

**October**  
**New Testament** (2020 study)  
(Comments based on ESV text)

October 1 — 1 Timothy 6 — **Dangerous Detours.** Paul warns of two things in this chapter that threaten our faith. The first is any kind of “knowledge” that is not in line with God’s truth (v. 3). Ideas promoted by unbelievers, that in order to be able to accept, you have to reinterpret God’s Word, are concepts toward which “*some have swerved from the faith*” (v. 21) to embrace. We must honestly measure the world’s ideas against the timeless standard of Scripture. The second threat to our faith comes from “*the love of money,*” through which “*some have wandered away from the faith*” (v. 10). Rather than desiring wealth, we should be desiring godliness (v. 6). The desire to be knowledgeable and to be rich are two very common temptations that draw us. We must be aware that they are serious threats to our spiritual health and avoid them as dangerous detours.

October 4 — 2 Timothy 1 — **Final Words of Certainty.** Paul was released from prison in Rome after two years and ministered for a while in somewhat uncertain places until he was arrested again and imprisoned, probably in a Roman dungeon, before being executed. It was from this prison that Paul wrote this final letter. In this chapter, he mentions two things he is certain about. The first was that he knew his Savior. Although he had suffered imprisonment for sharing the gospel, he wrote, “*I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed*” (v. 12). His second certainty was that he knew his future: “*I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me*” (v. 12). God would guard that for him but we find out that it is not all God’s responsibility. Although it is “*By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us,*” Paul tells Timothy to, “*guard the good deposit entrusted to you*” (v. 14). That is in the form of a command, so it is what we must do. We have a responsibility to cooperate with the Spirit by yielding and obeying.

October 5 — 2 Timothy 2 — **Pondering Scripture.** One statement stood out to me today: “*Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything*” (v. 7). I hope that when you read these chapters every day, you will also be thinking over, pondering, and meditating on the things you read. Read it a second time! Highlight things that stand out to you! Take notes in a journal of insights that come to you or questions that you have! Put effort into your reading! The benefit of those efforts is given as a gift from God and He “*will give you understanding.*” We can never exhaust the meaning of God’s Word; it is bottomless.

October 6 — 2 Timothy 3 — **Tough Times.** Many of the attitudes and actions of ungodly people described in verses 2-4 are present with us today. We are not to be caught up in their ways but should rather, “*Avoid such people*” (v. 5). We should stand out from them by following Paul’s “*teaching ... conduct ... aim in life ... faith ... patience ... love ... [and] steadfastness*” (v. 10). When we do, ungodly people will oppose us because the contrast of that kind of life exposes their evil ways. It is no wonder that “*all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*” (v. 12). We must make this decision: Do I want to please people or do I want to please God?

October 7 — 2 Timothy 4 — **Farewell.** These are the last words we have from the great Apostle Paul. He knew he was going to die by execution. If we knew we had a terminal illness with only a few weeks to live, what would we be thinking about? Paul was thinking about others. He was concerned about Timothy’s future, how he was to “*preach the word*” (v. 2), “*do the work of an evangelist*” (v. 5), and avoid the dangerous opposition of Alexander the coppersmith (vv. 14-15). He wanted Timothy to come to him in Rome and bring Mark (v. 11). Why would he want Mark, the one who had deserted him earlier in ministry? Paul said it was because Mark would be “*very useful to me for ...*” What would you anticipate would logically follow? For companionship ... comfort ... personal service? No, it was because he would be useful to Paul “*for ministry*” (v. 11). Paul was still doing

ministry and Mark could help him to reach outside the dungeon to others. Oh, that our hearts would also still be set on others when we approach our final days on earth!

October 8 — Titus 1 — **Pastoral Epistles**. The three letters Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus are known as the Pastoral Epistles because these two recipients were both pastors and Paul's representative overseers to pastors of other churches. This letter to Titus, like 1 Timothy, was written after Paul's first house-imprisonment in Rome, and the two letters have similar content about the proper function of the churches and their leadership. He emphasized that the church elder, or overseer, "*must hold firm to the trustworthy word, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it*" (v. 9). God's Word is the absolute foundation of our faith—our standard of truth. Jesus said to His Father, "*Your word is truth*" (John 17:17). When we read it, we may sometimes not understand it but we must not question its truth.

