

Intro to Second Timothy: Grace, Mercy, and Peace.

Romans 8:1-17

Romans 8: 18-39

Responsive: Psalm 125

Last week we closed out the first letter to Timothy from Paul, so I thought it made sense that we would just start this morning continuing on in the second letter. But before we dive into this letter I always like to take the first week of going into a new book to set up the history around it, I always find it interesting and I think its rather important for us to understand not just what is being said, but why, and to do that we need to understand what is going on in the world around Paul and Timothy at the time of writing this second letter.

Over the past few months, we had been going through the first letter, where as we talked about last week in a sort of broad overview of that letter Paul wrote to encourage Timothy in his ministry at Ephesus, where Paul had left him to set forth good order and sound doctrinal teaching within that church body which had fallen astray due to the rise of some false teachers among them. By the time that this second letter would have gotten to Timothy, is it believed about 4 years have passed since the first letter, So Timothy had been faithfully ministering to the people of Ephesus for quite a while now. This 2nd letter is less of the practical instruction that the first one was, since by now Timothy has been well established in that ministry there, and instead is more a letter of encouragement. The bibles that we have today which as withstood all these generations contains 3 personal letters from Paul. Most of the new testament is addressed to church bodies, but here in 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus we have personal letters written from Paul to not just some of his disciples and followers, but dear friends. And this is something that we will see in the tone of his writing especially here in this letter. In verse 2 Paul calls Timothy his beloved son.

Timothy was Paul's son in the faith, he was Paul's understudy throughout Paul's second and 3rd missionary journey, Timothy was taught directly by Paul, and aided Paul in the gospel ministry...and he is now ministering as the Pastor in Ephesus while Paul is now spending his time in a Roman prison awaiting execution. This was Paul's final letter that we have record of today, so it was written somewhere before Paul's death in AD 67. Nero was emperor of Rome, and was about 10 years into his reign as he increasingly became more violent and cruel. In AD 64 half of the city of Rome burnt down, there was unrest among the people, and Nero used Christians as his convenient scapegoat to blame all of Romes problems on. Paul being imprisoned in Rome, became one of the casualties of Nero's rage against Christians, and Paul was beheaded shortly after the writing of this letter. So we see Rome is in great turmoil, a failing leader who is lashing out at a group of people to save his own ego, and Paul imprisoned writing this letter of encouragement to Timothy.

This second letter to Timothy gives us a picture into Paul's own ministry, his own mindset about it, and where his heart and mind are focused. There are certain details in this letter that give it a feeling of this being a farewell letter, asking Timothy to help get some of his things in order, at the closing of this letter Paul gives an account of those who have served faithfully in this gospel ministry along side Paul, and also those who have turned against him giving Timothy a sort of, state of the global church of believers report, as I am sure Paul had been receiving letters and visitors from various other churches he helped establish around the known world who would be keeping him updated on their issues, and progress.

In this letter we get a sense as well that Paul believed that the ministry was going to only get more difficult for Timothy, with the rise of persecution now coming out of Rome, a place where though riddled with its own corruption and problems, up until this point had been relatively safe for believers. Paul had used his Roman citizenship to escape the persecution and call to death from the Jewish leaders, but now that Rome, under the leadership of Nero has begun to target Christians as well, there wasn't going to be much of a safe haven anymore, facing persecution from the Jews in Israel, and now the gentiles in Rome, this gospel ministry was one which was going to be bringing greater and greater risk for those who believed. But despite that, Paul here in this letter is seeking to encourage Timothy that it is all worth it, Paul now nearing the end of his own life and ministry, writes to Timothy in this second letter, that he has “fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith.” As Paul reminded Timothy in his first letter, all things in this world are fleeting and temporary, and it is best to have your heart and mind set upon the things above, the things eternal, to stand for the word of God, and pursuit righteousness, and share this message of hope for it is these things that truly matter in our lives. Even to the point of death as Paul was facing, for in death we are delivered, finally free from this sinful flesh, into the loving arms of our savior.

