



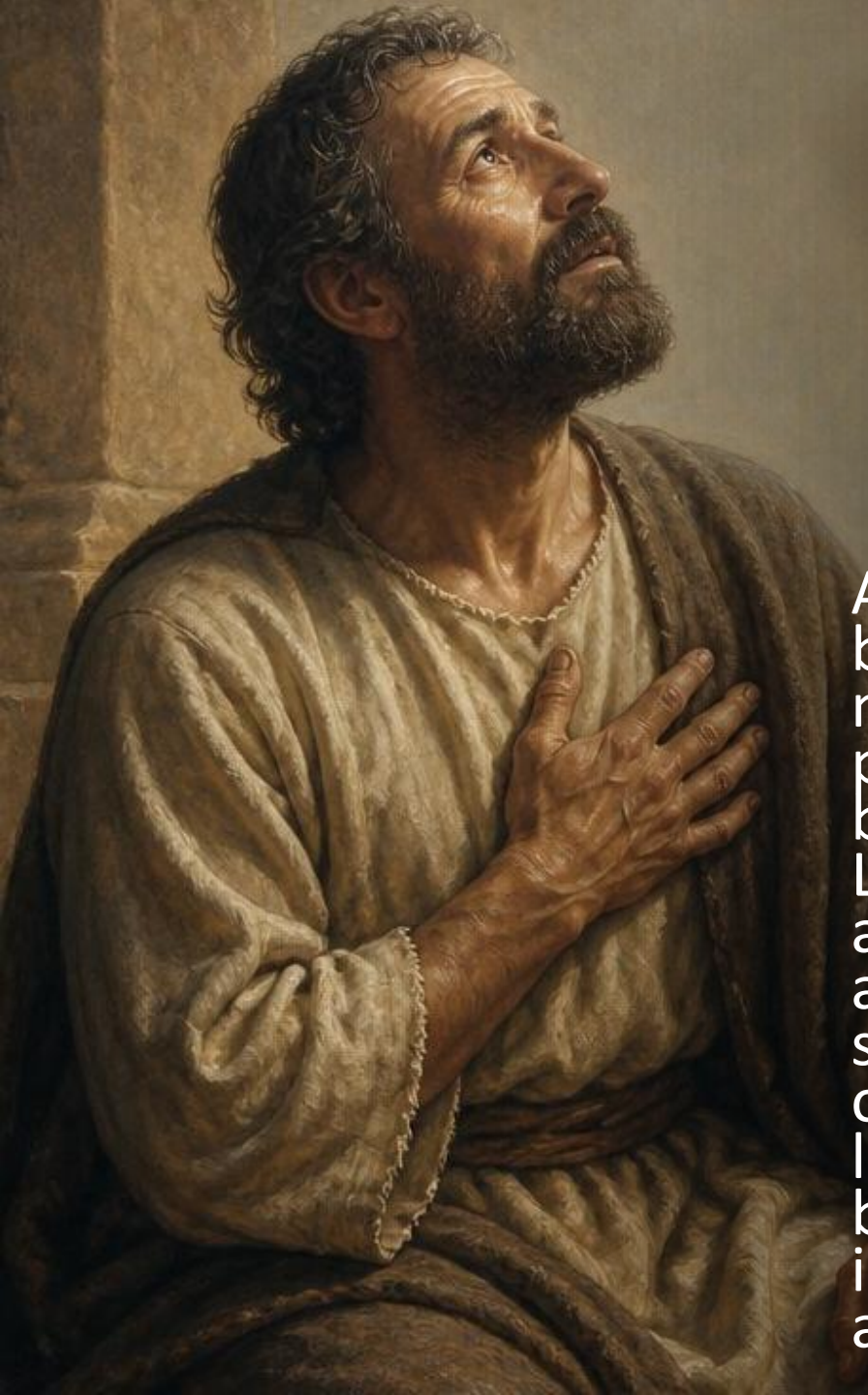
The Chief of Sinners: Paul's Testimony of Radical Grace

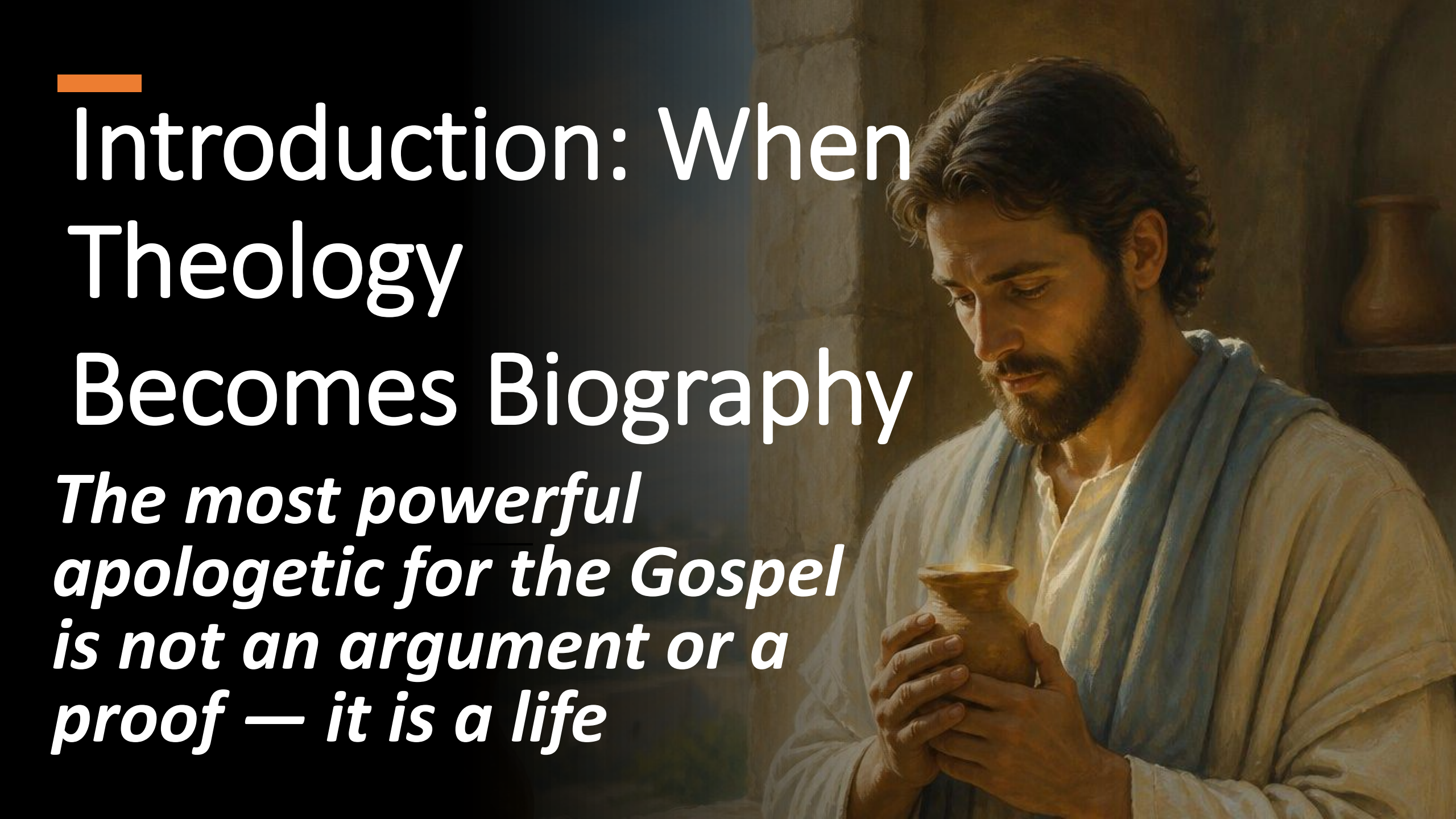
1 Timothy 1:12–14

1 Timothy

1:12-17

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.

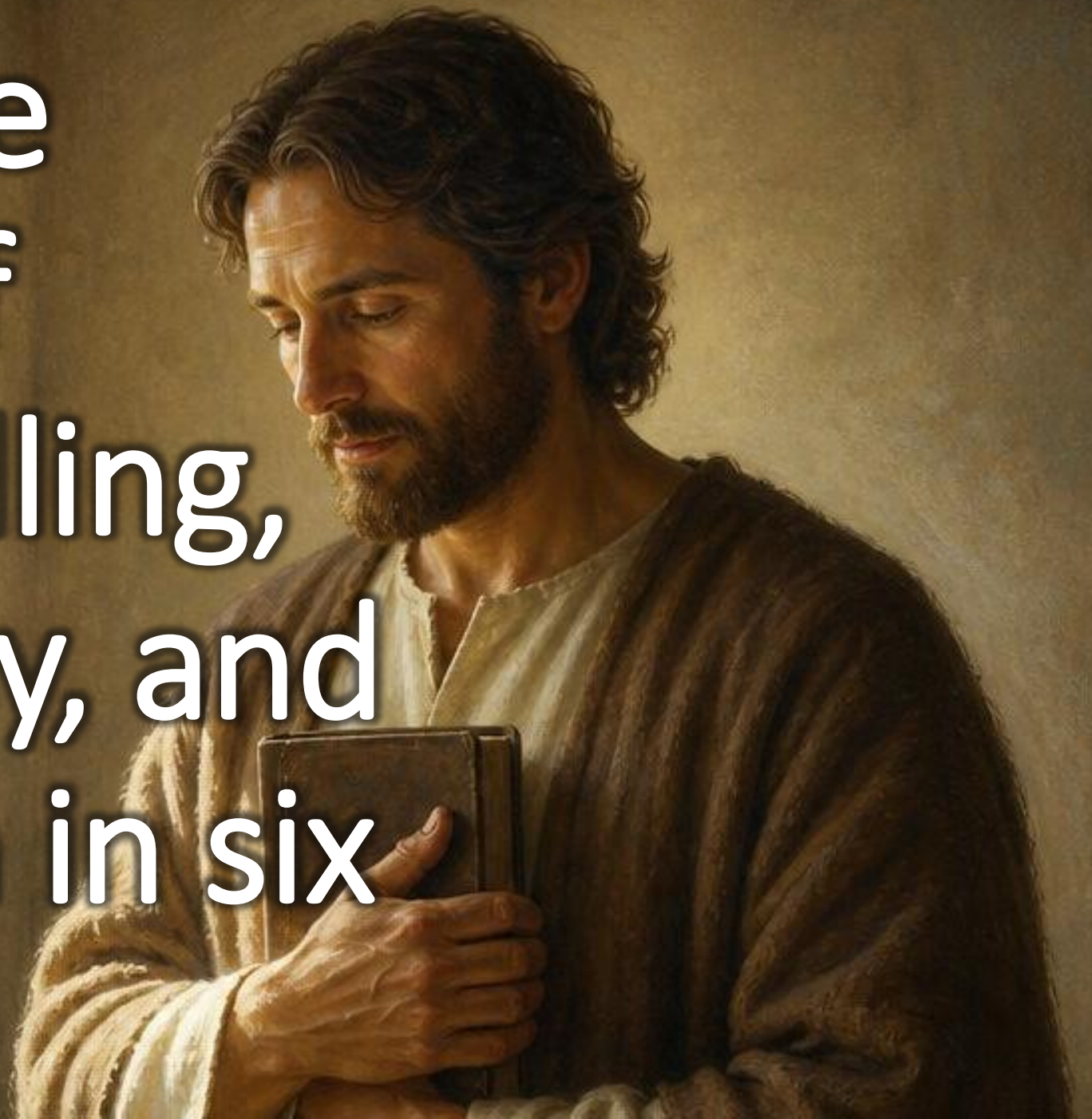


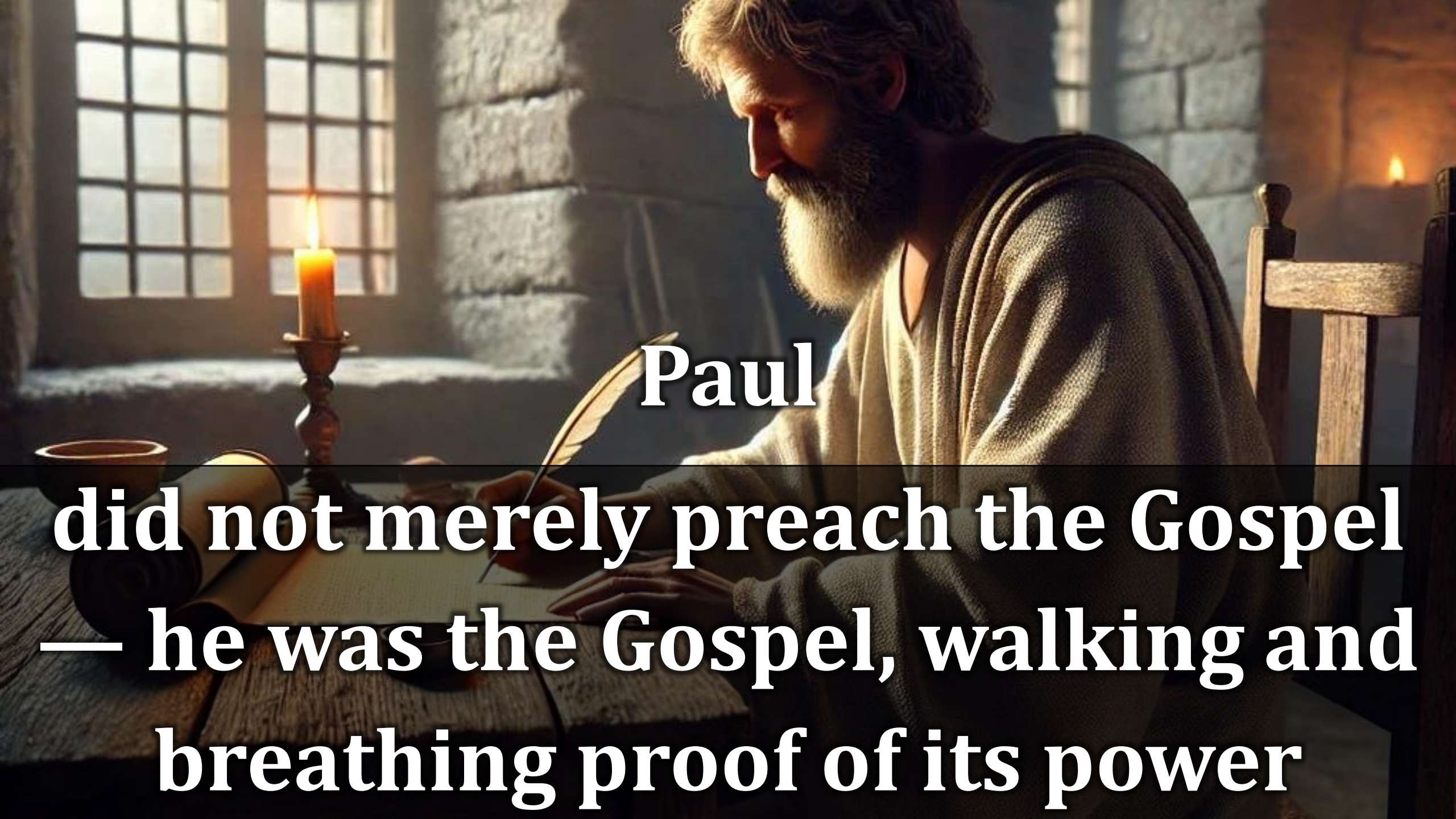


Introduction: When Theology Becomes Biography

*The most powerful
apologetic for the Gospel
is not an argument or a
proof — it is a life*

