Faithfulness in Troubling Times

The Rock

September 18, 2022

**These are my preaching notes, posted online due to a shortened message resulting from a medical emergency among the congregation**

I Introduction

* Source important to establish authority and validity
  + People will try anything
    - It used to be seen (and to some degree still is) that scams came at us in letters, and my dad was almost tricked into giving away thousands of dollars that way; as a result, he became hypersensitive to those ploys and began annotating the date junk mail was received before he shredded it and my mom continued that practice until she died (paperwork, paperwork, paperwork)
    - Sometimes, these scammers presented themselves as representatives of some organization (or even government agencies) in phone calls, warning the recipient of the call that if they did not pay them a certain amount (usually by providing bank account or credit card information, negative effects would result)
    - Today, text messages are often the weapon of choice for scammers, as one I recently received
    - The text indicated there was a debit request for $5356.23 from Trader Joe’s Grocery Store and it urges me to click on a link to confirm or cancel – Strike 1: Trader Joe’s® uses that name, not Trader Joe’s Grocery Store
    - That link was not associated with my credit union – Strike 2
    - Nice try – I have checked with the credit union before and they NEVER send out text alerts like that; if they suspect fraud, they would call me, which they did on one occasion – Strike 3
    - Taking it at face value would have had serious negative effects
    - Times and methods for scammers change, but the one thing that never changes is that you have to know and trust your sources
    - Upon further examination, it is clear that the people sending the communication neither have any authority to do what they threaten/promise nor are their methods valid
* First in a series on 2 Timothy; message and series titles the same
* Much less a message on doctrine than establishing the study of the book
* If it’s not worth studying, why study it?
* Topics to consider when studying any book of the Bible
  + Author
  + Historical background
  + Audience
  + Purpose
* Understanding these is key to understanding the author’s intent and how to apply
  + As a part of the accepted canon of Scripture, not so much an issue
  + However, there are detractors so we will deal with their issues
* Historical background insightful to other areas such as the purpose
  + Writings after a tragedy often call for reforms to prevent another
* Knowing the audience can explain tone and message
  + Writing a scientific/educational paper much different than a personal one
* Understanding the purpose essential to grasping original message
  + Was the purpose to persuade? Encourage? Correct? Instruct?
* One of three epistles (letters) referred to as pastoral epistles
* Pastorals written to Timothy and Titus, Paul’s co-laborers in ministry
* We will look at details, but 2 Timothy is, in a sense, Paul’s last will and testament, his last inspired letter, a written legacy for ministry passed on to his son in the faith, Timothy
* Let’s begin with the authorship, or source, of the letter

II Authorship (Source of the Letter) and Historical Background

* ***2 Timothy 1:1: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus***
* Nearly universally accepted as Paul
  + Formerly Saul (Ac 13:9) of Tarsus
  + Witnessed and agreed with the stoning of Stephen (Ac 7:58, 8:1)
  + Most aggressive persecutor of the Church (Ac 8:3; 1 Co 15:9; Php 3:6; 1 Ti 1:13)
  + Requested to be sent to Damascus to chase believers (Ac 9:1-2)
  + Traveled the first-century world on three missionary journeys (Ac 13-28)
  + Widely believed he was executed for his faith during the reign of Nero (c. A.D. 67)
* Some claim the pastorals were pseudepigraphas, letters with false claims of authorship
* Four main arguments against Pauline authorship
  + History
  + Vocabulary
  + Polity
  + Doctrine
* Issues of the detractors from Pauline authorship addressed
  + History
    - Pastorals contain historical references that do not match Acts – understandable if there were two imprisonments, which it seems there clearly were
      * Living conditions
        + 1st: ***Acts 28:30, “He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him”*** – rented house with visitors
        + 2nd: in chains (***2 Timothy 1:16, “May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains”***) and deserted (***2 Ti 4:16, “At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!”***)
      * Charges leveled
        + 1st: Crimes against the Jews
        + 2nd: Crimes against the Roman Empire
      * Outlook for Release
        + 1st: ***Philemon 22, “At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.”*** – optimistic
        + 2nd: ***2 Timothy 4:6, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.”*** – anticipated execution
  + Vocabulary
    - Most common argument, but also the most easily explained
    - Words/groups of words common in other letters absent in these three
    - Words/groups of words not found in others found in these three
    - The pastorals contain more Latin words than other letters
    - Two-fold explanation
      * Colleague vs. Outsider
        + Regardless of field, correspondence with colleagues differs from that to those outside your field