As we go through this letter, we will see a Paul who is prepared to die, challenging both Timothy and us today on how we will eventually face that reality. The final test of faith, is the handling of death, will we be wrapped up in fear of it, or resting in the one who has conquered it. As we read these words to Paul in this final letter that we have of Paul's before his death, we can see how Paul has prepared himself for that inevitable reality knowing he is coming to that end, remaining faithful, resting in the hope of what is to come, having fought the good fight, and ran the race, is looking toward the prize, As he writes to his spiritual son, to encourage him and inform him as he will be the one to pick up Paul torch and carry the light of the gospel to the people

So with all that in mind, let us go ahead and read the first 7 verses of 2nd Timothy as we begin to look at this final letter from Paul, to his beloved protege, dear friend, and fellow minister of the gospel. (READ 1-7.) In his greeting Paul identifies himself as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, this puts him in the exclusive camp along with the 12 disciples that followed Jesus. Paul called himself, one who was born out of time, to qualify as an Apostle of Jesus one must have seen and learned directly from him, which in the account of Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road we see that Paul did indeed see Christ, and learn from him. Not just this claim, but this reality is why Paul in his letters can right with the authority that he does, for as an Apostle he was chosen according to the will of God, to set forth the doctrines and foundations of the church. This role of Apostleship ended with Paul, he was the last to join that exclusive group, and the revelation we have in scripture written by the Apostles is the final revelation, if any claim a new revelation, they are false teachers and deceivers. The word of the Apostles, and the bible that we have today is given so that we may know Christ, who he was, his teachings, and so that we can see examples of true faith through the life and words of his followers.

We have all the revelation we need in this book, for to see Christ, and to know him through the account of these men is sufficient, as we are to repent and believe, and live our lives as followers of Christ, not worrying about the future, but resting in what he has done. Again that is where we see Paul in this letter, knowing his time is coming to an end, but focused upon the ministry, upon the gospel, and resting in Christ. The revelation of God is complete, we have all we need, and will have until that day he returns. The purpose and point of scripture is to point us to Christ, the one who has fulfilled the law and the prophets, taking the penalty of our sins upon himself as he died on the cross, paying that penalty so we may have eternal life in him, not being judged by our sin, but rather God sees us through the blood of the son who was sent for us, by the grace and mercy of the father who loves us.

Paul's apostleship came by way of God's appointing, he was not some self claimed apostle, it was not by his choice, but rather by God's appointing of him. And that appointment came through the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ, as I had mentioned already this morning Paul saw Jesus face to face on that road to Damascus, on his way to persecute, arrest, and potentially kill Christians, Christ intervened, and changed his life in an instant, taking him from a man who hated Jesus and his followers to the very core of his being, to being one of his very own Apostles writing a majority of the new testament, and establishing churches all across the known world at the time. There is power in God's call, a power that can not be resisted, whether that be the call into salvation, or a call into the ministry. And though we may not each be called into the formal role of pastor, or teacher, we are all called into the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To be willing and able to give an account for this hope that we have through him, living our lives as his children, being a reflection of the love and grace we have been given.

The promise of life is only found in the blood of Jesus, the promised Messiah, who has come to take away the sins of his people. Through whom our salvation is secure, and there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. Paul wrote to the Roman Church, in chapter 8 of the book of Romans, "for I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, powers nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." In this second letter to Timothy we see Paul living out this belief, as he is imprisoned, facing death, taking comfort it knowing this reality, as he says in verse 7 of that letter, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." There is rest in Christ, there is rest in the knowledge that no matter what befalls us in this life, that we as God's children are secure, with our hope not being in this world, but in the day we are called up into heaven to be with our Lord and Savior.

