

Bible Study # 28

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Paul's 2nd Letter to Timothy

Background for 2nd Timothy

- Paul wrote this letter during his 2nd imprisonment in Rome between a first hearing and a final trial with little or no hope of gaining his freedom or saving his life
- In this the 11th hour of his life, Paul said that he had “completed the race”
- The letter contained a number of practical directives and hopes for Timothy’s arrival before winter
- It was also Paul’s last will and testament, his farewell message, given to his closest, beloved disciple and is similar to Paul’s farewell message to the presbyters of the church of Ephesus (Acts 20:17-35)

Purpose of 2nd Timothy

- Paul wrote this letter to encourage his younger colleague and to summon him to Rome
- *Timothy* was still in *Ephesus* trying reform the local church whose problems had steadily worsened
- *Timothy* was youthful and reserved by nature so Paul called him to be manly and strong in the grace of God
- Paul was learning how loyalty was a rare commodity in this time of distress
- The earliest persecution of Christians in Rome began in 64 AD and was fierce and many of Paul's companions had deserted him

Outline of Paul's 2nd Letter to Timothy

- **1. Opening Address (1:1-2)**
- **2. Perseverance in Suffering (1:3-2:13)**
 - A. Thanksgiving (1:3-5)
 - B. Admonitions for Timothy (1:6-14)
 - C. Update on Paul (1:15-18)
 - D. Personal Endurance (2:1-13)

Outline of Paul's 2nd Letter to Timothy (Cont)

- **3. Perseverance in Sound Doctrine (2:15-4:8)**
 - A. Responsible Preaching (2:14-26)
 - B. Times of Distress (3:1-9)
 - C. Following Paul and Scripture (3:10-17)
 - D. The Mission of an Evangelist (4:1-8)
- **4. Conclusion (4:9-22)**
 - A. Final Instructions and Warnings (4:9-18)
 - B. Greetings and Benediction (4:19-22)

2nd Timothy 1

- **2 Tim 1:1-14** *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God ... guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.”*
- Paul began this letter with his usual salutation, and then:
 - Reminded *Timothy* of his prayers for him and expressed a desire to see him again
 - Reminisced of his love for *Timothy* based on the faith that he received from his mother and grandmother
 - Reminded him of his ordination by the laying on of Paul’s hands

2nd Timothy 1 (Cont)

- Called him not to be ashamed and to give testimony for the Lord and his prisoner Paul while he accepts the hardships suffered for the Gospel
- Asked him to trust in the power of God who called them both in virtue of grace in Jesus
- Paul reminded *Timothy* that he was suffering, but that he was convinced that Christ was guarding the deposits of faith entrusted to him by Paul *

2nd Timothy 1 (Cont)

- **2 Tim 1:15-18** *“You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me...and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus”*
- *Timothy* was aware that almost everyone in Asia had turned away from Paul except for *Onesiphorus* who had come to Rome and was offering great help to Paul
- Abandoned before the trial for his life, the aged apostle wanted a trusted companion like *Timothy* at his side *

2nd Timothy 2

- **2 Tim 2:1-13** *“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,... if we are faithless, he remains faithful - for he cannot deny himself.”*
- Paul called on *Timothy* to pass on his teachings to trustworthy men
- He further called him to fight like a good soldier of Christ by not entangling himself in worldly affairs
- Paul added the image of the athlete and farmer to help him focus on his single purpose which included the understanding that (according to Paul’s gospel) Jesus Christ rose from the dead
- He concluded by proclaiming that if one dies with Christ, he will live with him *

2nd Timothy 2 (Cont)

- **2 Tim 2:14-26** *“Remind them of this,...and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.”*
- Paul called on *Timothy* to give a good example and to be an upright dispenser of the truth in contrast to *Hymenaen* and *Philetus* who had swerved from the faith
- *Timothy* must not be surprised at the presence of such evil men because the Church, like a great house, contained many vessels of different value (gold or wood) *

2nd Timothy 3

- **2 Tim 3:1-17** *“But understand this,...that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*
- It is interesting that Paul predicted that in the “last days” difficult times will come about including 19 kinds of vices or 19 kinds of vice-ridden people
- He suggests that such people be considered as being godless
- Paul calls Timothy to be strong to false teachers

2nd Timothy 3 (Cont)

- Paul compared some of these individuals to be like those misfits who rose up against Moses and the truth
- *Timothy* was well acquainted with Paul's conduct and sufferings in *Galatia* from which he was rescued by the Lord
- He predicted that the pious in Christ would be persecuted
- He called *Timothy* to be faithful to the Scriptures which could instruct him to find salvation through faith in Jesus Christ
- Paul reminded *Timothy* that all scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, reproof, correction and instructing in justice

2nd Timothy 4

- **2 Tim 4:1-15** *“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead,...for he strongly opposes our message.”*
 - Paul charged *Timothy* to be zealous in spreading and defending the sound doctrine
 - He predicted that a time would come when men will no longer endure the truth but will secure teachers who would please their ears
 - Paul asked *Timothy* to bring Mark and hurry and come to him in Rome as it appears that only Luke has remained with him