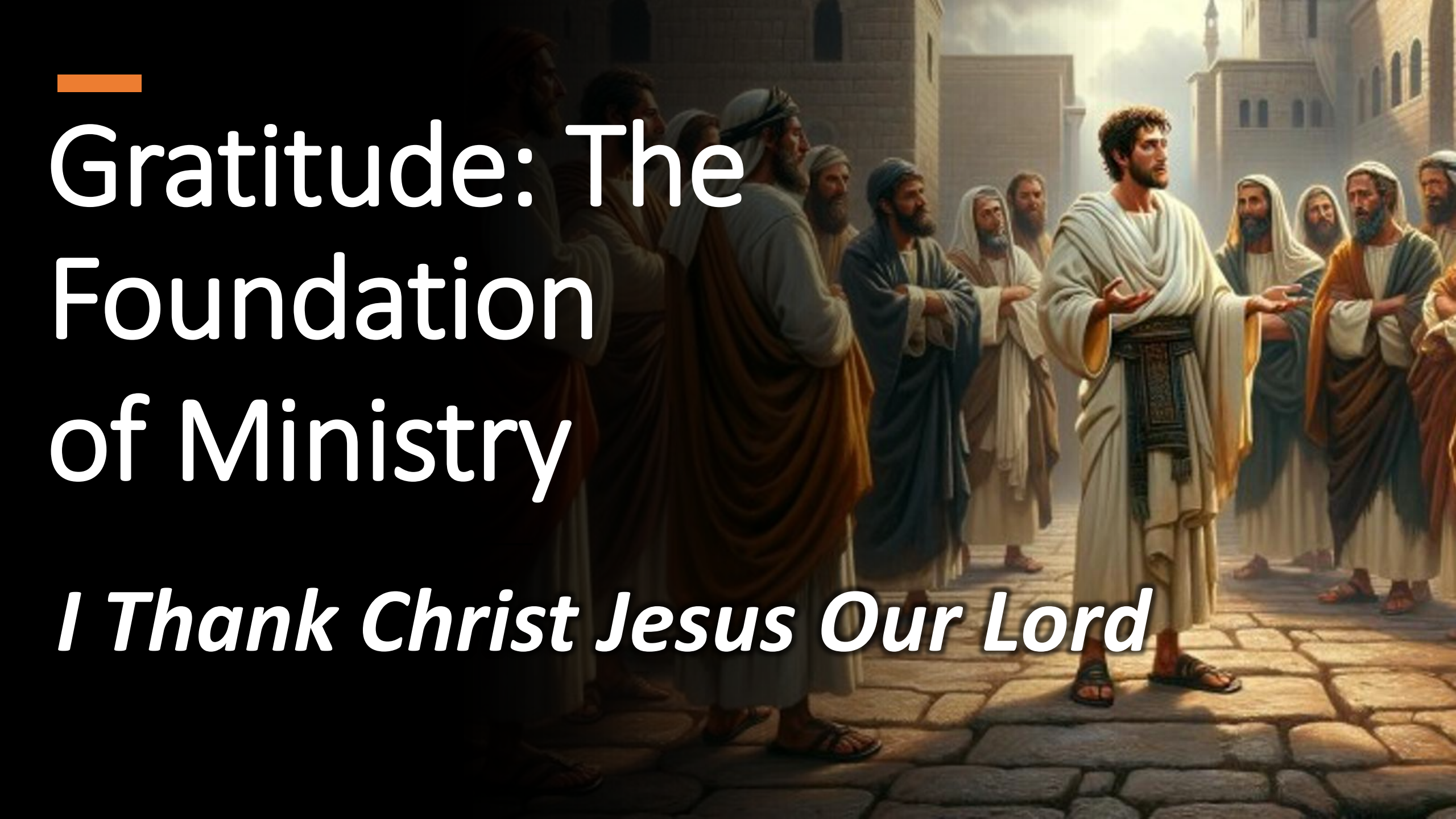
Contains the
doctrines of
election, calling,
grace, mercy, and
glorification in six
verses



A man with a long, grey beard and hair, wearing a simple brown robe, is seated at a wooden desk. He is focused on writing with a quill pen on a large, unrolled scroll. The scene is dimly lit, with a single candle in a brass holder providing the primary light source. In the background, a window with a grid of small panes allows soft, warm light to filter into the room. The walls appear to be made of rough-hewn stone. The overall atmosphere is one of quiet concentration and historical authenticity.

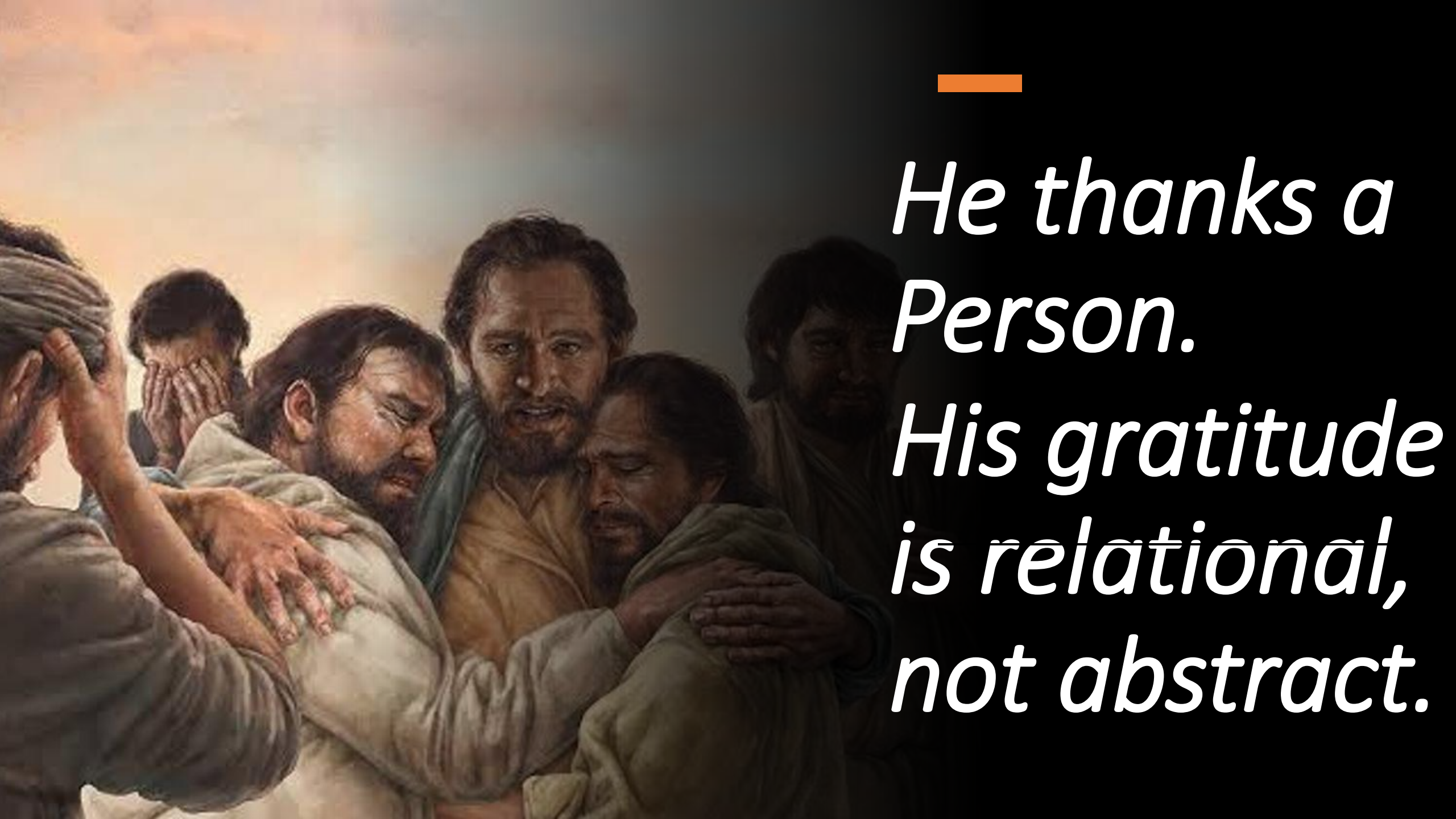
Paul

**did not merely preach the Gospel
— he was the Gospel, walking and
breathing proof of its power**

A group of men in ancient robes are gathered in a city street. One man in the center, wearing a white robe and a dark sash, is gesturing with his hands as if speaking. The other men are dressed in various colored robes (brown, blue, white) and some have beards. They are standing on a cobblestone street with ancient buildings in the background.

Gratitude: The Foundation of Ministry

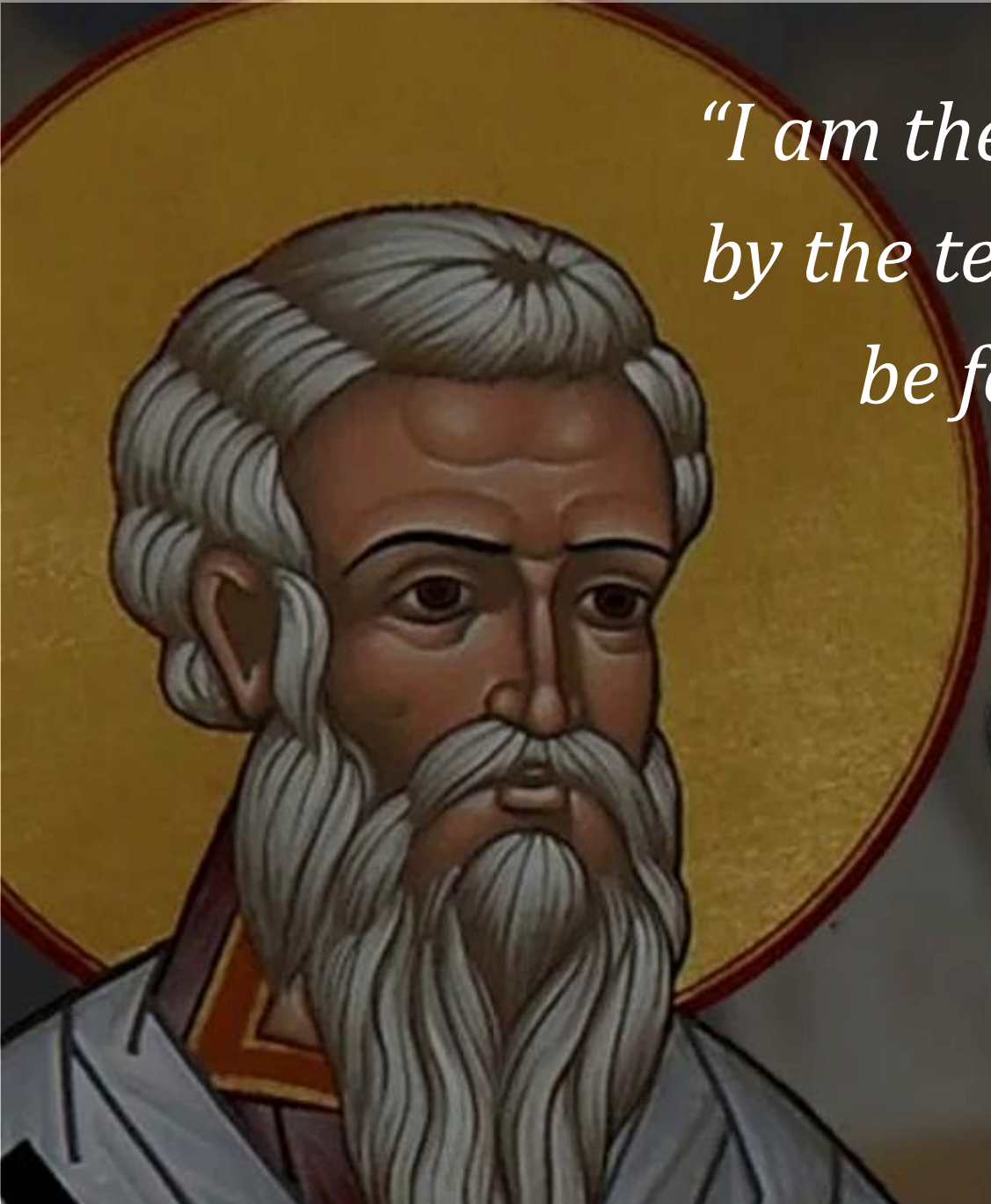
I Thank Christ Jesus Our Lord



*He thanks a
Person.
His gratitude
is relational,
not abstract.*

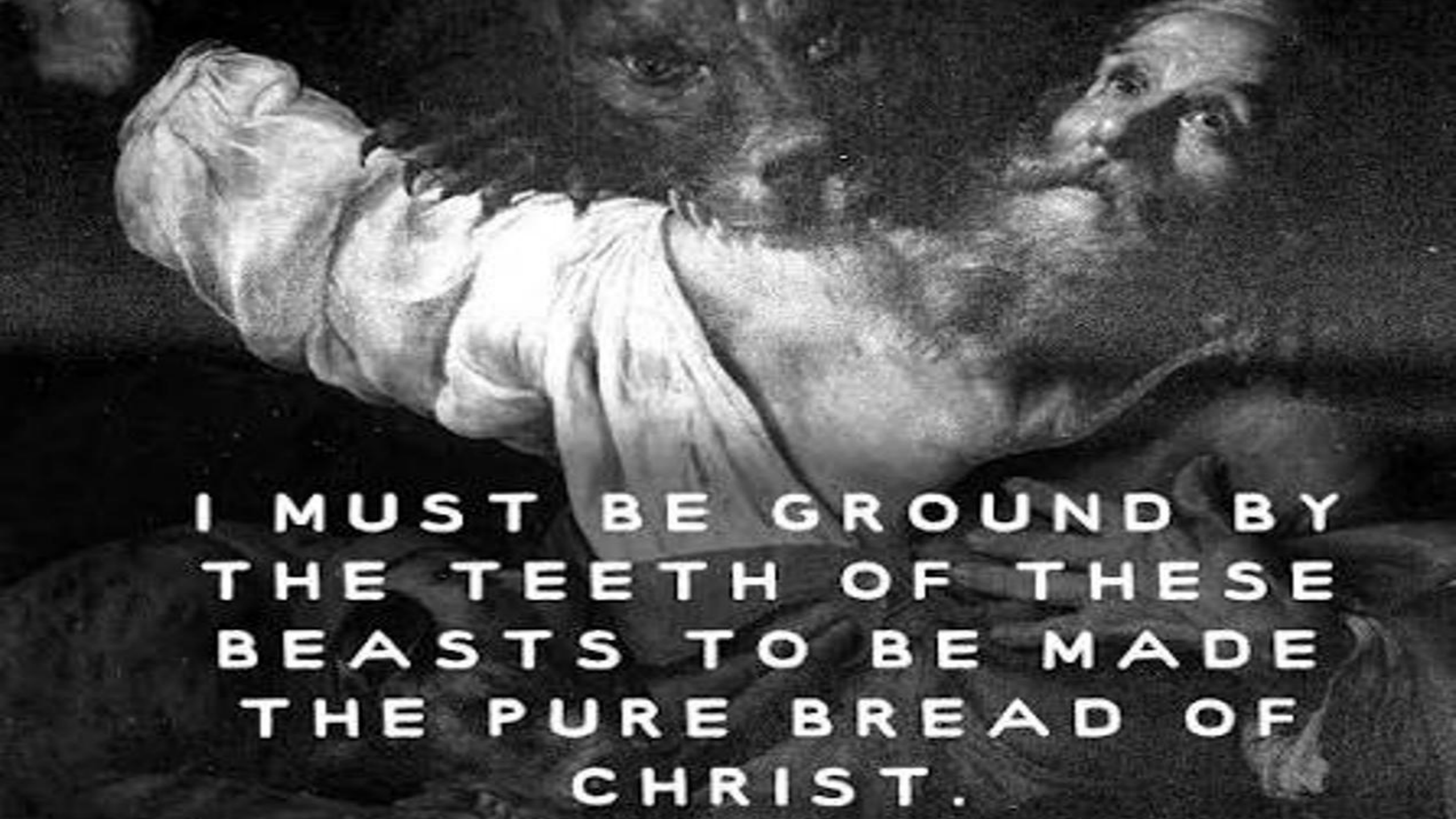


The **difference**
between functional
religion and genuine
Christianity can often
be detected by does
your thanksgiving go to
God Himself or merely
to the benefits He
provides?



*"I am the wheat of God. Let me be ground
by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may
be found the pure bread of God."*

IGNATIUS
OF ANTIOCH



I MUST BE GROUND BY
THE TEETH OF THESE
BEASTS TO BE MADE
THE PURE BREAD OF
CHRIST.

