

July 20 , 2019

Adult Sunday School Class

Objective: Provide some insight into Paul's circumstances as a background for better understanding this letter to Timothy and note the way he modeled his primary advice to remain faithful in chapter 1.

Opening Prayer: Father, I thank you that you hear me. That you never leave me or forsake me and that you are an ever present help. I ask for your special anointing on this lesson plan and the time that we will spend together studying your word and your ways. Bless both speaker and listener. Open our hearts to receive a fresh revelation from your Spirit. I bind forces that would hinder and welcome you as our teacher today. In Jesus name!

Read: II Timothy 1:1-18 & 4:6-22

Q – When was this letter written? - Most likely in the late summer or fall of AD 67.

Q – Where are we in the calendar of Paul's life?

- Very near the end.
- It would be more appropriate to measure his life in terms of days or months, certainly not in years.

Q – Where is Paul at the time of this writing?

- In prison in Rome.
- He is being housed in the infamous Mamertine prison.

Q – What was the primary use of the Mamertine prison in AD 67?

- It was used to house prisoners waiting trial or execution for capitol offenses.
- It was not used to incarcerate people for long periods of time (years).

Q – What do we know about incarcerations for longer periods of time in first century Rome?

- There were two types of long term incarceration, house arrest and forced labor.
 - House arrest meant being chained to a Roman soldier or being confined in the home of a dignitary pretty much as a slave.
 - Those assigned to forced labor were typically assigned to live and work in a mine, quarry or similar industry.
 - They were treated as slaves, frequently chained to their work or place of residence.
 - It was not uncommon for the prisoner to never leave the mine or see the light of day again.

Q – What do we know about the conditions under which the prisoners were held at Mamertine?

- This prison had two levels, neither of which would satisfy the basic standards of prisons today.
- It was built into the side of a hill and a major portion of it was underground.
- The lower level was completely underground with a ceiling height of ~12' and no access to daylight.
- The only way for people to enter the lower level was through a hole in the floor above.
- Prisoners were lowered through the hole and tethered there with chains.
- Depending on their crimes their chains could be very short or long enough for some movements.
- If they were executed on the lower level their bodies were frequently disposed of through an access hole to the sewer system which ran under the structure.
- It was cold and damp, the stench was horrific and living conditions deplorable.

Q – Why would the Apostle Paul find himself in a prison primarily reserved for those accused of capitol offenses? - We do not know the specific charges against Paul however a reasonable assumption would be a charge of treason?

Q – Why treason? Wasn't Paul an advocate of submitting to those in government with authority over the citizenship?

- While we do not know the specifics of the charge(s) that were brought against Paul, we do know that Nero was the emperor of Rome at the time.
- Nero and his supporters asserted that he was God.
- Anyone who said he was not God was therefore making statements consider to be treasonous.

Q – How do you believe Paul would have responded if someone were to attempt to force him to publicly agree that Nero was in fact God?

- I believe he would have vehemently denied their assertion.
- Which of course would have resulted in his committing an act of treason.

Q – Why do you envision he makes reference to his first trial?

- We don't know for sure but I surmise he was brought to trial on an initial charge.
- Either during that trial or perhaps prior to that trial additional charges were leveled against him for which a second trial was ordered.

Q – How long was Paul housed at Mamertine? - The things I've read indicate 6 – 9 month

Q – If this was a “holding cell” prior to trial or execution why would it take 6 – 9 months to complete the preliminary activities.

- There were no required pretrial schedules.
- If the accusers were from out of town the distance would have been a significant factor.
- In addition, at times they held prisoners for a “cooling off” period to allow any emotional resistance to die down prior to taking further action.

Q – Can we reasonably assume from what we've read in his letter and what we know in general about about Mamertine that he knew at the time he was writing to Timothy that he was more than likely going to be executed? - I believe we can.

Q – What have we read that would cause one to believe he had visions of continuing some form of ministry to others, at least for some period of time?

- His request for Mark, who he referenced as being helpful to him in his ministry.
- His request for his scrolls.

Q – If you knew you only had a few months to live what would be on your “bucket list” (things you would want to complete before exiting this life)?

- I would certainly want to spend as much time as possible with my loved ones and reinforce any advice previously given.
- I'd want to say good by in person if at all possible and hug them as long and as often as I could.

Q – What do you think your demeanor would be, if you found yourself in that situation?

- Most likely melancholy or sad.
- However you would try to be upbeat to minimize the impact to your loved ones.

Q – From what we've read so far, what demeanor is Paul projecting?

- I believe he is feeling the weight of his pending trial and most likely execution.

- At the same time, he is doing his best to not let his situation have an adverse impact on one of his last opportunities to prepare Timothy for effective ministry.

Q – Why does God allow these kinds of situations to exist?

- There is a constant spiritual struggle going on in the world in which we live.
- Forces of good (God) and evil (satan) are arrayed against each other.
- We are the target, the struggle is for the souls of mankind.
- Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces in the heavenly realms.
- God has set a predetermined time and conditions to end it but we're not there yet.
- He has asked us, like Job, to trust Him to see us thru,.
- He will never leave us or forsake us and is an ever present help in time of trouble.
- Have faith in God Paul, there are much bigger issues at stake!

Q – Now that the stage is set to begin understanding the multifaceted messages in this letter, tell me how Paul recalls Timothy?

- He remembers him in tears.
- Perhaps when Paul and Timothy parted the last time or perhaps he could be recalling a tenderhearted young minister of the gospel, his spiritual son, Timothy.

