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I. The Pastoral Epistles

- The three letters of Paul addressed to Timothy and Titus have been referred to as the Pastoral Epistles since the 18th century.[1] The grouping is pretty natural given the overlap and similarities and themes of the three letters.
- **Authorship.** The authorship of all three letters is debated by scholars. All three begin with a greeting that identifies Paul as the author of each letter. However, the majority of scholars doubt Paul is the author on literary, historical, and theological grounds. For example, the Pastoral epistles "share a common Greek vocabulary which diverges in many ways from the rest of the Pauline epistles." [2] On the other hand, the differences in vocabulary could be explained by Paul's use of scribes to produce his letters.
- Is possible non-Pauline authorship a big deal? I tend to think it is not. I like Robert A. Wild's reflections on the issue of authorship:

Although written by someone else under Paul's name, the Pastorals are not "forgeries." Within the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition, the writing of pseudonymous epistles was a long standing tradition. In such cases the writer sought to extend the thought of his or her intellectual master to problems of a later day. The writer said in effect, "The master would have surely have said this if faced with this set of problems or issues." It is quite likely that the original readers of the Pastorals knew very well that Paul himself was not the "actual" author and that the letters represented an effort to extend his heritage to a later generation.[3]

- **Date Written.** A wide range of possible dates have been proposed: 60 to 160. If Paul wrote the letter then the letter would have been written in the 60s. If Paul is not the author then a date around 100 seems reasonable.[4]
- In today's lesson, we will focus on the most personal of the three letters: 2 Timothy.

II. Rekindle the Divine Gift

- Read 2 Timothy 1:2-7:

(2) To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (3) I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have

remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; (4) Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; (5) When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. (6) Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. (7) For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

- *What gift does Paul want to stir up in Timothy? Is it Faith? Why does Paul mention the putting on (or laying on) of hands?*
- *Why does Paul mention the faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother? Do you think Paul mentions them as part of his point in verse 6 about stirring up the gift of God? Does Paul want to emphasize a chain of faith or chain of tradition? Is this a theme of the Pastoral epistles?*
- *Is it important that Paul mentions the faith of his forefathers?*
- *Why does Paul mention that God has not given a spirit of fear but of power and love and of a sound mind? How is that verse related to the command to stir or rekindle the gift of God?*
- *Does Romans 8:15–17 help us understand verse 7 better? Does it help us understand what "gift" Paul wants rekindled?*

(15) For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: (17) And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

- *What do you think it means that God gives a "sound mind?" The Greek is translated as "self-discipline" in most modern translations (see for example, the NRSV and NIV). Does that difference affect how you understand verse 7?*
- *Doesn't it seem unlikely that Timothy's grandmother was a Christian? Is that a reasonable inference? Why isn't Timothy's father and grandfather mentioned?*

(1) Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: (2) Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. (3) Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a

III. Power and Suffering

- Read 2 Timothy 1:8-12:

(8) Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; (9) Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: (11) Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. (12) For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. (13) Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. (14) That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

- Paul seems to draw on or use language that is similar to Romans 1. Once again, it is important to keep in mind what "ashamed" means or implies in this context:

This somewhat surprising expression has little to do with moral disgrace or with personal pride. In the Septuagint (LXX), "to be put to shame" is to have the hope or expectation disappointed, a confidence proven to be misplaced.[5]

- *Why emphasize afflictions? Why is suffering and not being ashamed linked together in these verses?*
- *Paul refers to himself as a prisoner in these verses? Why? Is the usage ironic in some sense?*
- *What does it mean to hold fast to the "form of sound words?"*
- *What is the "good thing that was committed unto thee?" What is Paul referring to? Is it related to verse 11? Could the good thing be the responsibility or calling to teach and preach the gospel (to preach sound words)?*

IV. Three Metaphors

- Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7:

(1) Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. (2) And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (3) Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (4) No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. (5) And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. (6) The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. (7) Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

I think a modern translation is helpful for these verses:

(1) You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; (2) and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. (3) Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (4) No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. (5) And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. (6) It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. (7) Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things. (NRSV)

- *What does it mean to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus?*
- *Why does Paul use the metaphor of a soldier? What is verse 4 about? Why emphasize not getting entangled in every day affairs? How does this apply to Timothy? Do you think it applies to us in anyway?*
- *What do all three metaphors have in common?*
- *Do these verses give more insight into Paul's view of teaching and watching over a congregation?*
- *Do you think it is important that Paul doesn't give Timothy the meaning of the metaphors but instead tells him to think about them?*

V. A Faithful Saying

- Read 2 Timothy 2:8–13:

(8) Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: (9) Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. (10) Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. (11) It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: (12) If we

suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:
(13) If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

- *Do you think verse 11–13 might be a hymn? Do you see a poetic structure?*
- *How is faithful used in these verse? What is meant by a "faithful saying?"*

V. Unlearned Questions

- Read 2 Timothy 2:22–26:

(22) Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (23) But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. (24) And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, (25) In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; (26) And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

- *What is a foolish and unlearned question? Why should we avoid foolish and unlearned questions? Aren't all questions good? Can you think of an example? How do they cause strife?*
- *Is Timothy supposed to avoid asking foolish and unlearned questions or answering those questions? Does it matter? Is this advice unique or particular to someone in Timothy's position?*
- *What is the goal of teaching and instructing?*
- *What does it mean to "recover themselves?"*

Endnotes

1. Coogan, Michael D. (Editor), 2001, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Oxford University Press, 349.
2. Coogan, Michael D. (Editor), 2001, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Oxford University Press, 349.
3. Brown, Raymond E. (editor), Joseph A. Fitzmyer (editor), and Roland E. Murphy (editor), 1990, *The New Jerome Bible Commentary*, Prentice Hall, 892.
4. Brown, Raymond E. (editor), Joseph A. Fitzmyer (editor), and Roland E. Murphy (editor), 1990, *The New Jerome Bible Commentary*, Prentice Hall, 893.

5. Barton, John, and John Muddiman (Editors), 2001, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 1084.