Who Has Enabled Me

“Who has enabled
me” is theologically
loaded — the
supernatural enabling
of the Holy Spirit



Endunamoo

To infuse with power; to impart strength from an external source. Not self-confidence or natural talent, but the supernatural enabling of the Holy Spirit —

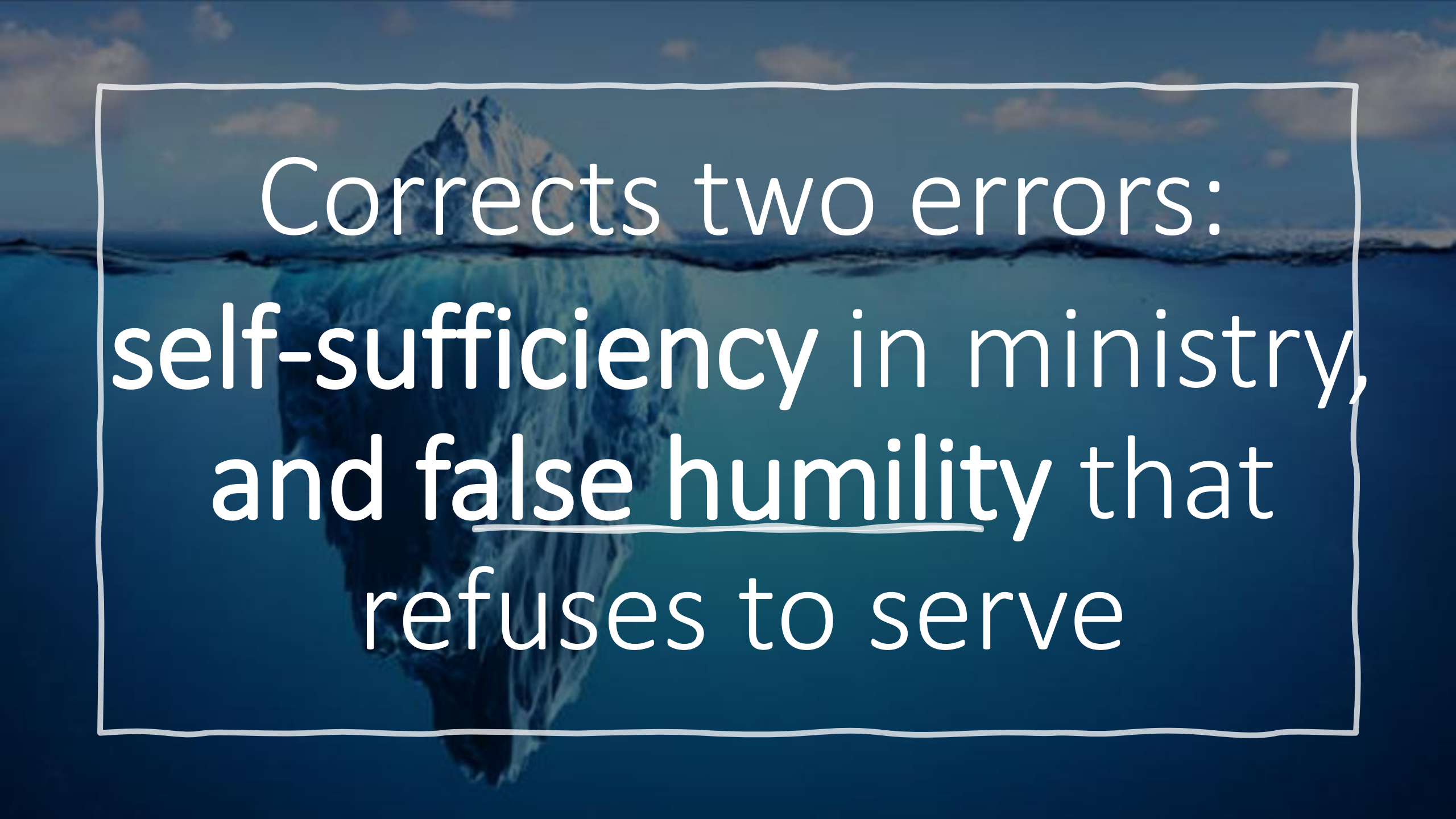




Philippians

4:13

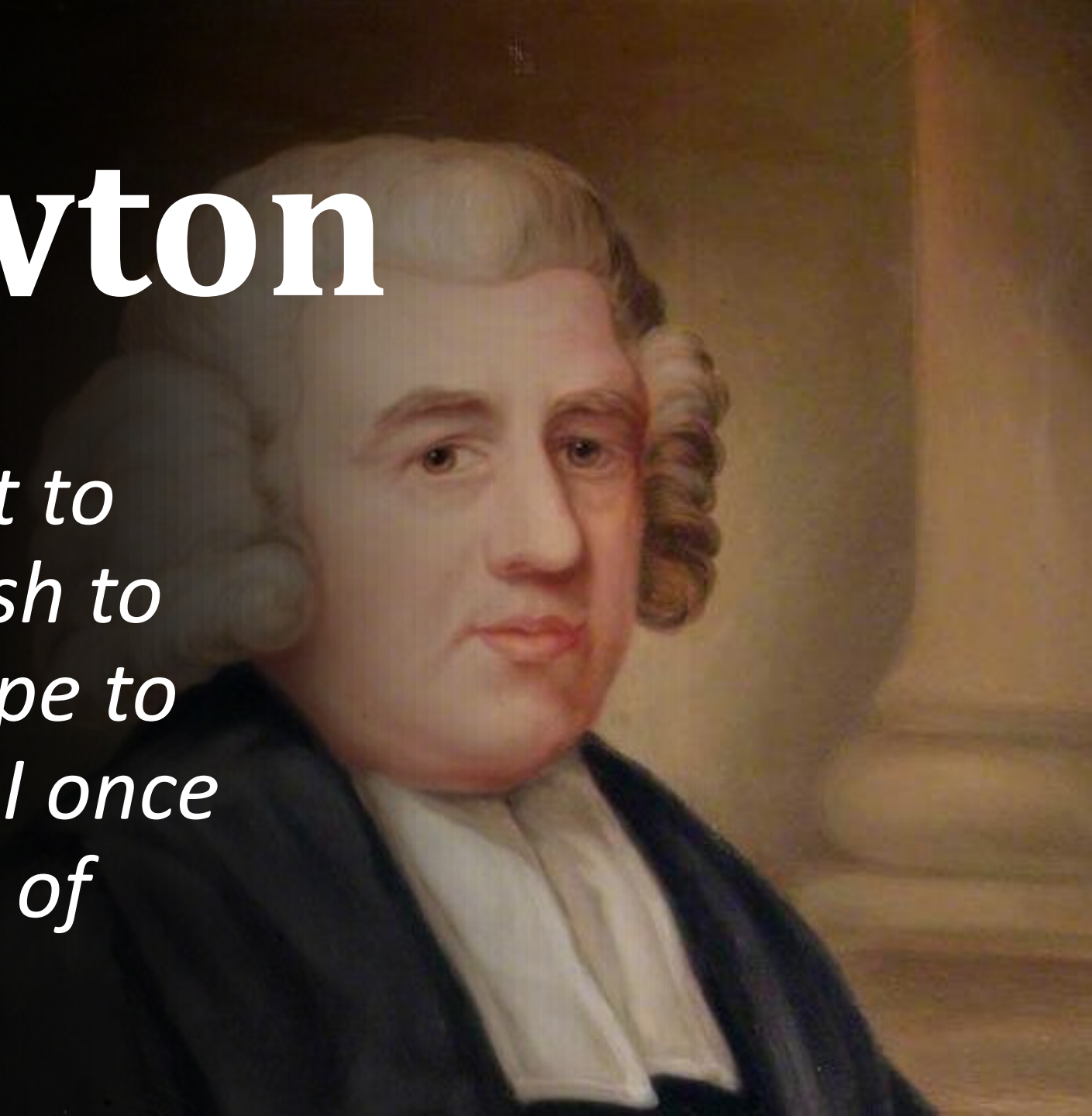
*I can do all things through
Christ who strengthens me.*

A photograph of an iceberg floating in the ocean. The small tip of the iceberg is visible above the water, while the much larger, jagged mass is submerged below the surface. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a lighter blue with some clouds. The text is overlaid on the image, with the words 'self-sufficiency' and 'false humility' underlined.

Corrects two errors:
self-sufficiency in ministry,
and false humility that
refuses to serve

John Newton

“I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I wish to be. I am not what I hope to be. But I am not what I once was. And by the grace of God, I am what I am.”



The Reckoning: Counted Faithful

“He counted me faithful” is
imputed faithfulness, not a
reward for natural
trustworthiness



Hegeomai

*To reckon, to consider,
to evaluate and declare.
This is imputed
faithfulness, not
intrinsic faithfulness*



Romans 4:5

But to him who does
not work but
believes on Him who
justifies the ungodly,
his faith is accounted
for righteousness.



Exodus

4:10

Then Moses said to the Lord, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”



Judges

6:15

So he said to Him, “O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.”



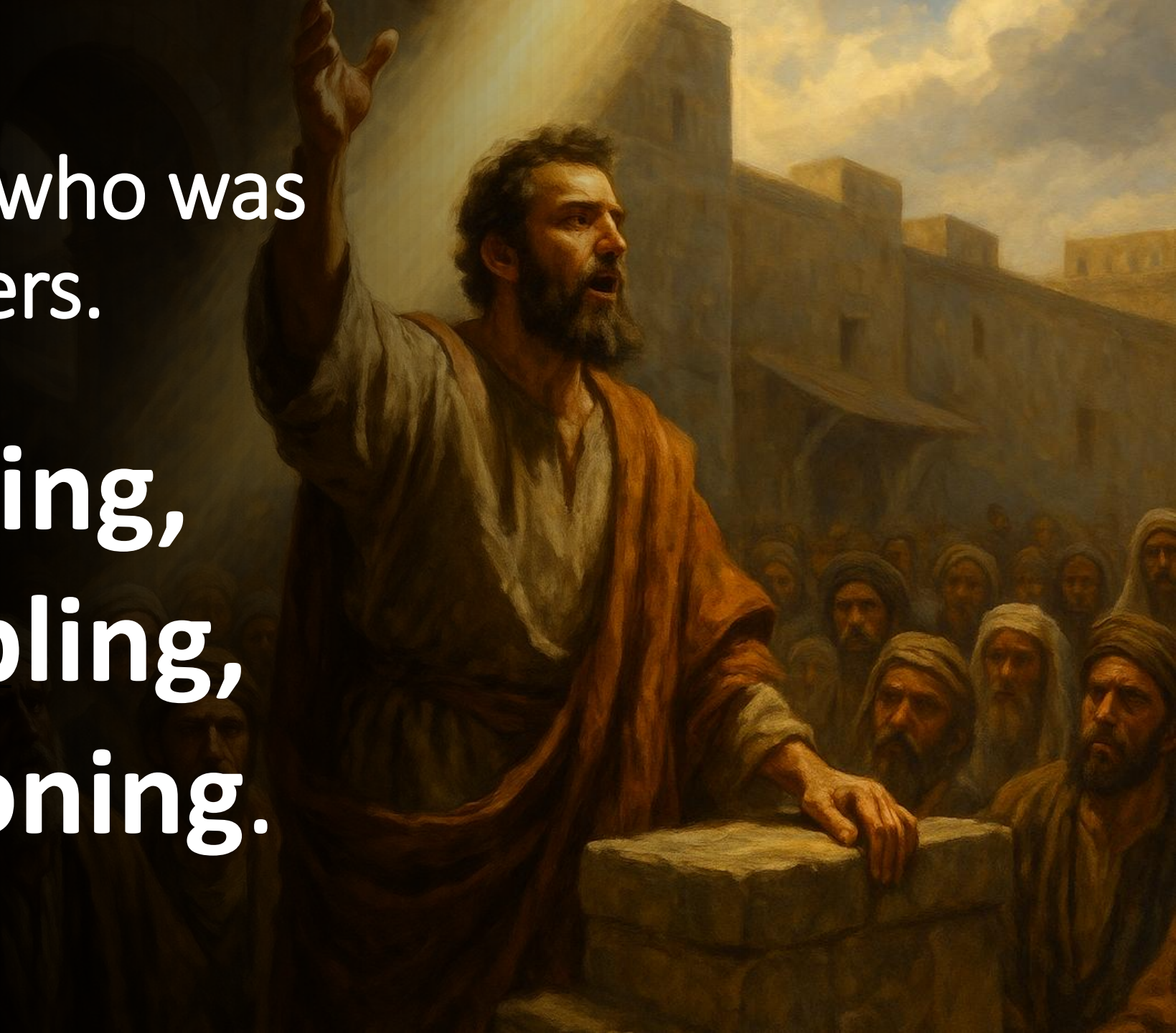


Jeremiah 1:6

Then said I: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.”

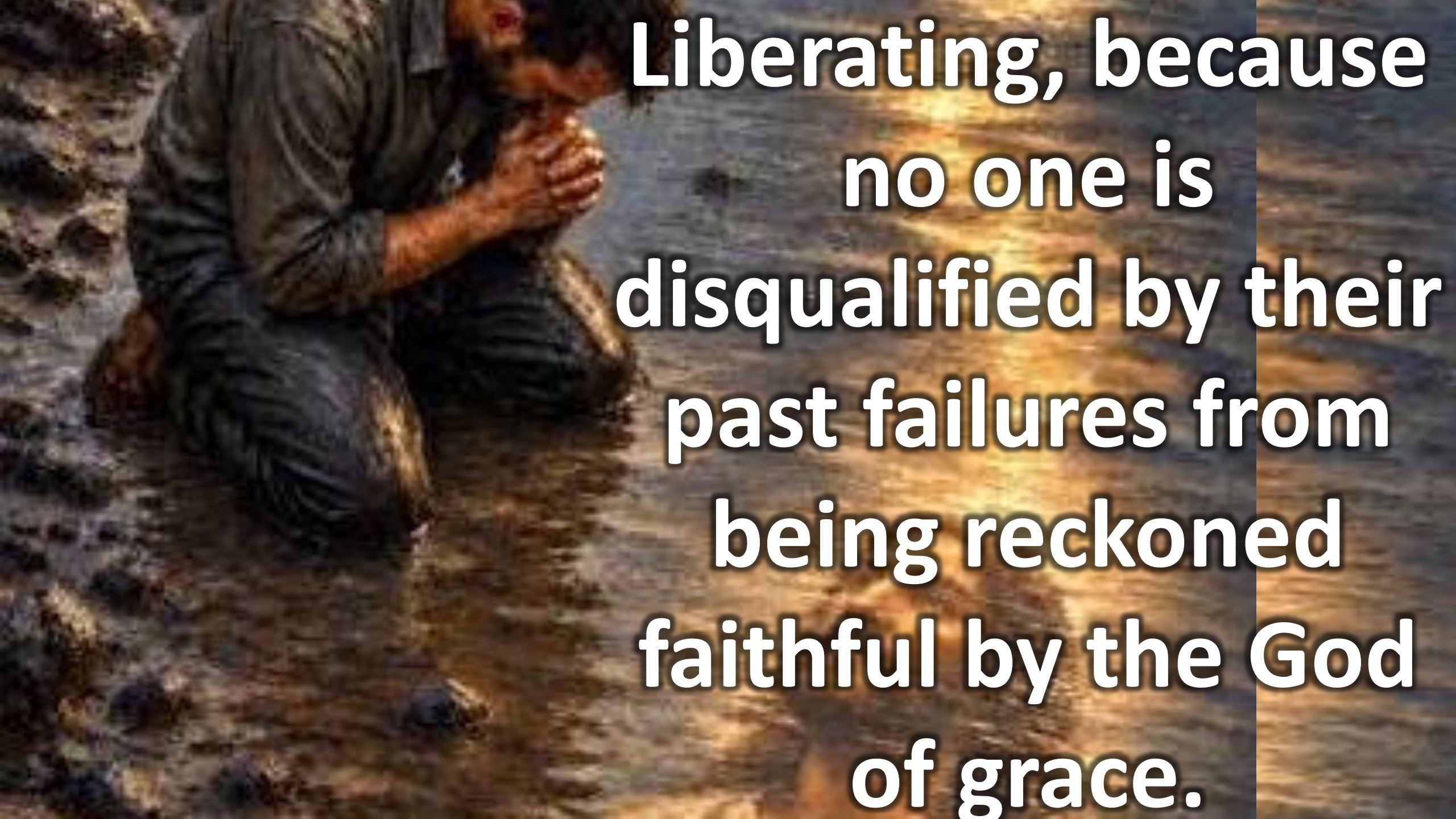
—
God called Paul, who was
the chief of sinners.