*Example – discussing nuclear power*

* + - * + Of the ten non-pastorals, only Philemon is not to a group of believers at a local church to outline/reinforce doctrine
      * Time in Rome – vernacular (Latin) expanded
        + *Example – use of “y’all” after I lived in VA for a while*
  + Polity
    - Local church organizational structure in pastorals differs from other letters
      * Ignores ***Acts 14:23 - “And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”*** and ***Philippians 1:1 - “Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:”***
        + *Example – arguing against founding fathers’ drafting of the Constitution based on non-existence of three-branch government in 1787*
  + Doctrine
    - Nine of Paul’s other 10 letters are theologically-rich
      * Philemon written to a friend to ask forgiveness for another friend
      * Once again, recipients are the key
      * Pastorals outline structure and operation of a local church and exhort fellow workers
      * Examples of Doctrine Covered in the Pastorals
        + Deity of Christ – ***Titus 2:13 - “…waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,”***
        + Christ’s work on our behalf – ***1 Timothy 2:5-6 - “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”; Titus 2:14 - “who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”***
        + Election of the saints – ***2 Timothy 1:9 - “who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began”; Titus 1:1-2 – “Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, 2in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began”***
        + Inspiration of Scripture – ***2 Timothy 3:16-17 - “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”***
  + Bottom line
    - Evidence of Pauline authorship of pastorals is overwhelming
    - Early Church accepted them as such
* To put them in perspective with timing of Paul’s other letters…
  + During journeys: Ro, 1 & 2 Co, Ga and 1 & 2 Th
  + During 1st imprisonment: Ep, Php, Co and Phm (prison epistles)
  + Between imprisonments: 1 Ti and Titus; during 2nd imprisonment: 2 Ti
* Now, we look at the addressee of the letter, Timothy

III Audience (Recipient of the Letter)

* Timothy, a young man from Lystra, in the region of Galatia (modern-day Turkey) (Ac 16:1)
* Timothy ≡ “Dear to God” or “One who honors God”
* Likely converted under Paul’s ministry during Paul’s first journey (Ac 14) since he took Timothy with him on his second journey (Ac 16:3)
* Replacement for John Mark? (Ac 13:13, 15:39-40)
* Will see more in coming weeks, but Timothy was:
  + Born to a Jewish Christian mother and Greek father (Ac 16:1)
  + Raised on OT Scriptures (2 Ti 3:15)
  + Known as a godly man, even at a young age (Ac 16:2)
  + Paul’s personal emissary to several churches (1 Co 4:17; Php 2:19; 1 Th 3:2)
  + Serving as pastor in Ephesus at the time of this letter (installed by Paul - 1 Ti 1:3)
  + Imprisoned himself at least once (He 13:23)
  + Wanted in Rome by his mentor (2 Ti 4:9) as his life was likely nearing its end
* Paul was likely a man of meager means (2 Ti 4:13), but he desired to pass on his greatest possession, his mantle of ministry (though not his apostleship), to Timothy (As Elijah to Elisha in 2 Ki 2)
* Now that we know to whom the letter was written, let us examine the letter itself

IV Purpose (Tone and Flavor of the Letter)

* As stated earlier, Paul believed he faced imminent execution
* While remaining steadfast (***2 Timothy 4:7 - “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”***), Paul did write with a sense of urgency
  + *Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord* (1:8)
  + *Retain the standard of sound words* (1:13)
  + *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead* (2:8)
  + *Solemnly charge them in the presence of God* (2:14)
  + *But realize this* (3:1)
  + *I solemnly charge you* (4:1)
  + *Make every effort to come to me soon* (4:9)
* These four chapters are packed with instructions on how to continue the ministry
* Timothy is:
  + reminded of truths he knows
  + warned of dangers to faithful believers
  + warned of people who oppose faithful believers
  + given examples of Paul’s experiences (favorable and unfavorable)
  + directed to faithfully preach the Word
  + emboldened to stand strong
  + encouraged to follow in Paul’s footsteps through persecution and suffering
* Through it all, Paul exhorts Timothy to remain faithful as the Lord is faithful
* While the Worship Team comes up, let’s look at where we go from here

V Conclusion (Looking Ahead)

* With the motivation for studying the book established, we can now move on to do that
* Until the Lord brings our new pastor to The Rock we will look at each verse of the book on the first and third Sundays of each month
* Four major themes roughly follow the four chapters:
  + Faithfulness in Testimony
  + Faithfulness in Toil
  + Faithfulness in Trials
  + Faithfulness in Teaching
* Encouraged to read to prepare for each message
  + The entire book in one sitting at least once
  + The whole chapter containing each message’s passage
* Next message in the series: October 2, 2022: Motivated to Faithfulness - 2 Timothy 1:1-7

**BENEDICTION – 1 Th 5:23-24: *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved completely, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He Who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.***