2nd Timothy 4

- He pointed out that no one came to his defense and all forsook him
- But, he said, the Lord stood by and strengthened him to ensure that by his preaching, the Gospel might be completed and all the Gentiles might hear it
- Paul directed Timothy to stop by *Troas* to pick up his old cloak, books and parchment
 - Some speculate that Paul was arrested in *Troas* and had to leave without these very important items

2nd Timothy 4 (Cont)

- **2 Tim 4:16-22** *“At my first defense no one took my part;...To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen”*
 - At the end Paul sent greetings to *Priscilla* and *Aquila* and the household of *Onesiphorus*
 - He also told *Timothy* that *Erastus* stayed in *Corinth*, and *Trophimus* was left in *Miletus* after he fell ill
 - Paul called *Timothy* to hurry and arrive before winter
 - He closed with a greeting for *Eubulus*, *Prudens*, *Linus*, and *Claudia*

Transition

- We will conclude our study of **Acts** and the **Epistles of Paul** with a look at the **Book of Hebrews**

Letter to the Hebrews

Background

- The authorship of the letter has long been a matter of debate
- Formerly, it was considered anonymous and stood as one of the most unique writings in the New Testament
- Early on the Eastern Church believed that Paul authored the letter:
 - Either by himself, or
 - He had a secretary or disciple translate the work from a Semitic original, or
 - The secretary expressed the substance of Paul's theology in his own personal way

Background (Cont)

- Originally the Western Church did not accept it as being the work of Paul, but in the 4th century a shift of opinion arose accepting the Eastern Church's position
- It was not until the 16th Century that serious doubts arose even though the Council of Trent listed it as one of the letters of Paul
- Although there is no consensus, the majority of modern scholars reject a strict view of Pauline authorship
- Many today believe that it was authored by a disciple of Paul who expressed Paul's teaching in a particularly elegant way

Background (Cont)

- Even though it is called an “epistle”, it should be considered a “theological treatise”
- It was written to a specific group of Jewish Christians who knew the Old Testament well, especially the **Book of Exodus**
- It appears that the author was concerned that there might be some danger of apostasy
- It provides a detailed description of the temple and its services, indicating that it must have been written before the **70 AD destruction of the Temple**

Background (Cont)

- The author does everything he can to prove that the old Temple in Jerusalem is worthless and that the Church (Christ) is the new Temple of God
- He is also trying to prove that the old priesthood is completely outdated and worthless compared to the new priesthood of Christ

Outline to the Letter to the Hebrews

- **1. Exordium (1:1-4)**
- **2. A Name Superior to the Angels (1:5 -2:28)**
 - A. Christ, the First-Born (1:5-14)
 - B. A Great Salvation (2:1-4)
 - C. Christ, Our Elder Brother (2:5-18)
- **3. A Merciful and Faithful High Priest (3:1-5:10)**
 - A. A High Priest Worthy of Faith (3:1-4:14)
 - B. A High Priest Abundant in Mercy (4:15-5:10)

Outline of the Letter to the Hebrews (Cont)

- **4. High Priest of a New and Better Covenant (5:1-10:39)**
 - A. Exhortation to Christian Maturity (5:11-6:12)
 - B. God's Oath to Abraham (6:13-20)
 - C. The Priesthood of Melchizedek (7:1-28)
 - D. The New Covenant Is Superior to the Old (8:1-9:28)
 - E. The Efficacy of Christ's Priesthood (10:1-18)
 - F. Holding Fast in Faith (10:19-39)

Outline of the Letter to the Hebrews (Cont)

- **5. Faith and Endurance (11:1-12:13)**
 - A. The Faithful of the Old Covenant (11:1-40)
 - B. Appeal for Endurance (12:1-13)
- **6. Walking the Straight Paths (12:14-13:18)**
 - A. Holiness and Worship (12:14-28)
 - B. Charity, Chastity, and Contentment (13:1-6)
 - C. Submission to Leaders (13:7-19)
- **7. Doxology and Conclusion (13:20-25)**

Hebrews 1

- **Heb 1:1-4** *“In many and various ways God spoke of all to our fathers by the prophet; ... having become as much superior to Angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.”*
 - From the beginning of this letter we see a contrast between the old and the new covenants
 - This idea (repeated throughout the letter) can be seen when the author says, “in the old days God did it this way, but in the present He does it this way”
 - This should remind us of what Paul said in **Colossians 1:15** (we will hear the Pauline themes all through this letter)
- The comments on angels in **Hebrews 1** can be seen in **Philippians 2** *

Hebrews 1 (Cont)

- **Heb 1:5-14** *“For to what Angel did God ever say, Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee?... for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?”*
 - It appears that the author was facing a problem dealing with angels
 - This may be similar to the problem related to angels within the Church of Colossae based on an inordinate interest in angels, most likely due to a Gnostic influence
 - Some of the early Christian Gnostics tended to be interested in the “eons” who were angelic beings believed to move between the spiritual world and the earth to deliver messages

Hebrews 1 (Cont)