**divine calling,
divine enabling,
divine reckoning.**



— Humbling,
because no one
can claim to
deserve the trust
placed in them.



A person in a military uniform is kneeling on a muddy, dark ground, possibly a battlefield. They are in a prayerful pose, with their hands clasped together and their head bowed. The background is a blurred, muddy surface. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image, in a large, white, bold font with a black outline.

**Liberating, because
no one is
disqualified by their
past failures from
being reckoned
faithful by the God
of grace.**

Putting Me into the Ministry

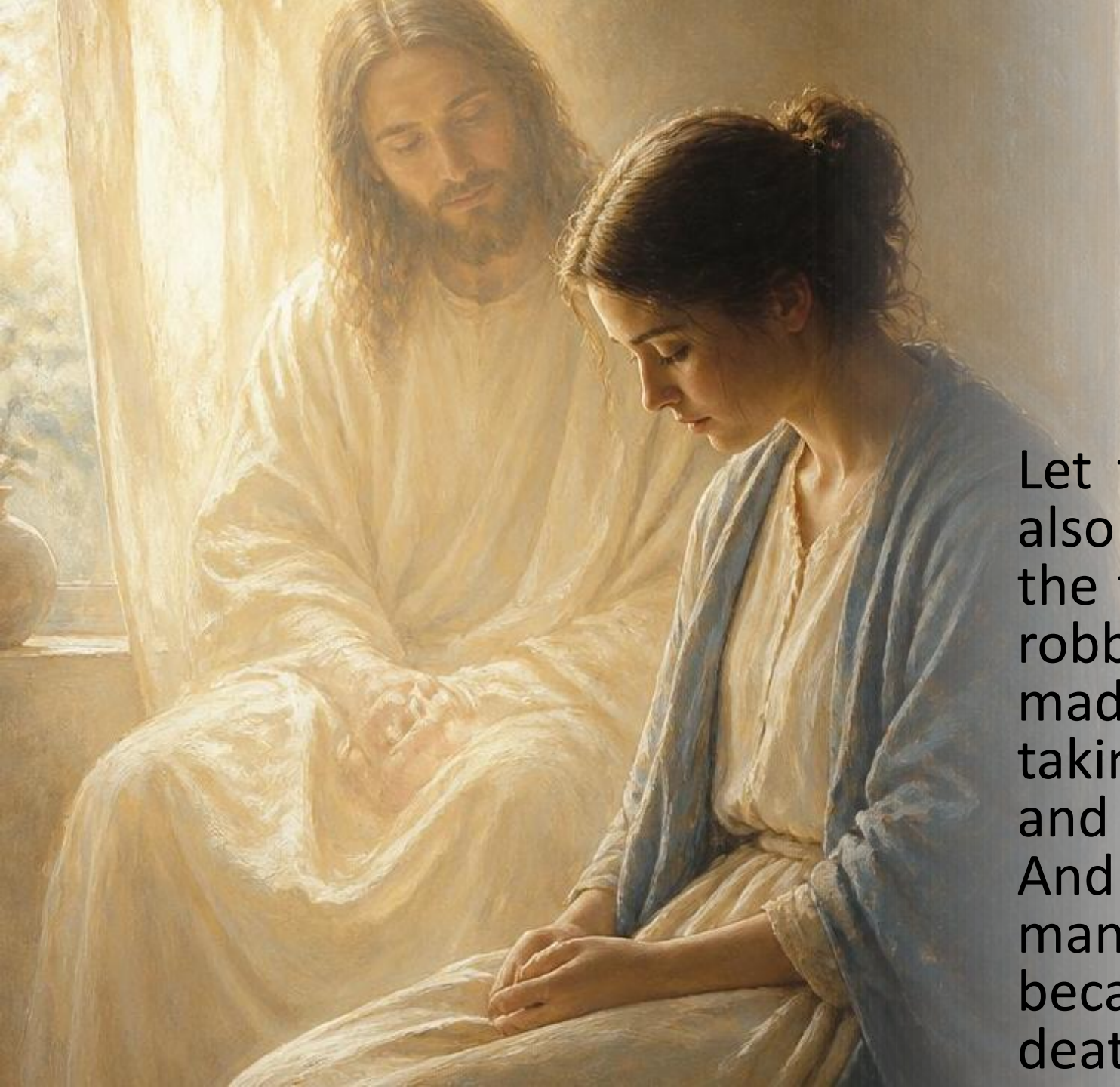
Paul, the former chief persecutor, was commissioned to serve — not elevated to celebrity





Diakonia

*Service — waiting on
tables, caring for the
practical needs of
others.*



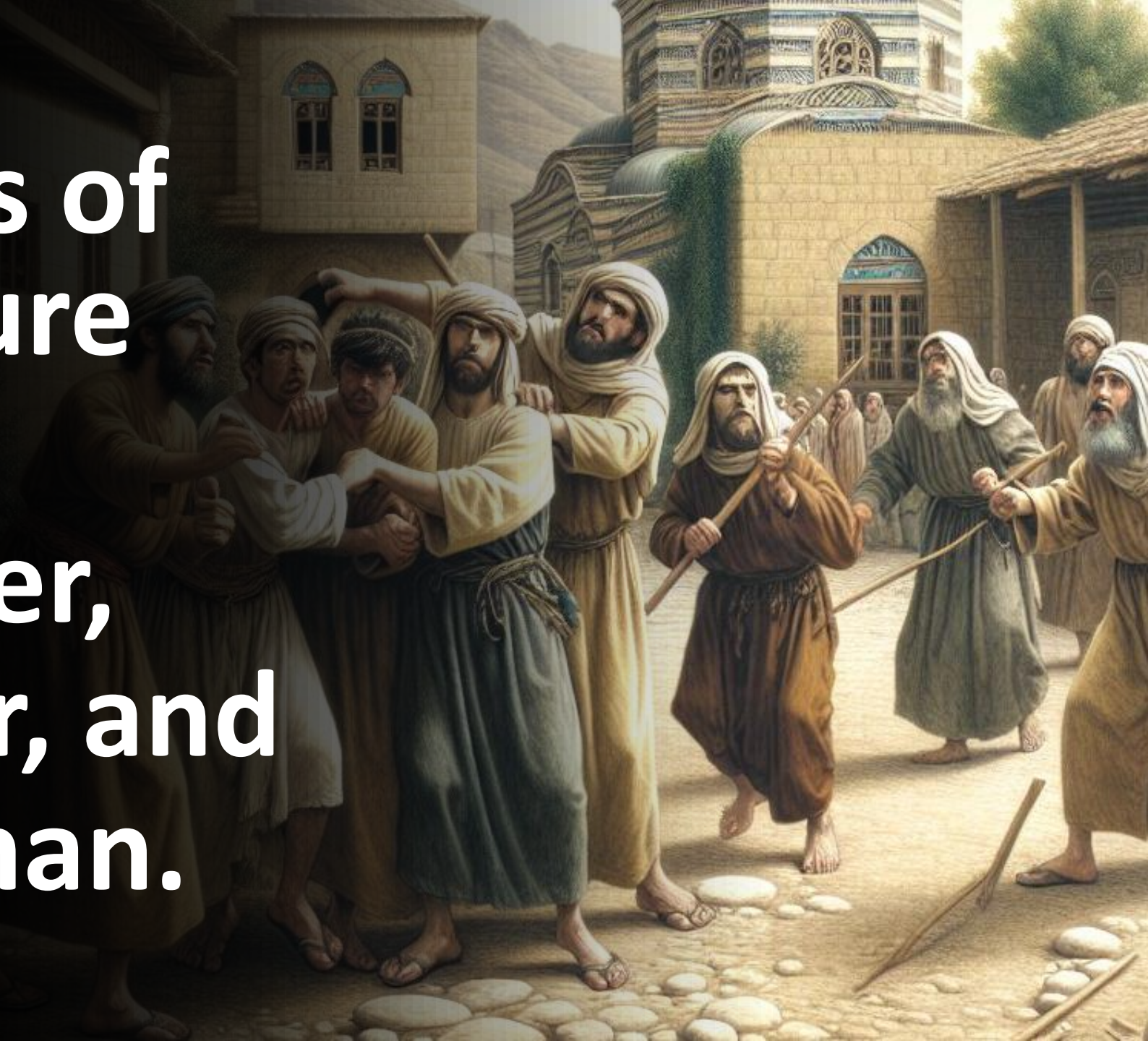
Philippians

2:5–8

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Three Words of Self-Disclosure

- Blasphemer,
- Persecutor, and
- Insolent man.



Three Words of Self-Disclosure

Blasphemer — *he spoke
against Christ and
compelled others to
blaspheme under torture*



Acts

26:11

And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.



**Persecutor — he
hunted
Christians,
entering homes,
dragging
believers to
prison and death**



Acts 8:3

As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.



**Insolent — contemptuous
violence that humiliates its
victims for the perpetrator's
own pleasure**

- Paul was proud of being wrong.
- Paul enjoyed the power that violence gave him.

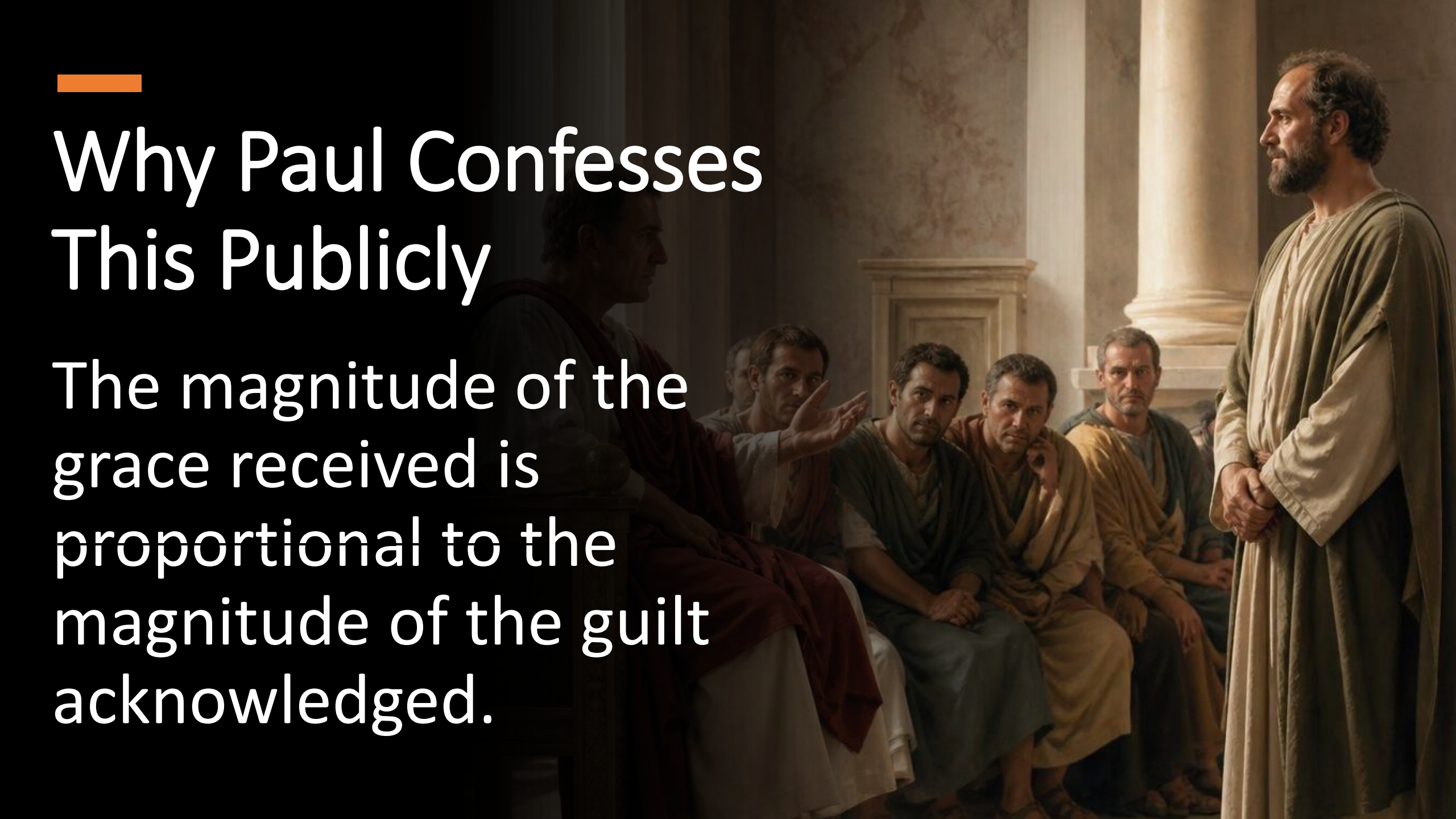


Acts

7:58–8:1

And they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.



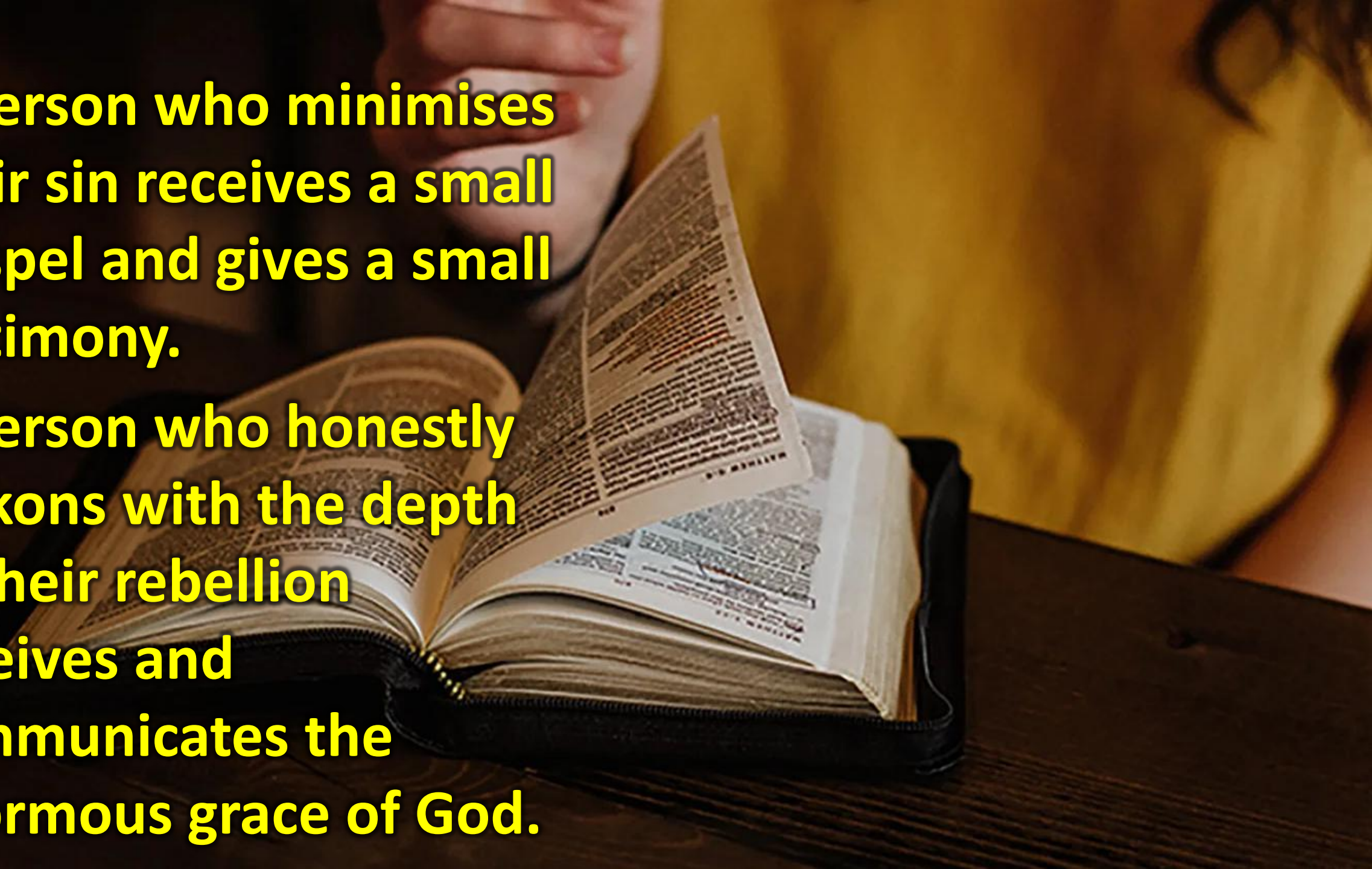
A man in a red robe is seated on the left, gesturing with his right hand towards a group of men seated in the center. The men are dressed in classical robes and are looking towards the right. On the far right, a man with a beard, wearing a light-colored robe, stands and looks towards the group. The background features classical columns and a stone wall.