Verse 3 gives us a view into Paul's mindset, while imprisoned, facing inevitable death he says, "without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day." Paul's love and concern for Timothy is on full display here in this letter, it is apparent that Timothy was not just a mere disciple and understudy of Paul, but was a precious friend of whom Paul cared for dearly. I couldn't help but think reading through this, how often do we get caught up in our own situations, our own moments of suffering, and that becomes our focus, both in our thoughts and in our prayers. But Paul here, despite his situation is concerned about Timothy, prays for him, we don't see him bemoaning his own circumstance, but rather we see him rejoicing in the lord, and praying for Timothy, and rejoicing in the Lords work in Timothy's life verse 5 "When I Call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your other Eunice, and I a persuaded is in you also"

This life can be full of hardships and trials, temptations and persecutions, and we can either see our selves as victims, or as conquerors. Scripture tells us that in Christ, through all things we are more than conquerors, for by his death he has defeated death, he has defeated Satan, he has defeated hell, snatching his chosen children out of the grasp of sin and holding them in his bosom. This is who we are in Christ, sinners, forgiven, the damned, glorified, because Christ came into our lives as a bright shining light exposing our sin and darkness, crushing us under the weight of our own rebellion so that we have no other choice but to turn to him and repent. And now through all things we can rejoice, because we have been forgiven, we are considered clean, no longer the guilty, but we are the free people of God. Free from sin, free from its condemnation, free from its penalty, freely partaking of the grace and mercy that was given, and freely expressing this hope and his love through our lives.

We know that through Paul's letters and as we will see going through this letter, there have been many who have abandoned him with some even turning against him, but Timothy was a precious friend, and brother who Paul cared deeply for and desired greatly to see. Verse 4, "greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy." Paul understood the hardship that Timothy was dealing with in Ephesus, and he understood how difficult it probably would have been for Timothy to leave, and make the journey to where Paul was imprisoned, but Paul desired to see Timothy, and he said such a visit would bring him great joy. One of the ways that God works in our lives is through our brothers and sisters in Christ, Timothy's faith was a great encouragement to Paul, having lost other friends and followers who had turned away, it is a great encouragement to have that friend, or friends who will stick by you no matter the circumstance. Paul was imprisoned, facing the death penalty, a very fate that he inflicted upon many followers of Christ before his conversion, and he desired the fellowship of his close friend, and brother.

Through hardships and trials, God can bring us avenues of joy and peace, especially through the ministry of fellow believers. In the intro in both of these letters that Paul wrote to Timothy he writes, "Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." This is the only 2 places in scripture with this greeting, In other greetings Paul writes, Grace and Peace, but here he calls and prays for mercy knowing Timothy's trials, and hardships, and likely as we see in this letter, knowing that standing as a Christian in the world will become increasingly difficult, and we see that today even as well, so there is a prayer there for mercy and protection for Timothy as he pursues Christ through the gospel ministry. Our God is a God of grace, he is a God of mercy, and a God of peace, in whom we can rest and rejoice in. As we travel through our life, there are many circumstances and instances where we don't see, or know what God is doing, or why he is doing these things, but throughout scripture he tells us, what the world meant for evil, God meant for good, and that through great tribulation comes great blessings, and I believe that those blessings sometimes may not even be meant for us, by that I mean through trials of faith, as we stand strong in Christ against the odds, singing his praises, and worshipping him, we become an enigma to those around us, as Jobs wife told him, you are suffering so much just curse God and die.

This is the response of the world when things get tough, but we as God's children, have his grace, his mercy, and his peace operating within us through the ministry of the holy spirit, so that through whatever befalls us in this life we can stand strong in our faith, trusting in God, that his will, and purpose is perfect. So Paul says in verse 6 to Timothy, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and of a sound mind. We are not to be ashamed of what God has done, and what he is doing in our lives, we are to faithfully live trusting, hoping, and believing upon him. As we read this morning in Romans 8, "He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." In Christ there is hope when we are hopeless, there is security when we are afraid, and there are blessings when we feel that we are cursed. This hope, this grace, this mercy, this peace is only found in him, may God be pleased to deliver us this supernatural peace and hope this morning, and if you are listening to this....the call goes out, to repent and believe and follow him, the only one who can deliver you from your sin, who says, his burden is light, he did not say this because this Christian life is easier, but because he helps us to bear the burdens of it. Let us look to him in all things, let us rest in him in all things, knowing, and believing, and hoping that through it all he is working his perfect and holy purpose and plan in our lives. May we, like Paul rejoice in Christ, may we find our joy in him, and may we rest in him, having the hope of his ultimate grace, mercy, and peace toward us.