

The Old Testament and the Gospel

II Timothy 3:14-17

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by Shafer Parker, Jr.
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Intro.

We have a baptism in the second service, so I decided to interrupt the series on covenants for one Sunday. I won't have as much time to preach in the second service, which means if I were to preach the next sermon in the covenant series today (the covenant with Noah), then us first service people would be ahead of the second service people, and I do hope to move both congregations along at about the same speed.

So today is a change of pace. I do want to talk to you about the gospel as presented in the Old Testament. But more than anything, I hope to help you fall in love with the idea that the whole Bible, contains one central message—all the way from Genesis to Revelation—and that that message is summed up by Peter as he stood before the Jewish leadership, mere months after our Lord's resurrection.

Acts 4:11 “This Jesus is **the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone** (Ps. 118:22). 12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people, and we must be saved by it.”

Let's start with a text from II Timothy. As we get ready to read it, let me remind you that this is almost certainly Paul's last epistle. He was in jail with a death sentence from emperor Nero coming down on him, and he was ready to go be with his Lord. Today's text is from chapter three, but it comes just before chapter 4 where Paul confesses that his life is “being poured out like a drink offering” and “the time of [his] departure is very close” (4:6). Perhaps this adds a little urgency to our text as we consider these are the last words of this godly apostle.

Today's Text

II Tim. 3:10 But you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance, 11 along with the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from them all. 12 In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, 15 and you know that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Heritage counts

As Paul says goodbye to Timothy, he is conscious that his life and ministry are ending and that Timothy and others have to take over his kingdom responsibilities. Notice, then, how Paul's mind works.

- He remembers their long association and that he had been a mentor to Timothy.
- Paul could say with confidence that Timothy had observed some outstanding characteristics in his life: sound Biblical teaching, Christ-like conduct, a kingdom focus and purpose, never-ending faith, extraordinary patience, deep love, and unending endurance. God grant that every Christian should be mentored by such a man or woman.
- Then Paul reminds Timothy that his faith, patience and endurance had been more than theoretical. These attributes were displayed in a time of extraordinary persecution, including stoning, all in Timothy's home district of Derbe and Lystra (Acts 14).
- Paul did not drag up these horrible moments in his life to complain. Quite the opposite. He used them as the opportunity to say, "The Lord rescued me from them all!"
- Two contrasting statements that should jump off the page.
 - "All those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."
 - "The Lord rescued me from them all."

This is the burden and the triumph of the Christian life. It is never easy to be a Christian, and as you know the Christian life is getting increasingly difficult for Canadians. This is not a prophecy about the future, it is a present day fact.

- In Alberta the present government is attempting to shut down Christian schools, and in another case a Christian school has been told not to teach or even read certain passages from the Bible because they are deemed offensive to the tender ears of unbelievers.
- In Ontario they are actively taking away parent's rights to raise children according to their own convictions. For example, a man named Steve Tourloukis has been fighting for seven years to gain the right to be notified before the public school teaches his children about moral issues, including sexual matters, but also abortion, the occult, and cultural relativism.

Listen carefully. From a New Testament perspective, this is not surprising; rather it is expected. Let me say it again; in the New Testament, persecution is the expected burden of the Christian life. "Those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." However, if we believe and live boldly like Paul, we will triumph in his declaration, "The Lord rescued me from them all!"

Two principles from this passage

There are two principles in this passage that I pray you don't miss. First, the more we enter into Paul's life, the more we can understand and believe for ourselves that the Lord will rescue all His children from every form of persecution.

But there's a larger principle here. The more we enter into the lives of all the Christian heroes, the more we will be strengthened to stand for Jesus through every form of persecution.

By knowing what God has done for others, we can also know that one way or another our Saviour and Lord—Jesus the Messiah—will deliver us from every form of persecution! And he will always do it in a way that brings Him the most glory and us the greatest reward. This is part of what Jesus meant when he told us not to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth, but to lay them up in heaven (Mat. 6:19-21).

How to enter into the lives of the saints

Now I hope you are thinking ahead as I speak of entering into the lives of Christian heroes. I hope you are asking, “How do I do that?” Here’s how Paul speaks to this question. By using himself and Timothy’s family, people he knew well, he is indicating that we have to enter into the lives of Christian heroes *knowledgeably* (we have to know who they are and how they lived), *lovingly* (we have to appreciate the sacrifices they made and the discipline they displayed, we have to be in sympathy with them), *spiritually* (we have to have the same Holy Spirit guiding us, calling us, at work in us, transforming us), and *experientially* (we have to imitate their actions, at least a little bit).