Why Paul Confesses This Publicly

The magnitude of the
grace received is
proportional to the
magnitude of the guilt
acknowledged.

○ A person who minimises their sin receives a small Gospel and gives a small testimony.

○ A person who honestly reckons with the depth of their rebellion receives and communicates the enormous grace of God.



Present Tense: I Am the Chief of Sinners

Paul identifies himself as
chief of sinners in the
present tense, not the past

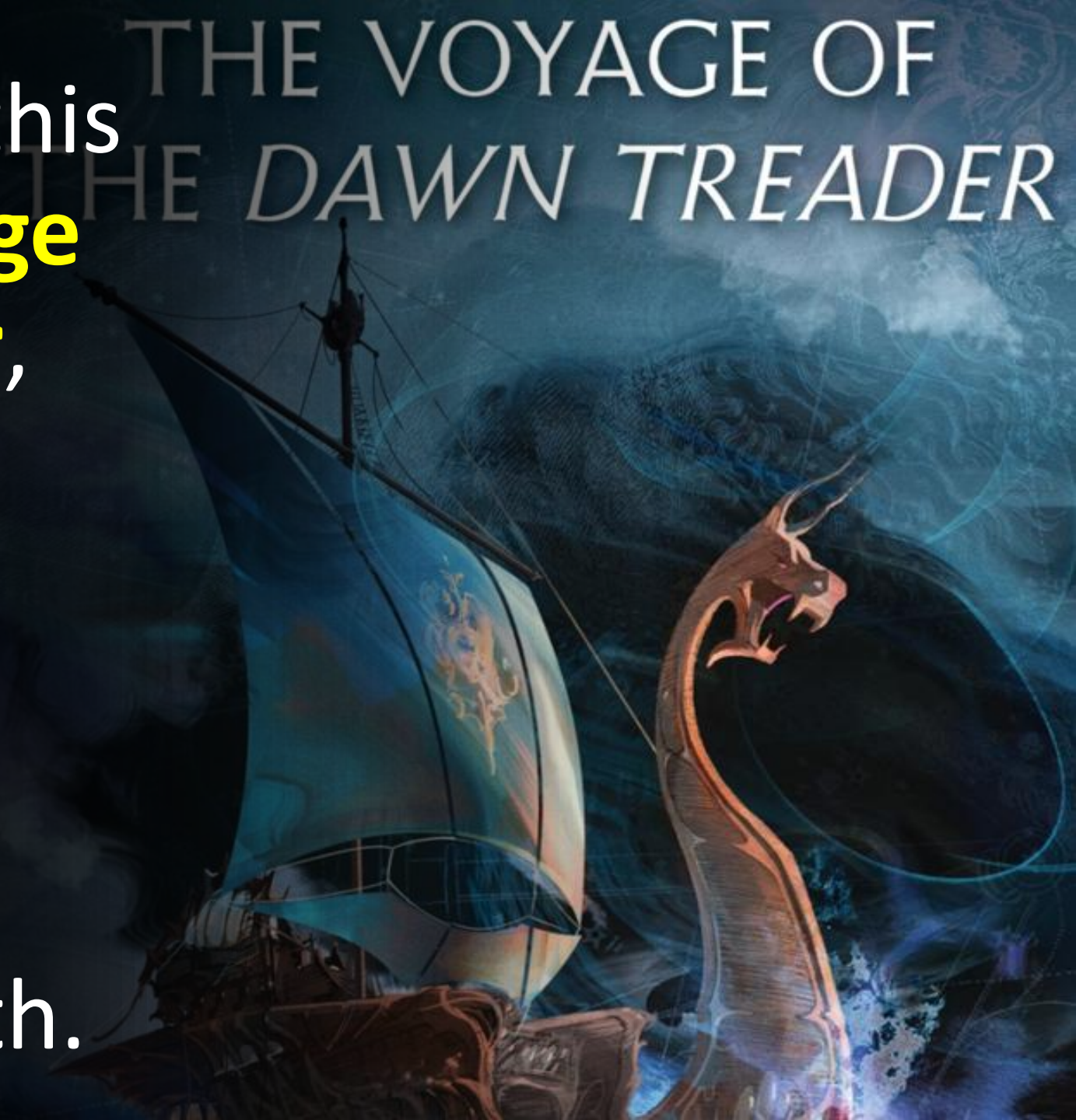


1 Timothy 1:15

This is a faithful saying
and worthy of all
acceptance, that Christ
Jesus came into the
world to save sinners,
of whom I am chief.



C.S. Lewis captured this paradox in **The Voyage of the Dawn Treader**, where the character Eustace has layers of dragon skin removed by Aslan. Each layer removed reveals another layer beneath.



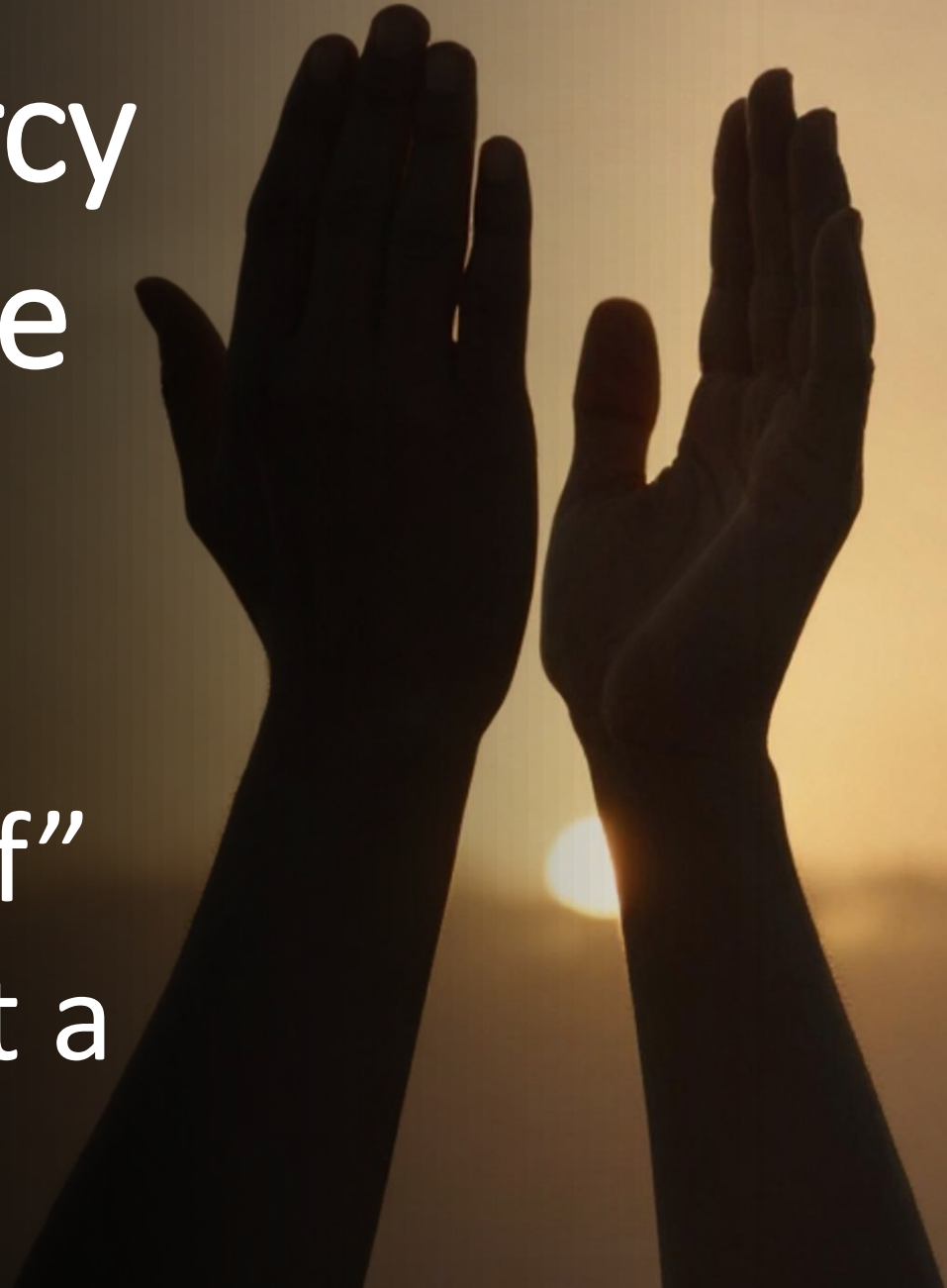
**Growth in
holiness and
growth in
humility rise
together —
never apart**





The Mystery: Mercy Given to Ignorance

“I obtained mercy
because I did it
ignorantly in unbelief”
— not an excuse, but a
qualification

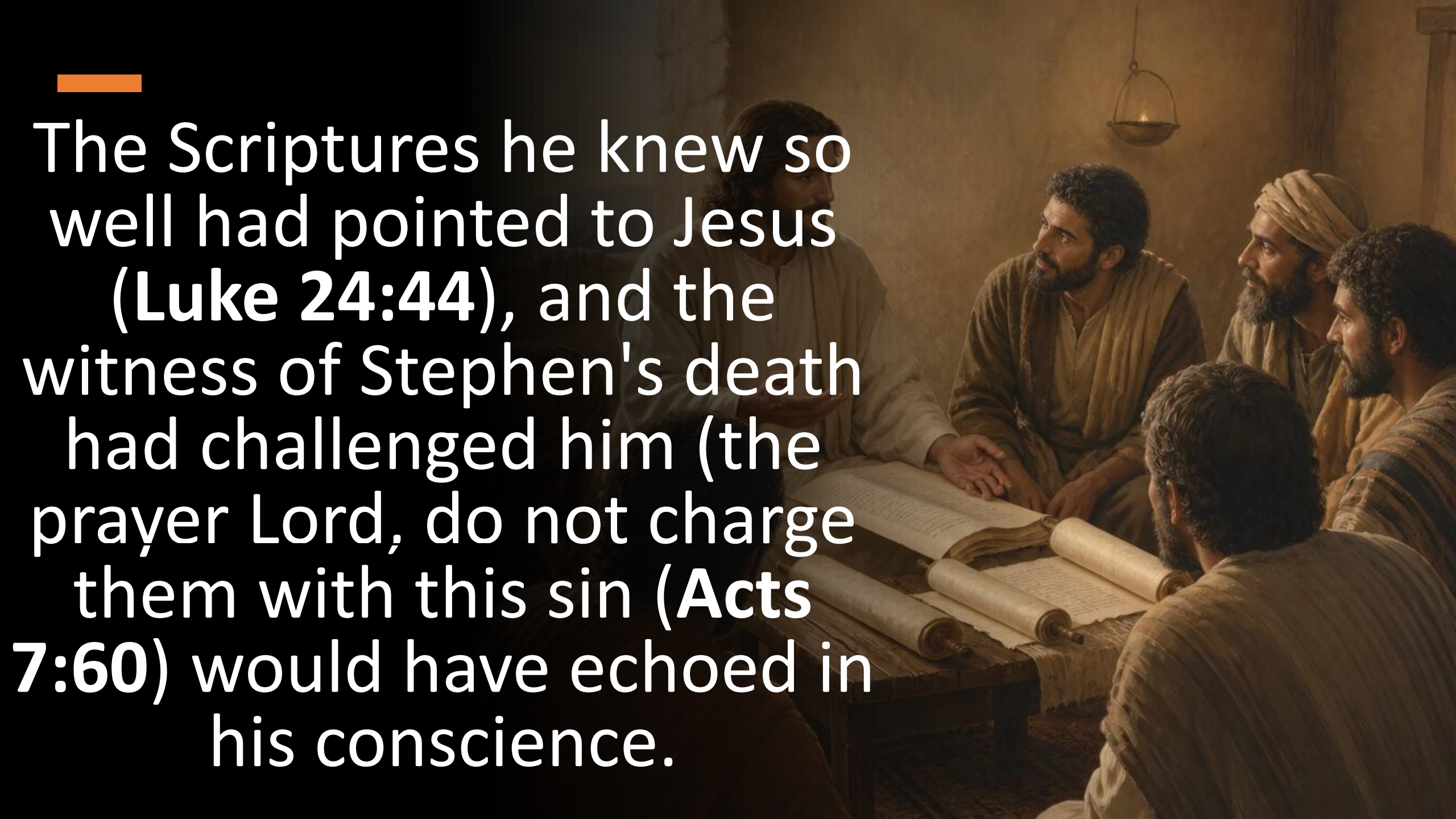




I Did It Ignorantly in Unbelief

The Scriptures he knew had pointed to Jesus; Stephen's dying prayer had challenged his conscience



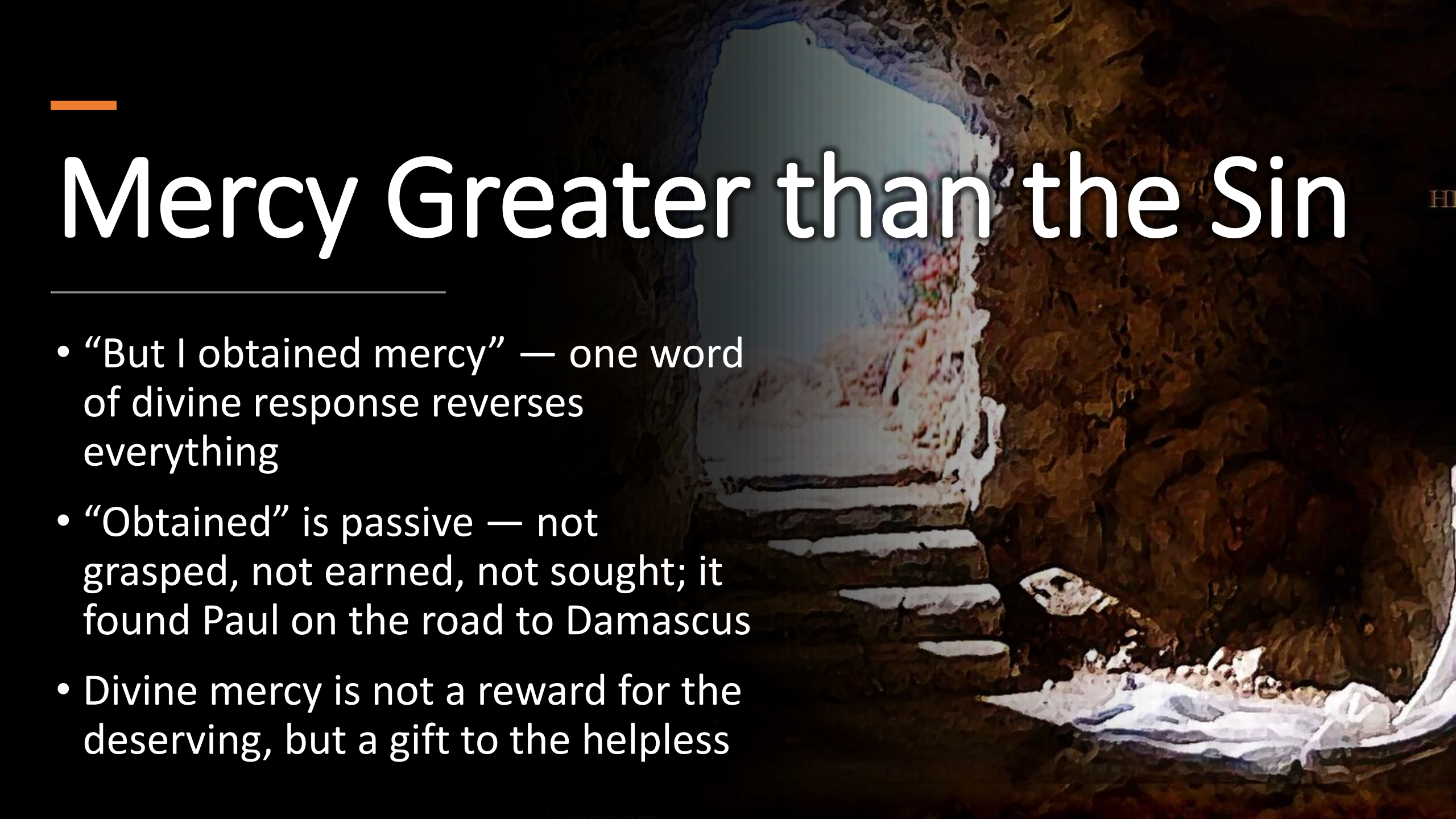
A painting depicting a scene from the Bible. Jesus, with long brown hair and a beard, wearing a white robe, is seated on the left, gesturing with his right hand while speaking. He is surrounded by several men, also with beards and wearing traditional robes. They are seated around a wooden table covered with several large, unrolled scrolls of parchment. The room has a warm, dimly lit atmosphere, with a single hanging oil lamp providing light. The background shows a simple wall and a doorway.

