

Timothy Our Brother

Col. 1:1-4

(Heb. 13:22-25) ²² But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³ Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you. ²⁴ Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you. ²⁵ Grace be with you all.

Since we just completed 27 weeks going through the letter to the Hebrews, I thought we would begin our new series today, where we left off in Hebrews 2 weeks ago.

Our sermon today is entitled “Timothy Our Brother” and

... the mention of Timothy in the final sentences of the letter to the Hebrews not only connects this letter to Paul and Luke,

... but it also indicates that Timothy was known throughout the Christian world in the first century.

Today as we begin our study of the letter to the Colossians we begin with the opening Salutation.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. (Col. 1:1-2)

Pray

Pay attention to the pronoun Paul uses to describe Timothy.

1. Timothy OUR brother by God’s will.

Throughout the New Testament Epistles, as well as the book of Acts we encounter this man Timothy over and over again.

... in fact, Paul writes 2 letters to him.

And as you read through the New Testament it quickly becomes obvious that Timothy is one of Paul's most trusted and valuable friends ...

... this is a relationship that spans some 20 years

... that length of time testifies to deep personal connection that existed between Timothy and Paul.

I once heard it said that “the surest proof of a success is a successor” and if that statement is true Timothy was that “proof” for Paul.

We first meet Timothy in Acts 16.

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, ² and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.³ Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. (Acts 16:1-3)

Here in Acts Paul is on his 2nd missionary journey.

If you remember, Paul, on his 1st missionary journey had planted churches in a number of cities, including Derbe and Lystra.

Now, on his 2nd missionary journey he apparently meets Timothy for the first time.

(We learn in Paul's last letter [2 Timothy] that Lois and Eunice [Timothy's mother and grandmother] had been some of Paul's first converts from the Jewish community in Lystra.)

⁵ For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. (2 Tim. 1:5)

Passing through Lystra for the 2nd time Paul meets Timothy and he is so impressed with Timothy's passion for Christ that Paul adds this young man to the ministry team.

... and the passage in Acts 16 tells us that Paul circumcised Timothy

Now, that is interesting because back in Acts 15 at the Jerusalem council it had been firmly established that circumcision was unnecessary for salvation...

... in fact, according to **Acts 15:22-31** the Jerusalem council had written a letter to this effect which Paul was now taking to all the gentile Christians and churches.

... so why did Paul proceed to circumcise Timothy?

... Well, Timothy's father was a Greek and his mother was Jewish and Paul circumcised Timothy because there were Jews in that region that Paul wanted to reach for Jesus ...

Paul wanted to make it clear to all observers that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was good news for both the Jew and the Gentile ...

... some people have looked at this and called Paul a hypocrite or indecisive, but I disagree!

You always defend the truth, you always stand for what is right,

... but in secondary issues you must always remain flexible because the cause of Christ is the greater cause

... Jesus is more important than our cherished opinions!

- It's not about "chairs vs. pews" it's about the Cross of Jesus.
- It's not about "choir vs. praise teams" it's about the bodily resurrection of Christ.
- It's not even about "Baptist vs. Presbyterians" it is about "*On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!*"

Honestly, what is most profound to me is not that Paul circumcised Timothy, but that Timothy let him.

Timothy was willing to be associated as a **friend and fellow laborer** with the Apostle Paul.

a. Associations indicate Identity

Timothy was not ashamed to be known as Paul's associate and brother in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That wasn't just a **big deal** the first day that Timothy met Paul, **it got bigger** with each passing year.

When Paul was writing this letter to the church in Colossae, Nero was Caesar of Rome.

150 years later Tertullian would say of Paul's time that it was "a society where, when anything bad happened the cry immediately went out, "throw the Christians to the lions, it must be their fault."

Does that remind you of anything?