- It sounds like the author of Hebrews was trying to deal with a similar Gnostic problem
- He was attempting to clarify the concept of Jesus as an intermediary between God and man by proclaiming that His role was much different than the role of these “demi-gods” or angels moving within the *Plorma*
- He was establishing that Jesus was far superior to all of the angels *

Hebrews 2

- **Heb 2:1-6a** *“Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, ... It has been testified somewhere,”*
 - It appears that the author’s audience was in danger of falling into *apostasy*, (the abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief)
 - Father Sebastian loves the phrase *“it has been testified somewhere”* because we can always use that phrase when we cannot remember where a phrase is to be found in the Sacred Text
 - Remember, early on these texts were not divided into chapters and verses *

Hebrews 2 (Cont)

- **Heb 2:6-8** *“What is man that thou art mindful of him or the Son of Man that thou carest for him? ...we do not yet see everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.”*
 - Here the author was referring to **Psalm 8: 4-6** even though he does not remember the exact reference
 - The author of this Psalm was referring to “humanity or Israel”
 - The author of Hebrews sees that passage as a prophecy of the Incarnation and Ascension of Christ (a similar discussion can be seen in **Philippians 2**) *

Hebrews 2 (Cont)

- **Heb 2: 8b-9** *“As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”*
 - Certainly our country as a whole, and many of our “Catholic” politicians and leaders are no longer “subject to him”
 - Unfortunately, they are not operating in accordance with God’s law
 - The author of Hebrews was calling his readers (and us) to look around at the consequence of this failing to be subject to Him: violence, crime, sin and all kinds of other horrible stuff

Hebrews 2 (Cont)

- He reminded his audience that even though all were not “subject to Him”, Christ for a little while was made lower than the angels, and through His incarnation and was crowned with glory and honor because he suffered and died for everyone
- And he pointed out that Jesus’ death allowed his followers through Baptism not to face death *

Hebrews 2 (Cont)

- **Heb 2: 10- 13** *“For it was fitting that he, ...’Here am I, and the children of God has given me’”*
 - This verse sounds a lot like **Colossians 1**
 - The author, like Paul, uses the Psalms to help make his point as this is taken from **Ps 22:22** *

Hebrews 2 (Cont)

- **Heb 2: 14-18** *“Since, therefore the children share in flesh and blood, ... he is able to help those who are tempted.”*
 - The Greek word used here is *perizo* from the verb **to be tested**
 - As discussed elsewhere, a better translation of what the RSV calls “tempted” should be “tested”
 - Jesus was not “tempted” by the devil in the sense we understand being tempted such as eating too much chocolate
 - We are “tested” by God (although the Devil might “tempt” us)

Hebrews 2 (Cont)

- God is not trying to trip us up or put some sort of bait out in hopes that we will fall for something
- We often hear about Jesus' death serving as an "expiation" for the sins of the people
- The understanding of how He did this is found in Heb 2:14 where the author reminds us that Jesus became like us (in all things but sin), and that by conquering death for us we no longer have to experience (taste) death

Hebrews 2 (Cont)

- To make many of these theological points, the author of Hebrews used many metaphors
 - “Expiation” is a reference to the celebration of the Day of Atonement found in **Leviticus 16**
 - Blood was the symbol for life and it was believed to be able to clean off the death and restore life
 - The blood of the goat was like “sin cleaner”, sprinkled all over the sanctuary to remove the sins of the people
- Thus, the author of Hebrews was using this metaphor to explain the “saving power of Christ’s blood which was shed for us”

Hebrews 2 (Cont)

- Christ's blood brings us from death to life because of His resurrection from the dead which allows us to participate in His death and resurrection through baptism *

Hebrews 3

- **Heb 3: 1-6** *“Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider **Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.** **If we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope.**”*
 - The author of Hebrews was not claiming that Jesus was one of the 12 Apostles
 - Apostle in Greek (*apostolos*) means “one who is sent”
 - Jesus was sent by the Father
 - The context of this passage reflects Moses as representing the old covenant and Jesus representing the new covenant

Hebrews 3 (Cont)

- Throughout the letter the author used subjectives and conditionals “if” and “don’t do that” because he feared that members of his audience were about to fall into **apostasy**
- This understanding is supported by many commentaries on this passage *

Hebrews 3 (Cont)

- **Heb 3:7-14** *“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, when you hear his voice, ...**if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end,** ’”*
 - The author’s assertion that his audience might be about to fall away from the living God can be seen in contrast to the idea of “once saved, always saved” *

Hebrews 3 (Cont)

- He was clearly pointing out that one could be sanctified, saved, as a part of God's people, but if not careful, one could go through the wilderness, be tempted, and go astray causing one to fail to make it into the Promised Land (Heaven)
- Father Sebastian pointed out that Martin Luther was not fond of this epistle *

Hebrews 3 (Cont)

- **Heb 3:15-19** *“while it is said, ‘Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’... So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.”*
 - Again, the author called his audience back to their heritage as descendants of the Exodus who failed to attain the Promised Land due to their transgressions
 - This was a further plea against apostasy