The Scriptures he knew so well had pointed to Jesus (**Luke 24:44**), and the witness of Stephen's death had challenged him (the prayer Lord, do not charge them with this sin (**Acts 7:60**)) would have echoed in his conscience.

Luke 12:47–48

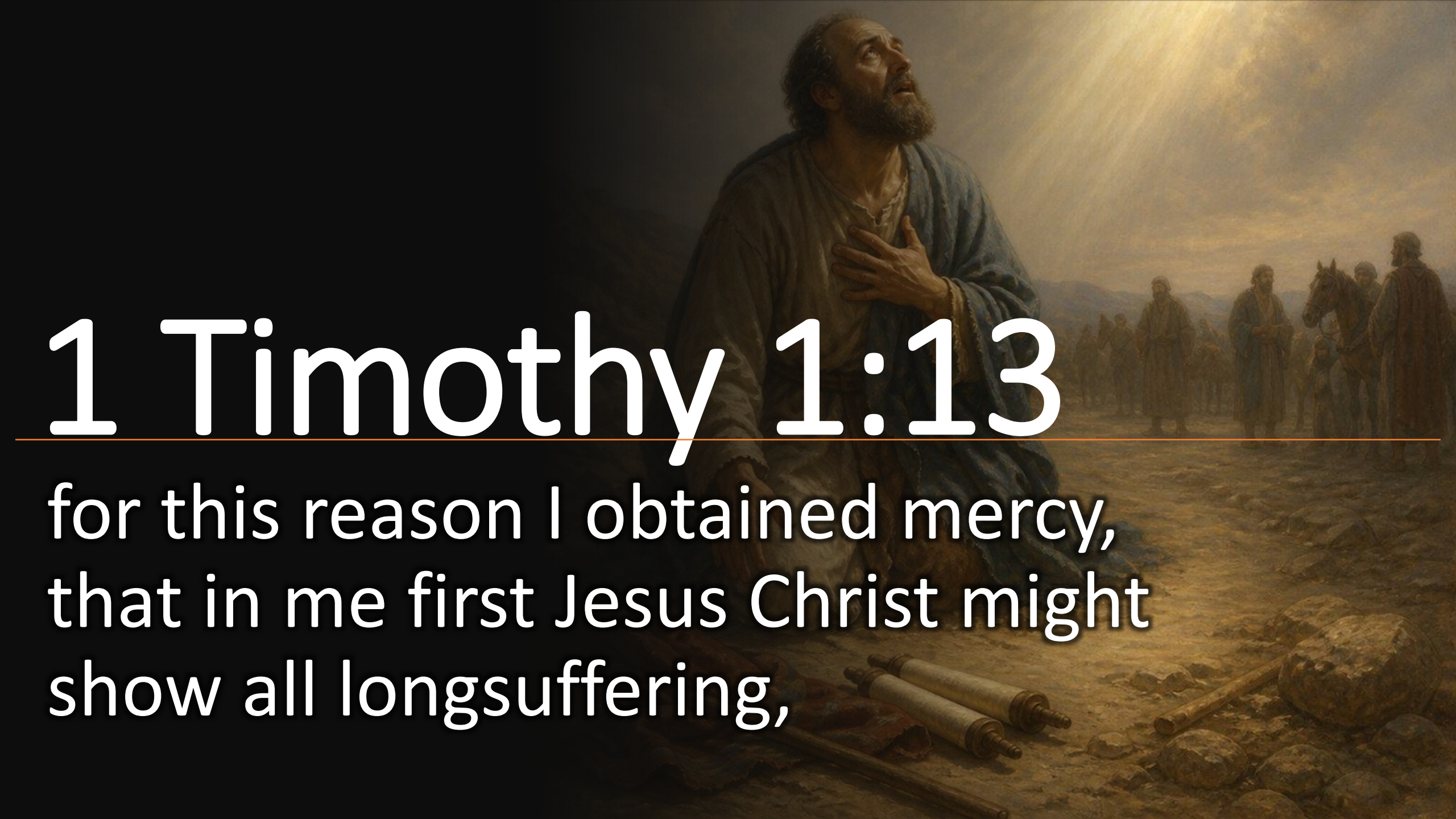
And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.



The background of the slide is a painting of a cave entrance. A stone staircase leads up from a dark, shadowed area towards a bright, glowing light at the end of the passage. The walls of the cave are textured and dark, with some light reflecting off the steps and the distant opening. The overall mood is one of hope and divine light breaking through darkness.

Mercy Greater than the Sin

- “But I obtained mercy” — one word of divine response reverses everything
- “Obtained” is passive — not grasped, not earned, not sought; it found Paul on the road to Damascus
- Divine mercy is not a reward for the deserving, but a gift to the helpless



1 Timothy 1:13

for this reason I obtained mercy,
that in me first Jesus Christ might
show all longsuffering,

Ephesians

2:1-4

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.



A woman in a white robe and pink shawl stands in a garden, her hands outstretched and eyes closed, looking up at a bright, golden light source. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, with rays of light filtering through the trees and foliage. Pink roses are visible in the lower right corner.

The Fullness of Grace

Grace came with faith and love —
it does not merely pardon, it
produces and transforms

1 Timothy 1:14

And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.



Hyperpleonazo

Paul's own coinage — hyper (beyond all measure) + pleonazo (to abound). Super-abundant grace: “overflowed” (ESV), “poured out abundantly” (NIV), “grace blazed out at me” (Phillips).



A man with his back to the viewer, arms raised in a gesture of prayer or praise, stands on a hill overlooking a vast landscape. The sky is filled with warm, golden light from a setting or rising sun, with a single white dove flying in the upper left. In the lower left foreground, a monarch butterfly is visible. The overall mood is one of spiritual contemplation and hope.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if
anyone is in Christ,
he is a new
creation; old things
have passed away;
behold, all things
have become new.

Theological Themes in Paul's Testimony

Paul's conversion illustrates the sovereignty of divine grace in unmistakable terms



The Sovereignty of Grace in Conversion

- He was not seeking God — he was fighting God, going in exactly the wrong direction
 - This is the testimony of a hostile rebel, arrested and transformed by a force he could not resist
- He had nothing in his character or conduct that would have attracted divine favour



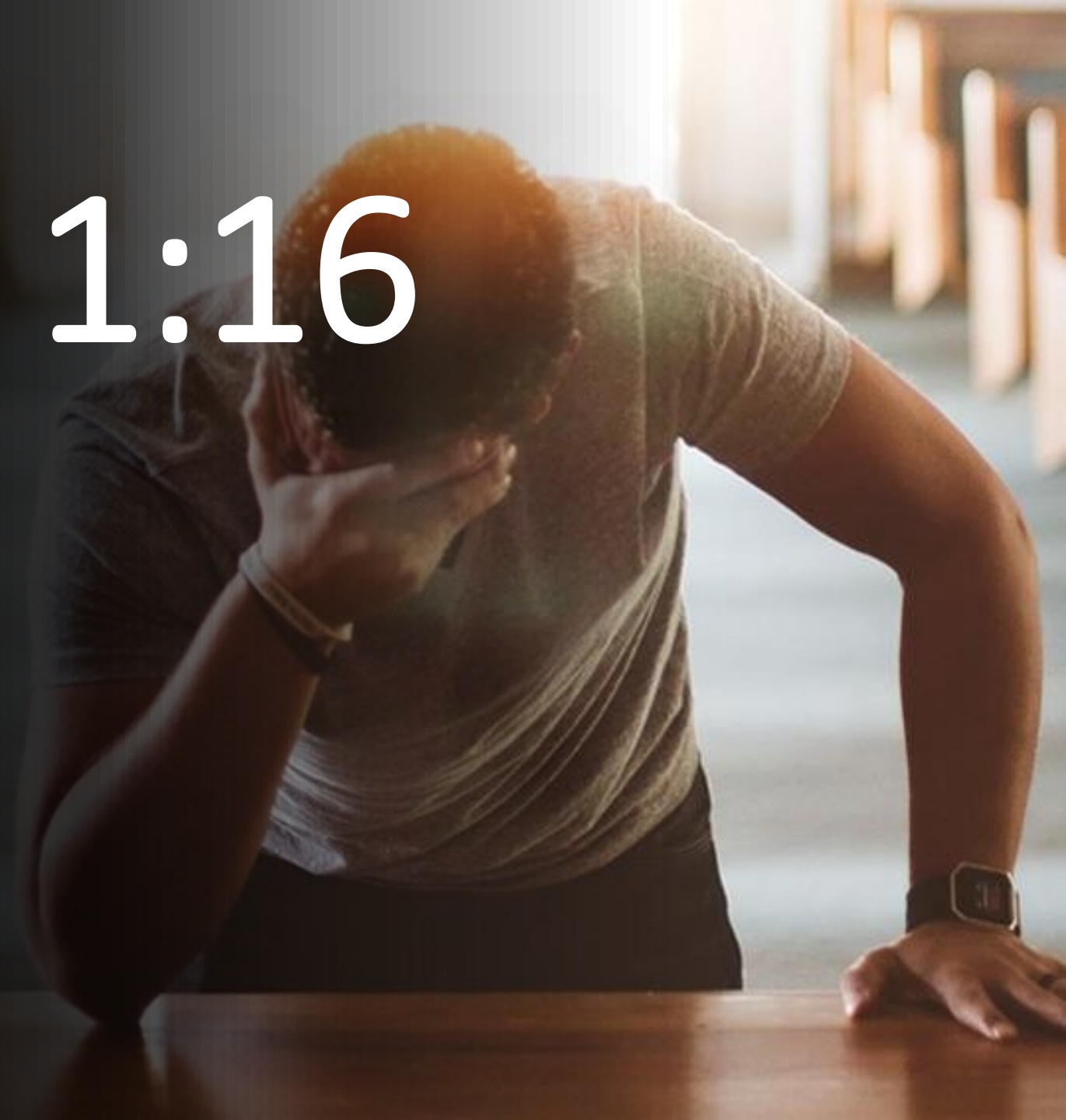
A wooden cross with a crown of thorns is positioned on the right side of the image. The cross is made of weathered wood, and the thorns are a deep red color. The background is a soft, out-of-focus sunset or sunrise scene with warm orange and yellow light. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The New Creation as the Evidence of the Gospel

Your transformed life is
a public demonstration
of the Gospel's power,
not just a personal
benefit

1 Timothy 1:16

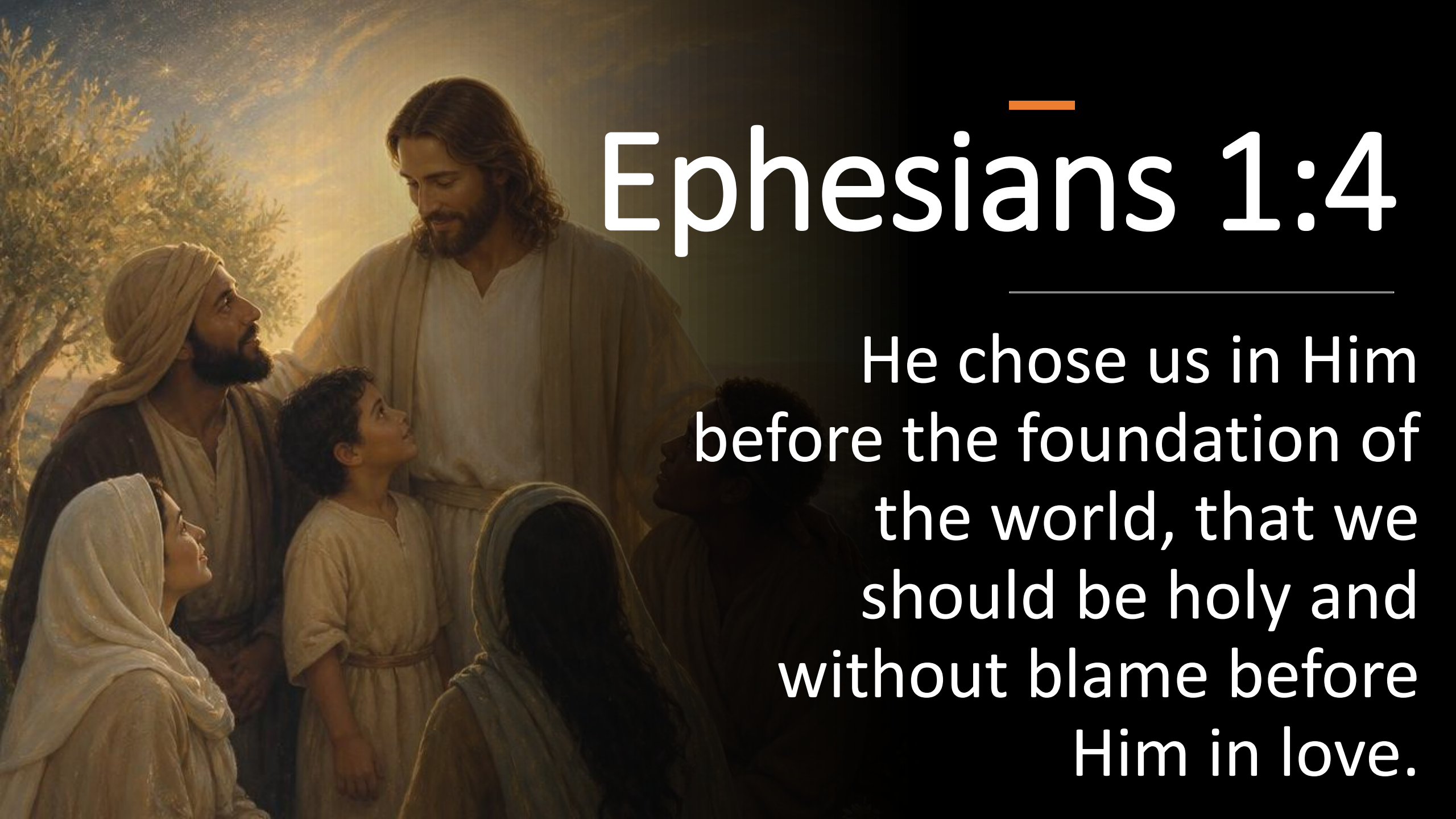
that God's purpose in transforming him was to display Christ's patience as a pattern, a model, a prototype for all who would believe afterward.