October 11 — Titus 2 — **Sensibly Controlled**. In this chapter, Paul gave instructions to and about different groups of people in the church: to Timothy as a church leader (v. 1), older men (v. 2), older women (v. 3), younger women (v. 5), younger men (v. 6), and bondservants (v. 9). There was one specific instruction given four times to these groups, translated consistently as "*self-controlled*" in the ESV and "*sensible*" in the NASB (vv. 1, 5, 6, 12). Maybe "sensibly self-controlled" would be a good way to combine those ideas. It involves controlling both our minds and our emotions. We are not to be swayed easily by new ideas or tantalizing trends but should be stable in our thinking and acting.

October 12 — Titus 3 — **Good Works**. Paul makes it very clear in this chapter that we cannot be saved by doing good things but that God saved us by His mercy, "*not because of works done by us in righteousness*" (v. 5). After we have stepped into the "saved" category, however, we are to concentrate on doing good things to please God and help others: "*...those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works*" (v. 8). Two other times, Paul emphasized our need "*to be ready for every good work*" (v. 1) and for believers "*to devote themselves to good works*" (v. 14). Who in your circle of family or friends could use help from you today? Could you give them a ride, run an errand, buy something at the grocery store or pharmacy, mow a lawn, or bring over a meal? There are many people around us who could use some help and there are many of us who could meet those needs.

October 13 — Philemon 1 — **Failed Influence**. Even godly people like Paul and Philemon might be considered failures at properly influencing some individuals. Philemon was a wealthy man living in Colossae (Col. 4:9) with a house big enough to accommodate church meetings of believers (v. 2) and to provide a guest room for Paul (v. 22). But this church leader had a slave, Onesimus, who had not been influenced sufficiently by Philemon to surrender his life to Christ. Onesimus (meaning "useful") ran away to lose himself in faraway Rome where God brought him to Paul, who did lead him to Christ. We are reminded also in this chapter that even Paul had someone under his influence who became a failure. At the close of this letter, Paul sent greetings from several people whom he considered "*fellow workers*" (v. 24), including Demas. Several years later, Paul wrote that "*Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me*" (2 Tim. 4:10). Even under Paul's strong influence and leadership, Demas turned out to be a failure. Are you considering yourself to be a failure because your son or daughter is not following Christ? Even under the best influence, some manage to resist. Don't give up praying and don't beat yourself up about it!

October 14 — Hebrews 1 — **The Mystery Book**. The book of Hebrews is unique in the New Testament. Unlike the way a normal ancient letter begins, this one doesn't name the author or clearly identify the recipients. Some people believe that Paul wrote it in spite of its very different format, approach, and vocabulary. Others have suggested the author to be Barnabas, Clement, Luke, or Apollos. I have a friend who is writing a book to support his contention that the author was Silas. Hebrews is deeply rooted in the Old Testament, reminding us at the beginning that "*God spoke to our*

*fathers by the prophets*" (v. 1). In this opening chapter alone, he quotes seven times from Old Testament passages. Although its human author is a mystery and much of its content is unusual, it is a rich book from which we can gain great truths and insights. This first chapter emphasizes the superiority of Christ.

October 15 — Hebrews 2 — **One of Us**. Although He was the Son of God, He willingly "*was made lower than the angels*" (v. 9) and "*partook of*" the flesh and blood of the humans He created (v. 14), becoming Jesus, the Christ, our Savior. This brings to mind parts of a great hymn written in 1921 and later set to the music of "O Sole Mio":

Down from His glory,  
Ever living story,  
My God and Savior came,  
And Jesus was His name ...

What condescension,  
Bringing us redemption;  
That in the dead of night,  
Not one faint hope in sight,  
God, gracious, tender,  
Laid aside His splendor,  
Stooping to woo, to win, to save my soul ...