- If you are pro-life...
- If you believe in biblical morality and biblical marriage
- If you refuse to buy into and chant the popular slogans of the activist groups
- If you say things like "I believe in biblical justice."
- or if you dare to say, "I love America!"
- or get this, here is a new one, "I am an evangelical"

Those positions identify you ... in the eyes of many people as being "less than."

But even more than these things ... our identity with the Lord Jesus Christ should be our clearest and most profound association.

... whether it's popular or not.

... whether it is legal or illegal.

We will always identify with the Lord Jesus Christ because **He has redeemed us ... and He has made us His forever!**

... and (**I must add**) to identify with Christ is to **ALSO** identify with **all those** who love and follow the Savior!

Timothy OUR Brother

In this letter, Paul is making public his association with Timothy and Timothy's with him and their association with all the believers in Colossae!

Our associations

b. Associations color perception people have of us.

... That is a good thing.

Even 2000 years later, a study of the life of Timothy is a study of the missionary journeys of Paul.

- Paul mentions Timothy in his writings no less than 17 times.
- He was an eyewitness to Paul's sufferings at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra (2 Tim. 3:11).
- We know Timothy hand delivered the letters of 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians
- Timothy ministered to Paul when he was in prison in Ephesus and in Rome.

Paul refers to Timothy as co-worker, son, child, and brother.

Paul and Timothy loved each other in Christ, and they didn't care who knew it.

Some of Paul's deepest and most personal words are written to Timothy. In 2 Timothy, Paul, in the last letter he writes says:

- Timothy, I am longing to see you
- ... join with me in suffering for the gospel
- ... you are aware that all who are in Asia have turned against me
- ... Demas having loved this present world has deserted me
- ... When you come bring the cloak, I left

- ... Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Be on guard against him yourself...

These are the kind of things you only say to a close friend

... believers need to be that kind of friend to each other.

... a friend who will not **judge you** or **be self-righteous** or **preach at you for bearing your heart**.

... As Proverbs 17:17 says, “a friend loves at all times.”

Timothy OUR Brother

Some scholars believe that the mention of Timothy here in this first verse implies that Timothy assisted Paul in the writing of this letter ...

Who knows? There are similar references to Timothy in 1 & 2 Thess, 2 Cor., Philippians and Philem.

Here is what we do know...

Colossians is not just letter from some cold ecclesiastical celebrity figurehead sitting in his palace,

... some know it all to a church of unknown believers telling them what they are doing wrong ...

... **No!** Colossians is a letter written in prison and it comes from 2 close friends, co-laborer's in the gospel

... and it is written to a group of faithful believers who love Jesus, and they love each other.

Again, as we see the winds of public policy turning even more against the church

... now, more than ever, we need this fellowship, the association, the friendship, and relationship, with brothers and sisters in Christ.

So, Paul makes this declaration of thanksgiving about them.

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, (Col. 1:3)

2. God the father of OUR Lord Jesus Christ

Paul is literally saying,

“We are always thanking God, the Father of OUR Lord Jesus Christ, when we are praying for you.”

... I love that pronoun.

This loving relationship that Paul and Timothy have between them ...

...and this loving relationship that these Colossians have for each other is built upon a common ground

... and that common ground is that **they are all worshiping the same God.**

... their highest allegiance is to the same God.

And who is this God?

... This God is the one who is the Father of OUR Lord Jesus Christ.

As I hinted at earlier with a quote from Tertullian, in those days, it was dangerous to be a worshipper of God who was the father of Jesus Christ.

You see, every town and village in the Greco-Roman world had gods and goddesses they worshipped ...

... the religious beliefs of most people were a mixture of mythology, paganism, sophism, and stoicism mixed up with bits and pieces of various philosophies from the different philosophers.

... and for them, worship wasn't about adoration and praise ...

... it was more about keeping those "gods" and "goddesses" appeased to keep them from getting angry.

... it was believed that every catastrophe, every tragedy, was the result of those "gods and goddesses" being angered.