The Doctrine of Election in Paul's Testimony

**Chosen before the
Foundation of the World**

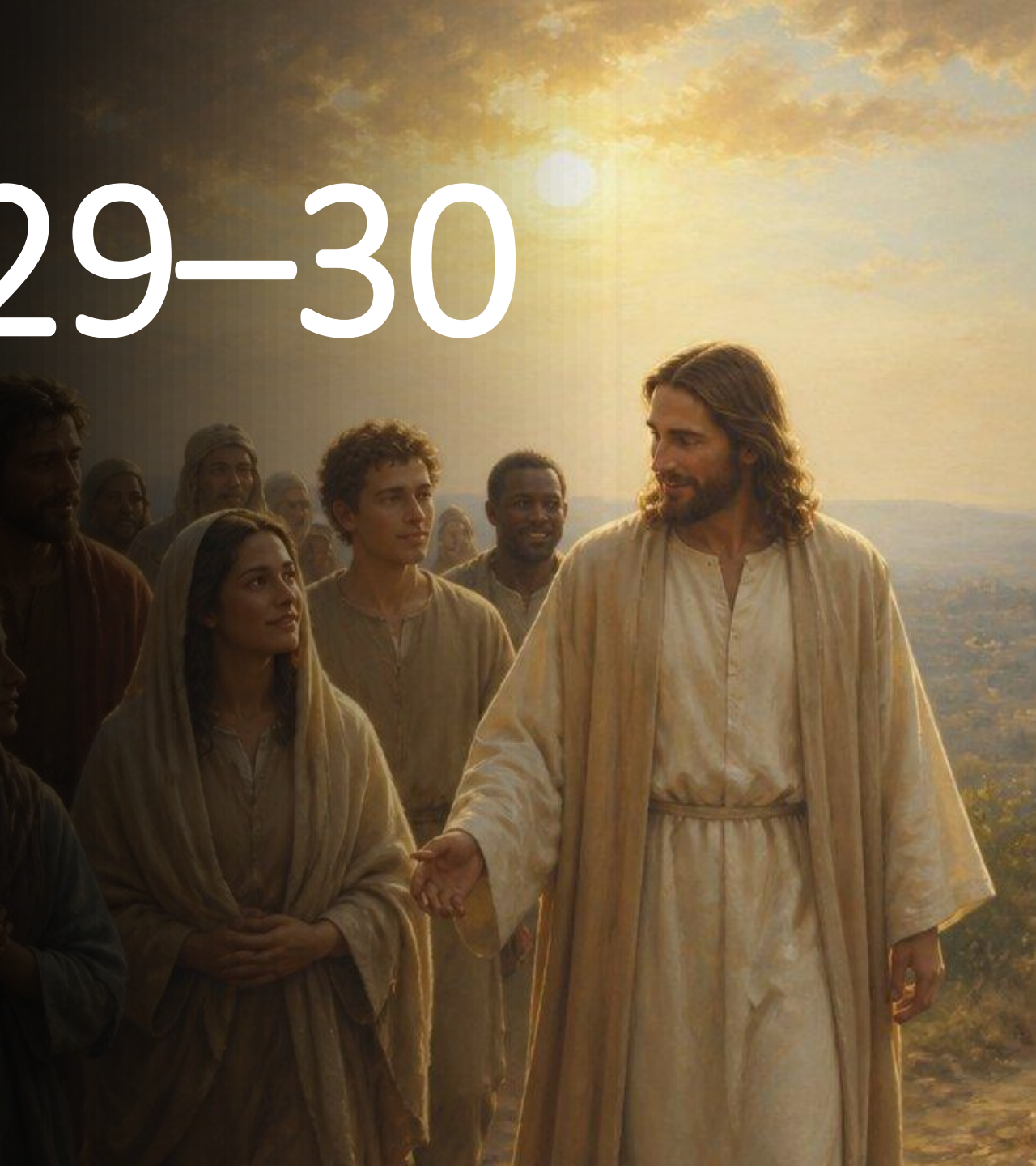


Ephesians 1:4

He chose us in Him
before the foundation of
the world, that we
should be holy and
without blame before
Him in love.

Romans 8:29–30

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.



Election as Doxology

Paul's response to
election is not intellectual
satisfaction but worship

DOXOLOGY.



Romans 11:33–36

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counsellor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.



The background of the slide features a warm, golden-brown color palette. At the bottom, an open book is visible, its pages slightly blurred. Floating above the book are numerous musical notes and a large treble clef, all rendered in a dark, semi-transparent style that blends with the background. The overall aesthetic is one of harmony and spirituality.

The distinction is everything.

- Theology done for self-advancement produces pride and controversy.
- Theology done for God's glory produces worship and love.



Mercy and the Pastoral Care of Fallen Leaders

**The mercy Paul received shapes how the church
should treat those who have failed in ministry**

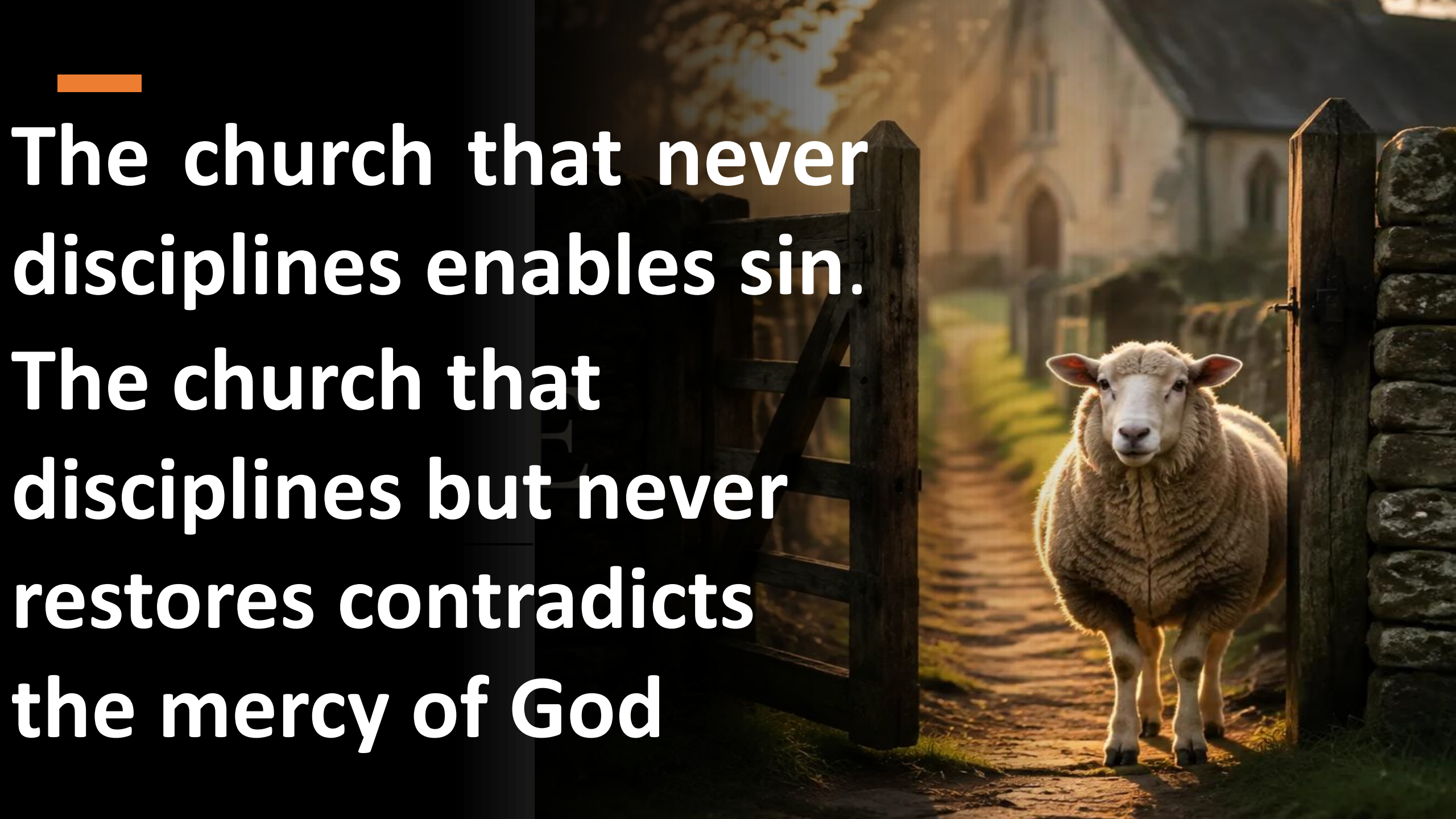
The Restorative Purpose of Mercy

Discipline should produce repentance, then restoration to the community of love

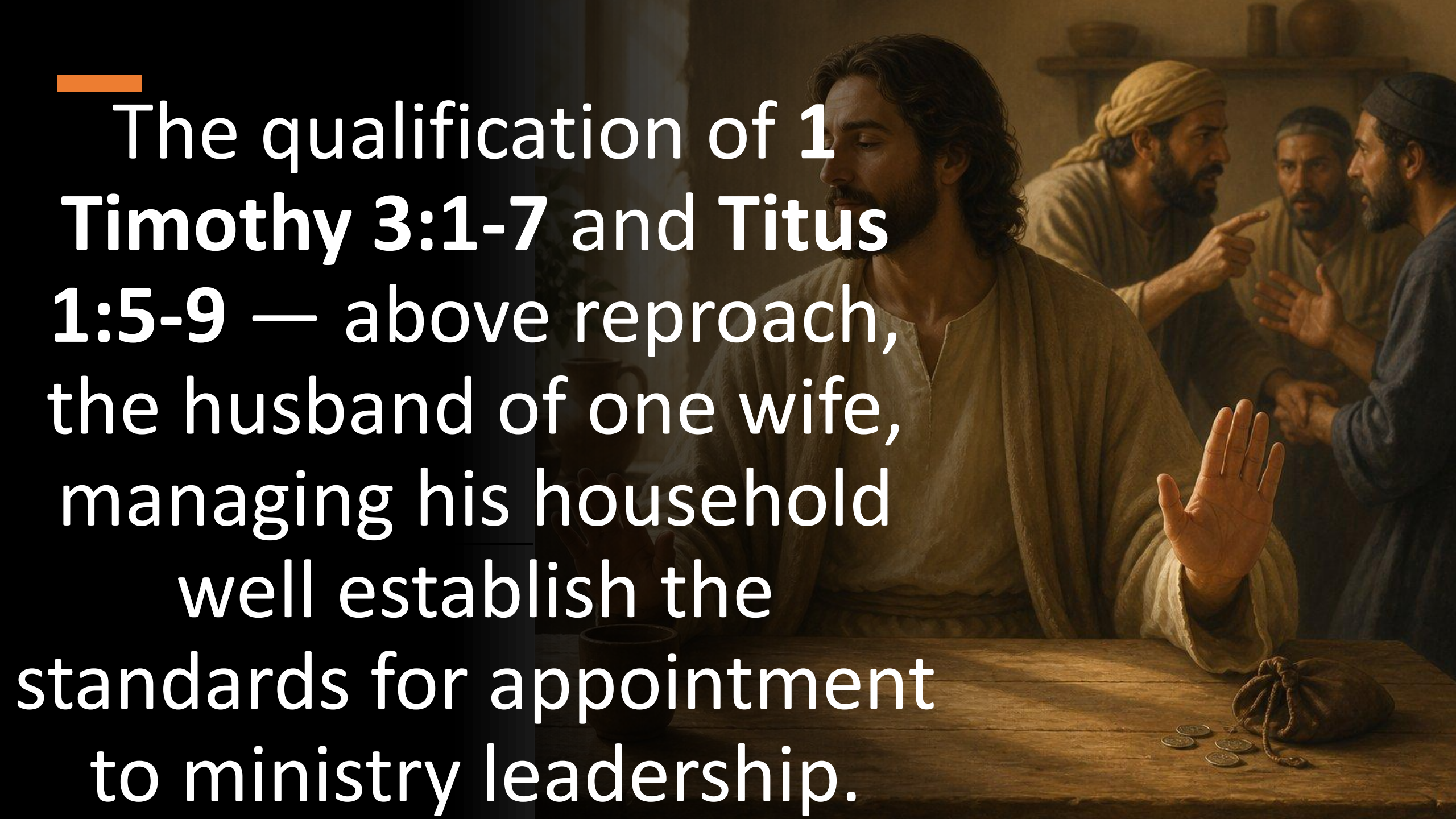




**1 Corinthians 5:5 and the
discipline passage in 2
Corinthians 2:6-8 together
establish the principle:
discipline to produce
repentance, then restoration
to the community of love.**

A photograph of a sheep standing in a wooden doorway. The sheep is looking directly at the camera. In the background, a church with a steeple is visible, bathed in the warm light of sunset or sunrise. The scene is framed by a dark, semi-transparent overlay on the left side where the text is located.

**The church that never
disciplines enables sin.
The church that
disciplines but never
restores contradicts
the mercy of God**



The qualification of **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9** — above reproach, the husband of one wife, managing his household well establish the standards for appointment to ministry leadership.



The Ministry of Reconciliation as the Context for Mercy

The Gospel is the ministry of reconciliation — ambassadors pleading on Christ's behalf

2 Corinthians

5:18–20

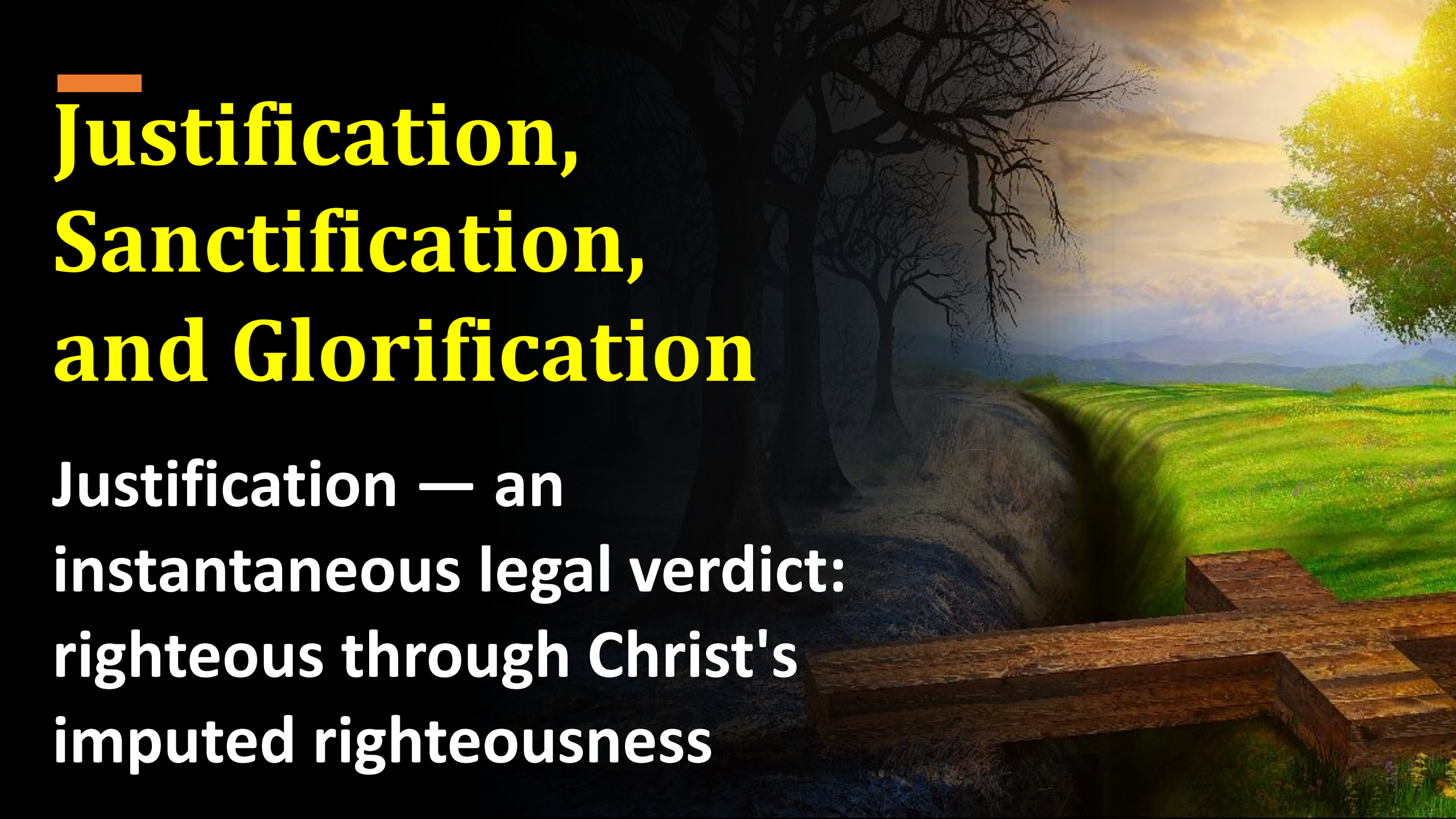
Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.



