SCRIPTURE:
“I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” —1 Timothy 1:12–17, ESV

MEDITATION:
I love these few verses written by Paul because they so clearly and personally describe the Gospel in its full context and purpose. He starts out by explaining how God radically changed the wicked man he was and even provides a laundry list of some previous transgressions. We know from elsewhere in scripture of the horribly violent atrocities that Paul condoned and participated in. Despite this, and only though the death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul was able to understand his position (our position too) as the “foremost of sinners,” repent of his sin, and accept the saving grace of Jesus.

I think many of us, myself included, like to stop there. We are saved; so, what more do we have to worry about? However, Paul makes it clear that we cannot stop there! In verse 16, he states that he received mercy for the purpose of directing others to Jesus. The fact that Paul can speak shamelessly about the sinner he was and how Christ changed him opens the door for others to accept this saving grace and ultimately glorify God. Paul feels this so strongly that he finishes this section with a doxology praising the “immortal, invisible, only God.” This text inspired the classic hymn of similar name that beautifully praises the character of God (“Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise” by Steve Green).

REFLECTION:
So, what does this mean for us? First, we need to recognize that we too are the
“foremost of sinners” and humbly accept the salvation that comes only through Jesus Christ. We then need to look for opportunities to explain to others what Christ has done for us. It is easy to exclude many of the painful and embarrassing details from our personal testimony, but the removal of these from our lives gives hope to those who are not saved and magnifies the amazing God who can change even the human heart. This week, work on articulating your personal salvation story and seek opportunities to share it with others. It was never meant to be kept to yourself.

**PRAYER:** Lord, in the coming weeks and months help us to see our sin for what it is. Convict us so that we repent and continue to follow you daily. Provide opportunities and give us the boldness to share our personal testimony with those who do not know Jesus, even if we are embarrassed or do not know what to say. We glorify and thank you, our Savior, for your magnificent character and power that is seen throughout all time and space. Amen.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**
Mark Wolf is a third year PhD student at the University of Georgia (UGA), studying computational quantum chemistry under Dr. Henry Schaefer III. Mark completed his undergraduate studies at Calvin College where he first learned about the ASA. He is one of the leaders of the UGA ASA student chapter. He currently lives in Athens, Georgia, newly wed to his beautiful wife Morgan, and they are members at Green Acres Baptist Church.