So, the idea of some other "god" being brought into their world declaring to be the only true God who was commanding that no other gods (outside of His Son Jesus Christ) was supposed to be worshipped.

... well, quite frankly, that frightened the citizens in the villages, towns, and cities like Colossae.

The teachings of Christianity are always in opposition to the various beliefs and ideas that are predominant in any non-Christian pagan society...

... and make no mistake about it, we live in a pagan society

... and as paganism becomes more and more entrenched ...

... opposing things, such as sanctity of life, morality, and ethical behavior will become more hated.

... good is declared as evil and evil is declared to be good

... and if you disagree ... well, you are just ignorant and close-minded.

When you love Jesus, you will keep His commandments and that becomes problematic in a pagan society.

... it goes against the ambitions of the world.

As Paul is writing this letter to the church in Colossae, he is not telling them to rebel against the government ...

... he is not calling them to political activism.

In this short letter the Apostle Paul is calling them to live **together as people who belong** to God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ—the trust Christ!

There are many expressions of what that looks like in this short letter but let me just give you one of them...

... a single sentence of what it look like to live together as people of the cross.

Now before I read this verse, keep in mind that this Colossae congregation is made up of **Greeks** coming from the background of pagan mystical polytheism and **Jews** coming from the background of the Old Testament circumcision.

... add to this tense mixture some of them were also barbarians, Scythians, slaves, freemen, and wealthy citizens...

... to this diverse hodgepodge of humanity the Apostle Paul writes:

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience,¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (Col. 3:12-13)

This isn't E-Harmony.com where everybody has gotten together because they have the same likes and dislikes, beliefs and opinions ...

... this is the opposite of that.

... you couldn't get a group of people more dissimilar than this group!

However, there is this one common denominator that bind them...

They all worship God, the father of OUR Lord Jesus Christ

... and here is the evidence Paul gives that proves this reality ... that this is true...

Paul says there is a **reason that we give thanks to God** for you every time we pray for you.

since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;
(Col. 1:4)

3. YOUR faith and love

Paul says, “*We give thanks to God for you every time we pray for you because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for each other ...*”

Their Christian life was not merely a mental assent to some academic or doctrinal proposition ...

... This wasn't “name it claim it” empty emotionalism.

They had been made alive!

Yes, in the past they had been engaged in evil deeds ... but now they have been reconciled to God!

... and we are going to see this next week in verse 6

... but now because of **an inner work that God has done**, there is an increasing outward display of that inner work, publicly in their lives.

This is what naturally happens when you become a child of God.

- I need to remind you morality isn't evil!
- Good works are better than perverted works!
- A tree is known by the fruit it bears.

This Colossians have been alive by and inward work that God has done!

Please allow me to skip ahead a few verses and show you how this glorious transformation has taken place.

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, (Col. 1:13)

In simple terms, God rescues us from the power of Satan, the kingdom of darkness ...

... but God doesn't just **bring us out**

... God transfers us **INTO** the Kingdom of Christ

... and my brother and my sister you need to know that this kingdom Christ is a kingdom of light and power!

You see, righteousness is not just something God is ... righteousness is what God does to us.

... righteousness is Christ in us the hope of Glory!

This is why Paul will write, *“Therefore since you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, walk in Him!*

... *“Since you have been raised up with Christ, seek the things above.”*

You see, **I** was, **we all** were, alienated from God living lives in delusion, destruction, and darkness ...

... we gave into our every whim and fought to have every desire satisfied

... and the more we gained what we wanted, the **less we were** and the more **broken we became**
...

... (ha) but then ...

... in the same way that Jesus came to Paul on the road to Damascus, and to **Timothy in Lystra**
... and all these people in Colossae

... Jesus came to us and everything was changed.

I leave you with Paul's description of that very thing.

¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (Col. 2:13-14)

This is why we must be **clear**, and we must be **specific**...

We worship God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

And because of our faith in Him we love all who love Him also!