Q – What feelings did Paul's recollections of Timothy produce?

- He longed to see him so he would be filled with joy.
- A joy that would allow him to escape, at least for a short while, the misery of his current situation.

Q – How did Paul communicate one of the most important messages in chapter 1?

- He modeled it. In one of the most difficult environments imaginable.
- He continued to demonstrate his own faithfulness to the gospel both in word and deed.

Q – How did Paul describe the heritage of Timothy's faith? - First seen in your grandmother, then you mother and now it lives in you.

Q – Is there something like a genetic link in families as it relates to spiritual things?

- It's not biological or genetic in that sense.
- However attitudes and openness to spiritual forces are passed on from generation to generation.
- Spiritual traits, both for good or evil can be passed on to subsequent generations.

Q – I've always been impressed with Billy Graham's ability to handle irreverence and tough questions in a way I'd expect Jesus to in similar situations. Did you hear how his daughter answered a reporters question of “where was God” during a school tragedy a few years ago?

- In essence, she said our society refuses to allow God in our schools, so why would you ask that question?
- To quote an old proverb, “The apples don't fall from from the tree.” She sounds just like her father.

Q – What attributes of the faith are we passing on to subsequent generations? -God help us to be faithful, particularly in the difficult times.

Q – How did he describe the faith of Timothy, his mother and grandmother? - Sincere.

Q – What does the word sincere mean? - Genuine, pure, real, free of deceit, hypocrisy or falseness, earnest.

Q – Can someone give me an example of pure faith and a couple of less than pure faith?

- Acts 3:1-10 – Peter and John walking into the temple, healing the man cripple from birth.
- Mark 9:14-29 – The man with the demon possessed son, “I believe, help now my unbelief”.

- Matt 11:1,2 – John the Baptist in prison asking “Is Jesus the one or should we look for another?”

Q – How pure is the faith that we are passing on to our children and grandchildren? - Again, God help us to possess genuine faith and be sincere, free of deceit in the values we pass on to our children.

Q – How did Paul describe the pattern of sound teaching for Timothy in this letter? - II Timothy 1:

- 13) What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.
- 14) Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Q – Who can give me some examples of the elements of sound teaching or as Paul would say, “the faith”, that we want to be sure to pass on to subsequent generations?

- In the beginning God created the heavens, earth and all it's inhabitants.
- God is love and always God is love.
- He is the same yesterday, today and forever.
- He is our loving heavenly father.
- He cares and takes care of us.
- He is always with us, He never leaves us or forsakes us and is an ever-present help.
- He hears us when we pray and He answers prayer.
- He has made provision for our sin and the sins of all of mankind.
- He's the healer, by His stripes we were healed.
- “This same Jesus that you see being taken up into heaven will come again in like manner.”
- If I go away, I'll come again so that where I am, there you may be also.

Q – What are some of the ways that we pass these elements of the faith on to subsequent generations?

- Modeled behaviors. Do we display the peace of God in the midst of the storms of our lives?
- Priorities.
 - What consumes us?
 - What occupies the highest places in our daily schedules?
- What's on our prayer list?
 - What do you say when you're alone with God?
 - Is it consistent with demonstrated priorities?
 - Nothing we say or do is a surprise to Him.
- How important is the word of God in our daily thought process?
- How much room in our lives has been allocated to God and the things of God?

Q – What do you believe are the strongest indicators of a person's priorities?

- Where and how they spend their time, energy and money.

Q – Now for the “guilt” questions.

- What have we been passing on to the next generation?
- What life priorities do we have on display?
- What values are reflected in our attitudes and behaviors?
- Are the priorities we display consistent with those we verbalize?
- Are we being honest in our evaluation of displayed values and demonstrated priorities?
- Help in these areas is available by making it a matter of daily prayer and reflection.

Q – How was the gift of God Paul speaks about acquired by Timothy? - Through the laying on of hands.

Q – Who's hands? - Paul's

Q – What kinds of things are accomplished by the laying on of hands?

- Healing
- Baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- Dedications.

Q – Why touching or laying on of hands?

- This process is mentioned in scripture and was modeled by Jesus and His apostles.
- It provides a point of contact and a physical demonstration of faith.

Q – Why would Paul admonish Timothy to fan into flames the gift given to him through the laying on of Paul's hands? Do you believe he was concerned the flame was going out?

- I doubt that.
- Rather I believe he was saying keep up or maintain the intensity of your gift and callings.

Q – Is it common for people's faith, spiritual gifts and callings to change over time? - It is, they can either grow stronger or weaker depending on the environment they are subjected to.

Q – What causes faith and spiritual gifts to get weaker?

- Lack of use.
- Diminished priority.
- Cares of this world, deceitfulness of riches and desire for other things.
- Misunderstanding the source of difficult times, tribulations and hard dry places.

Q – What causes faith and spiritual gifts to get stronger?

- Use.
- Regular time alone with the Lord in prayer and worship.
- Regular time in the word.
- Listening for the voice of His Spirit and following His leading.

Q – What were Paul's options for the construction of this letter to Timothy?

- He could have focused on his personal discomfort and the injustice of his situation.
- Or he could focus on “whom he had believed” and what that meant in his personal situation and for those in his spiritual family.

Q – What were Paul's expectations of “whom he had believed”?

- I know whom I have believed,
- I'm convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

Q – Are “Mamertine” experiences unique to people like Paul or those in positions of spiritual leadership? - No. difficult times can come to all of us.

Q – How does one prepare for such an experience? - Like Paul, we need to learn to focus on and completely trust the “whom” we have believed.