHETICAL LECTURES 6.1.²⁵

1:4 *Comfort in All Our Affliction*

THE CAUSE OF HIS ABSENCE.

CHRYSOSTOM: The Corinthians were very upset that the apostle had not come to them, in spite of his promise, and that he had spent all his time in Macedonia, apparently preferring them to the Corinthians.

Paul therefore prepares to meet this feeling against him by declaring the cause of his absence, though without stating it directly. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 1.3.27

PENITENTS RECONCILED.

SEVERIAN OF GABALA: Paul sets this down beforehand because he is about to say that the man who had been condemned because of his sin should be reconciled by God's comforting power. PAULINE COMMENTARY FROM THE GREEK CHURCH.28

COMFORT FROM THE SPIRIT.

GREGORY OF NYSSA: But what does it mean to say that the kingdom of God is within us? What else than the gladness which comes from on high to souls through the Spirit? For this is like an image and a deposit and a pattern of everlasting grace which the souls of the saints enjoy in the time which is to come. So the Lord summons us through the activity of the Spirit to salvation through our afflictions and to a sharing in the goods of the Spirit and his own graces. For he says: "Who comforts us in our afflictions, that we also may be able to comfort those who are in any distress." ON THE CHRISTIAN MODE OF LIFE.29

1:5 Sharing in Suffering and Comfort

SUFFERING AND COMFORT.

ORIGEN: If as the sufferings of Christ abound so also comfort abounds through Christ, let us welcome the great encouragement of Christ's sufferings and let them abound in us, if we indeed yearn for the abundant comfort with which all who mourn will be comforted, though perhaps it will not be alike for everyone. For if the comfort were alike for everyone, it would not be written, "As the sufferings of Christ abound for us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ." Those who share in sufferings will share also in the comfort in proportion to the suffering they share with Christ. And we learn this from the one who made such statements with unshaken conviction, for "we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort." EXHORTATION TO MARTYRDOM 42.30

ABUNDANT CONSOLATION.

CHRYSOSTOM: Paul did not want to depress the disciples with an exaggerated account of his sufferings, so instead of that he declares how great the consolation was that he received, reminding them of Christ. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 1.4.32

VISION OF SOUL.

ISAAC OF NINEVEH: Now by consolation he means theoria, which, being interpreted, is vision of soul. Vision gives birth to consolation. ASCETICAL HOMILIES 74.³³

1:6 Afflicted for Their Comfort

BEARING ALL THINGS NOBLY.

CHRYSOSTOM: What humility can compare with this, in that Paul raises to a level of equality with himself those who so obviously fell far short of him. Our salvation is demonstrated more clearly when we bear all things nobly. The work of salvation does not consist only of believing but of enduring evil when it is done to us. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 2.1.³⁵

THE SAME SUFFERINGS.

SEVERIAN OF GABALA: If the apostles suffered, how much more are the others likely to suffer! PAULINE COMMENTARY FROM THE GREEK CHURCH.³⁶

1:7 Hope Unshaken PAUL'S

COMFORT ALSO THEIRS.

CHRYSOSTOM: See how far they had advanced since Paul wrote his first epistle. Now his hope for them was unshaken by their behavior. Paul also tells them that if he has been comforted, they will be comforted as well. If the Corinthians regarded Paul's sufferings as their own, then his comfort would also be theirs. By saying this, Paul hoped that he would be able to encourage them and get them to accept his absence from them more easily. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 2.2.³⁷

1:8a The Affliction Experienced

1:8b *Despairing of Life*

COUNTERING DESPAIR

CHRYSOSTOM: It was very comforting to know what others were doing and what was happening to them. If the news was bad, people would be encouraged to be energetic and thus would be less likely to fall. If the news was good, they could all rejoice together. Here, as we can see, things had been very bad indeed. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 2.3.42

1:9 *Relying on God*

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH.

CHRYSOSTOM: Paul was expecting death, but things had not come to that point. In the natural course of events, he should have died, but God did not allow that to happen in order that Paul would learn not to trust in himself but in God. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 2.3.44

A CALL TO LEAVE THE PAST BEHIND.

BASIL: Perfect renunciation, therefore, consists in not having an affection for this life and keeping before our minds the “answer of death, that we should not trust in ourselves.” But a beginning is made by detaching oneself from all external goods: property, vainglory, life in society, useless desires, after the example of the Lord’s holy disciples. James and John left their father Zebedee and the very boat upon which their whole livelihood depended. Matthew left his counting house and followed the Lord, not merely leaving behind the profits of his occupation but also paying no attention to the dangers which were sure to befall both himself and his family at the hands of the magistrates because he had left the tax accounts unfinished. To Paul, finally, the whole world was crucified, and he to the world. THE LONG RULES 8.46

1:10 *Delivered from Peril*

DELIVERED FROM DEATH.

CHRYSOSTOM: Although the resurrection is a thing of the future, Paul shows that it happens every day. When a person is delivered from the gates of death, it is really a kind of resurrection. The same thing can

be said of those who have been delivered out of serious illness or unbearable trials. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 2.4.47

1:11 *Answer to Many Prayers*

HELP US BY PRAYER.

CHRYSOSTOM: Paul said this both to stir them up to pray for others and to accustom them to give thanks to God for whatever happened to others. People who do this for others will be much more likely to do it for themselves as well. Paul also teaches them humility and deep, fervent love. For if he, who was so high above them, admitted that he was saved by their prayers, think how modest and humble they should have been as a result. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 2.5.48

1:12a *The Testimony of Our Conscience*

CONSOLATION FROM GOD.

CHRYSOSTOM: The previous consolation was from God, but now it is the fruit of their own behavior. People who live uprightly will see the power of God at work in their lives and be comforted. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 3.1.3

TRUE GLORY.

AUGUSTINE: Cato is rightly praised more than Caesar, for, as Sallust says of him: "The less he sought for glory the more it followed him." However, the only kind of glory they were greedy for was merely the reputation of a good name among men; whereas virtue rests not on others' judgments but on the witness of one's own conscience and therefore is better than a good name. Hence the apostle says: "For our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience." . . . Therefore, virtue should not pursue the glory, honor and dominion which they sought, even though their good men sought to reach these ends by good means, but these things should follow virtue. There is no true virtue save that which pursues the end which is man's true good. It follows, therefore, that Cato should not have sought the honors he sought, but his city should have given them to him because of his virtue and without his asking for them. CITY OF GOD 5.12.4

1:12b *By the Grace of God*

NOT BY EARTHLY WISDOM.

DIDYMUS THE BLIND: Earthly wisdom means knowledge of material things. Those who have this kind of wisdom have no room for the wisdom of the Spirit, which they regard as foolishness. PAULINE COMMENTARY FROM THE GREEK CHURCH.⁵

1:13 *What You Can Understand*

WRITING ONLY FACTS.

CHRYSOSTOM: Paul is not boasting. All he is doing is writing facts which the Corinthians themselves would acknowledge to be true. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 3.1.8

1:14 *On the Day of the Lord Jesus*

PARTNERS IN HIS MINISTRY.

CHRYSOSTOM: Paul cuts at the root of the envy which his speech might occasion by making the Corinthians sharers and partners in the glory of his good works. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 3.2.11