A person is silhouetted against a bright, glowing sunset sky. Their arms are raised in a gesture of praise or worship. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong backlight effect and casting long, soft rays of light across the scene. The sky is filled with warm, golden-orange clouds.

The Transforming Power of Grace — Theological Synthesis

*Paul's testimony
compresses the entire
order of salvation into
six verses*



Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification

Justification — an
instantaneous legal verdict:
righteous through Christ's
imputed righteousness

A landscape painting featuring a dirt path that leads from the foreground into a bright, hazy horizon. On the left, a large, dark, leafless tree stands prominently. On the right, a lush green field is visible, and a wooden bench sits in the foreground. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and a bright light source, likely the sun, is visible on the right side, creating a warm, golden glow. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

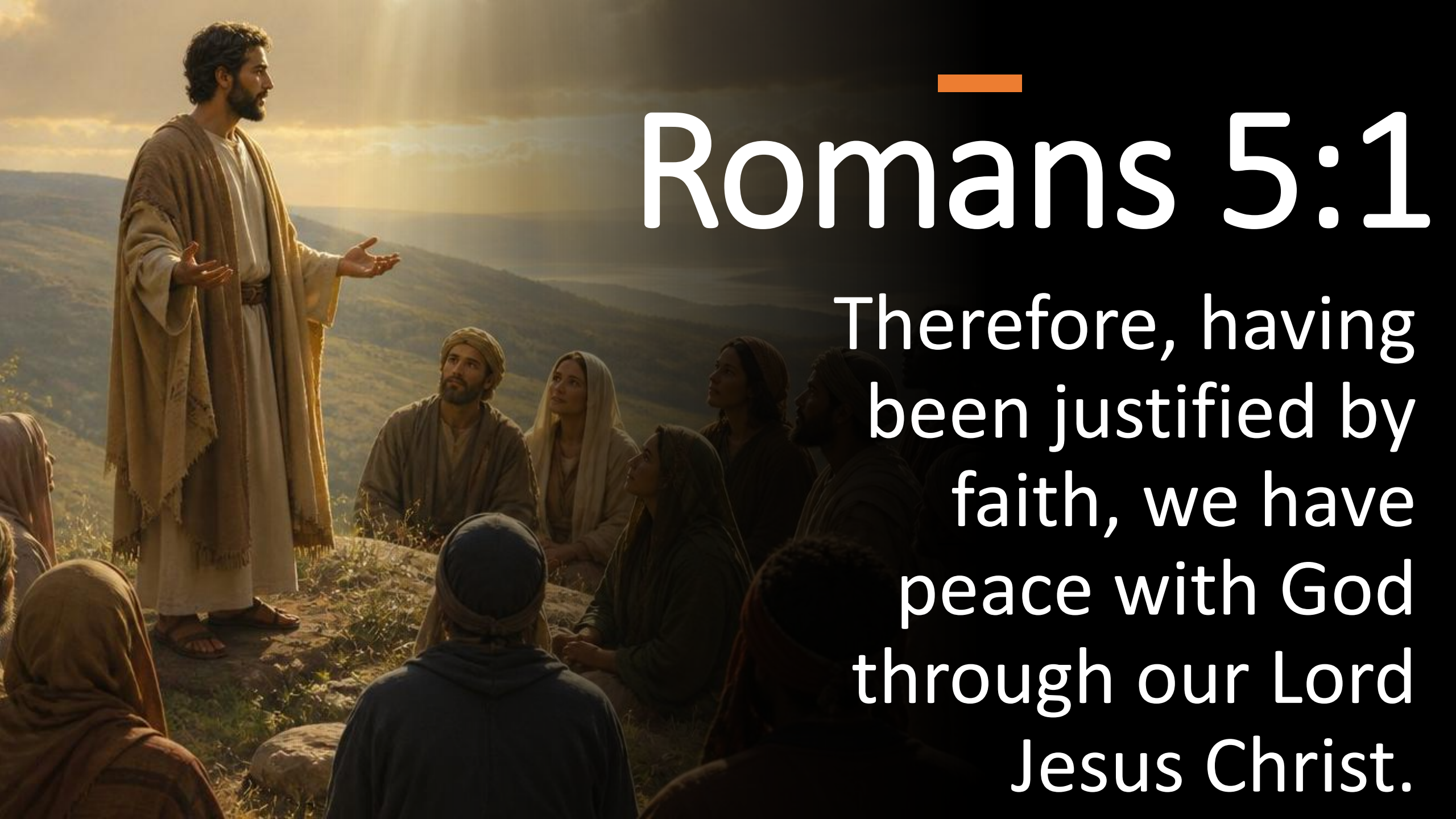
Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification

Sanctification — the
ongoing, lifelong process
of being conformed to
the image of Christ

A landscape painting featuring a dirt path that leads from the foreground, past a large, dark, leafless tree on the left, and towards a bright, hazy horizon. In the foreground, there is a low stone wall. The sky is filled with soft, golden light, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall mood is one of hope and journey.

Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification

Glorification — the final
resurrection and
complete transformation
into Christlikeness

A cinematic photograph of Jesus standing on a grassy hillside, gesturing with his hands as he speaks to a group of people seated before him. The scene is set during a golden sunset, with long shadows and a warm, hazy light. Jesus is wearing a white robe with a brown sash and a brown cloak. The people are dressed in traditional Middle Eastern attire, including head coverings and robes. The background shows rolling hills under a dramatic sky.

Romans 5:1

Therefore, having
been justified by
faith, we have
peace with God
through our Lord
Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:29

*For whom He
foreknew, He also
predestined to
be conformed to the
image of His Son, that He
might be the firstborn
among many brethren.*



The New Creation and Its Implications

The new creation is
not a moral makeover
— it is an ontological
transformation



2 Corinthians 5:17

*if anyone is in Christ,
he is a new creation;
old things have
passed away;
behold, all things
have become new.*



2 Peter 1:4

The person who
is in Christ has
been granted a
new nature





Ezekiel

36:26–27

A new heart
also I will give
you, and a new
spirit I will put
within you.



Hebrews 8:6

enrolled in a
new covenant

Galatians 2:20

It is no
longer I
who live,
but Christ
lives in me.





In the 1970s, in a maximum-security prison in Lorton, Virginia, a man named Harold Morris was serving two life sentences for armed robbery and murder.



In 1973, a volunteer came into Lorton Prison with a Bible study. Harold attended not out of religious interest but because it broke the monotony of the day



Harold Morris said later: I thought about everything I had done. I thought about the families I had destroyed. I thought about the two lives I had taken. And for the first time in my life, I did not feel angry at God.

*Harold Morris was
paroled in 1975. He
became an author,
a speaker, and an
advocate for prison
reform and youth
mentoring.*





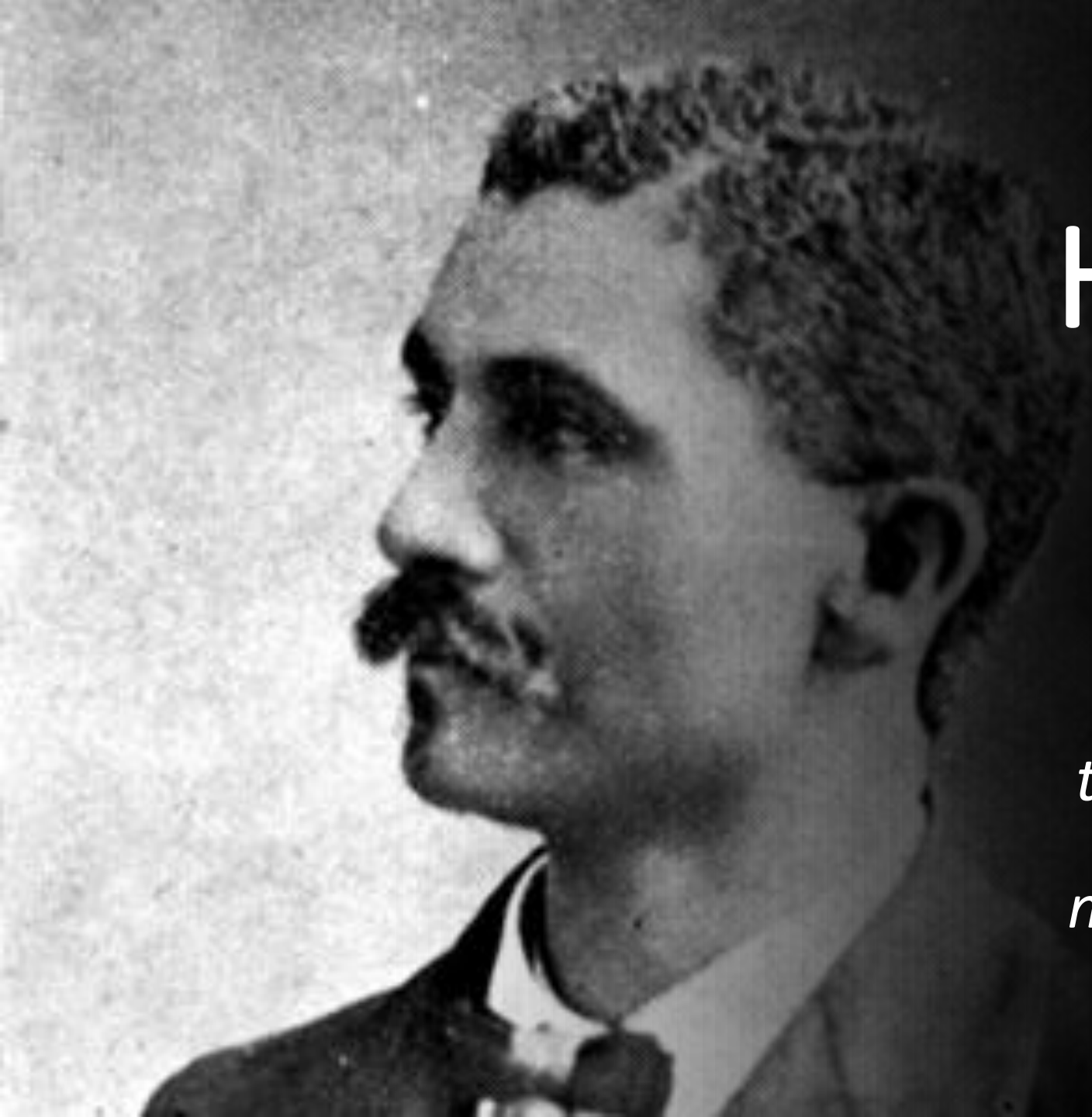
1 Timothy 1:15

**This is a faithful saying and
worthy of all acceptance,
that Christ Jesus came into
the world to save sinners,
of whom I am chief.**



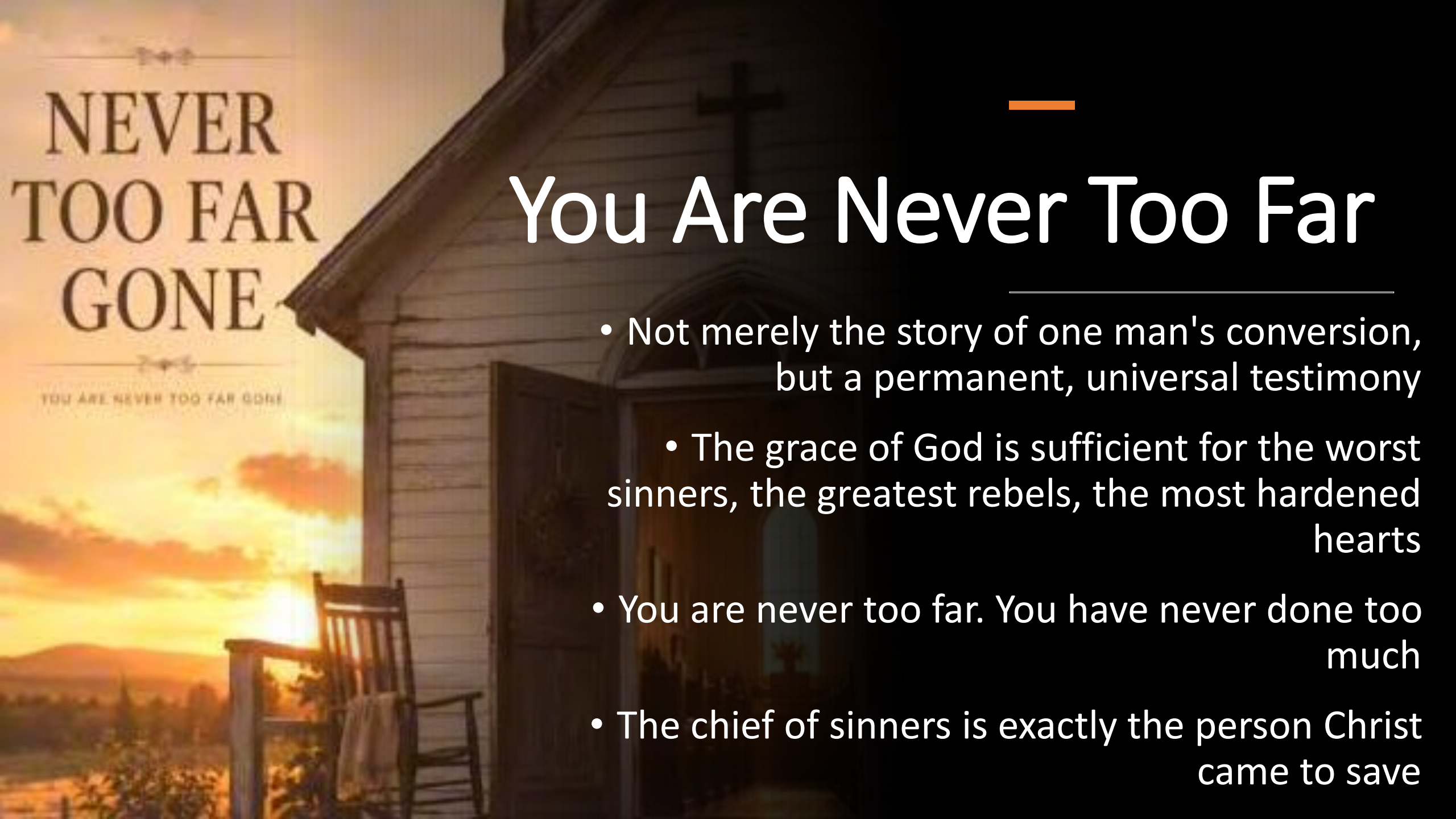
Harold Morris

"I thought about everything I had done. I thought about the families I had destroyed. I thought about the two lives I had taken. And for the first time in my life, I did not feel angry at God. I felt found. I was the chief of sinners. And Christ came for the chief of sinners."



Harold Morris

"I wasted part of it. But God does not waste what He redeems. The chief of sinners became the chief exhibit of grace. And if one man can be transformed the way Paul was transformed — then there is not a person alive today who is beyond the reach of Jesus Christ. Not one."



NEVER
TOO FAR
GONE

YOU ARE NEVER TOO FAR GONE

You Are Never Too Far

- Not merely the story of one man's conversion, but a permanent, universal testimony
 - The grace of God is sufficient for the worst sinners, the greatest rebels, the most hardened hearts
- You are never too far. You have never done too much
- The chief of sinners is exactly the person Christ came to save



Romans 5:20

Moreover the law
entered that the
offense might abound.
But where sin
abounded, grace
abounded much more.

2 Corinthians

5:17

*if anyone is in Christ,
he is a new creation;
old things have
passed away; behold,
all things have
become new.*



Application for Daily Life

- Write your testimony in three parts: who you were, how you came to faith, who you are becoming
- Spend five minutes this week thanking Christ specifically for enabling you for His work
- Pray daily for one person who seems too far from God to be reached
- Meditate on Ephesians 2:1-10 — journal your own “but God” moment
- Share one element of your “before Christ” story with someone who needs encouragement
- Read Romans 5:20 and let it answer the voice of guilt in your life today

Application for Daily Life