And for those godly heroes whom we only know through Scripture or biography, we must enter into their lives *imaginatively* (with the Holy Spirit’s help think deeply enough about their situation that we are mentally in their shoes).

This is exactly what Paul is teaching Timothy.

- First he reminds Timothy of the Christian heroes found in his own family, his mother and his grandmother. He’s already mentioned them by name back in chapter 1 of this letter—Lois and Eunice. Now he refers to them again as “those who taught you” (v.14). And about them he says to Timothy, “Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed.” Of course Paul was talking about those things Timothy had learned from himself, as well as from his mother and grandmother.

Why is it important to God to surround us with His faith heroes? He intends for us to see what a godly life looks like in real life. Timothy knew that Paul was no plastic saint. He’d seen Paul wrestle in prayer for the souls of men, and then speak boldly to them in the synagogues and in the market places. He’d also seen Paul bleed from wounds of every kind, his skin cut by the lash, his body bruised by the stocks. He’d even seen him stoned and left for dead. But he also knew that was not the end of the story. Timothy had seen Paul rise from the dead, in a manner of speaking, and then get up and forgive those who hurt him. From Paul, as well as his own female relatives, Timothy had seen love in action, as well as faith, patience and endurance.

Dear friends, there’s a reason why God surrounds us with godly people. They are the teachers God has assigned to us, and we are expected to learn from them.

So I say again, to succeed in the Christian life we need to *continue* (II Tim. 3:14) with what we have received from those godly men and women who came before us—not just from our parents, or just from Paul, but from all of them.

But more than anything else, we need to have the same view of God's Word that faith heroes have always had.

Do you see verse 15 in our text? In saying goodbye to Timothy Paul reminds him of three facts that together will serve as the foundation for a lifetime of victorious Christian living.

1. Timothy has had a lifelong knowledge of "the sacred Scriptures." And
2. It is the Scriptures that "are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."
3. Those "Scriptures" to which Paul refers are, collectively, the Old Testament.

How do we know that? Because no other testament existed when Timothy was a child. The New Testament had yet to be written. So notice again what Paul is affirming. He says that the Old Testament is (1) filled with gospel truth, the kind normally thought of as belonging to the New Testament alone, and (2) that the gospel is so clear in the Old Testament Scriptures that for Timothy the OT had given him "the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus" (NLT).

Paul is merely echoing Christ

In saying these things in support of the Old Testament, Paul is merely echoing Christ.

For instance, Jesus saw Himself as the fulfilment of OT prophecy, including His suffering, death and resurrection.

Luke 24:25 He said to them, "How unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Didn't the Messiah have to suffer these things and enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted for them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

More importantly, Jesus did not only see Himself fulfilling OT prophecy in the sense of merely being in the right place at the right time (born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem, crucified, etc.). *He saw Himself as the spiritual fulfilment of all the promises God made to the world regarding redemption and salvation.*

John 5:39 (speaking to Jewish leaders) You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, *yet they testify about Me.* 40 And you are not willing to come to Me so that you may have life.

John 7:37 On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! 38 The one who believes in Me, *as the Scripture has said,* will have streams of living water flow from deep within him." 39 He said this about the Spirit. (see Isaiah 55:1; 58:11, Joel 3:18)

In this vein, Jesus saw Himself as fulfilling in Himself all that mankind had failed to do in their walk with God.

Mt. 5:17 “Don’t assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For I assure you: Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all things are accomplished.

Conclusion

Dear Friends, it is no exaggeration to say that God was thinking of the gospel before He did anything at all, including the creation of the heavens and the earth. The entire history of the Old Testament (and by that I mean the history of the world) has been shaped and organized by the God who from before the beginning had planned a world in which His Son could gather for Himself a bride made up of the men and women redeemed with His own precious blood. This is truth that we simply cannot know without the Old Testament, not, at least, the fullness of it, the world encompassing nature of it. This is why I say the OT is at least as full of the gospel as the better known New Testament.

If all of history is about the gospel, then we are out of step if our lives are not also focussed on the gospel.