Without reluctance,  
Flesh and blood His substance,  
He took the form of man,  
Revealed the hidden plan.  
O glorious mystery,  
Sacrifice of Calvary,  
And now I know Thou art the great "I AM."  
— Words by William Booth-Clibborn

October 18 — Hebrews 3 — **Projecting Ahead**. In the first six verses of this chapter, the word "*faithful*" is used twice about Jesus and two times about Moses. One thing that stood out to me was that a portion of Moses' faithfulness was "*to testify to the things that were to be spoken later*" (v. 6). In a sense, Moses didn't know what he was talking about—at least he didn't understand the future significance of some of the things he said. For instance, when he relayed God's instructions about how to perform the Passover as a way to remember Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery, he had no idea that it also looked forward to the final Passover Lamb of God that would be slain to deliver us from sin's bondage. God would make that clear through the faithfulness of the New Testament writers. In different words, our own faithfulness is also referred to in verse 6, when "*we hold fast our confidence*." We have no idea what benefits our present faithfulness will provide for us or others in the future.

October 19 — Hebrews 4 — **The Word of God**. As I came to the well-known verse 12 today, which says that "*the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword ...*," it seemed to come rather abruptly and out of context. However, looking backward, I saw that there had been much said about God's Word: "*good news ... message*" (v. 2), "*as he said*" (3), "*he has somewhere spoken*" (v. 4), "*he said*" (v. 5), "*saying through David ... his voice*" (v. 7), and "*God would not have spoken*" (v. 8). The purpose of the Word of God is to be "*discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart*" (v. 12) so that "*no creature is hidden ... but all are naked and exposed ... to whom we must*

*give account*" (v. 13). God's Word is both revealing and powerful to change. Exposing ourselves to it every day is accomplishing that purpose.

October 20 — Hebrews 5 — **Got Milk?** There is a bit of rebuke here for Christians who have been coasting along without growth: "... *you have become dull of hearing*" (v. 11), needing to be taught when they should be able to teach (v. 12). In that sense, they are like new believers who have all their spiritual growth before them. Both types of believers need to be given the basics of Christian living, like a baby needs its mother's milk. First of all, they need to *take* milk. Many parents have struggled with children who have a hard time being willing to eat what is good for them. Reading God's Word every day is part of that development for you. Milk is not bad—we need it. But we must apply ourselves to it "*by constant practice*" (v. 14). The result is that our ability "*to distinguish good from evil*" (v. 14) will increase. That is one way we grow up into maturity.

October 21 — Hebrews 6 — **Growth.** The "*milk*" or "*basic principles*" talked about in the previous chapter (5:12) is somewhat defined at the beginning of this chapter as "*the elementary doctrine of Christ*" (6:1). This includes things like "*repentance ... faith ... washings [baptisms] ... laying on of hands [healing, gifts, or commissioning for ministry] ... resurrection ... and ... judgment*" (v. 2). These are foundational and important but there are more. We are also to add "*earnestness*" and "*assurance*" with endurance ("*until the end*"—v. 11). Earnestness involves sincerity, seriousness, and concentration of mind and will. "*Assurance*" is a result that comes from thinking and doing right and also from the Holy Spirit's activity (1 Thess. 1:5 translates it "*full conviction*"). We gain these two qualities of maturity by being "*imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises*" (v. 12). We need to think and act like others who are more mature than we are, those who have been diligent in growing as Christians.

October 22 — Hebrews 7 — **Permanent, Perfect Priest.** A Levitical priest was somewhat of a go-between for people who wanted to "*draw near to God*" (v. 25). The priest was not perfect, however, and had to offer a sacrifice for himself before being qualified to offer sacrifices for others (v. 27). Something better was needed. The mysterious Melchizedek was a type of the perfect high priest that was to come, namely Jesus. Although Melchizedek lived before the Mosaic law was given, he wasn't identified as a type of Christ until God declared it centuries later through King David in Psalm 110:4: "*You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.*" That coming high priest was the Christ whom David called "*my Lord*" and to whom God said, "*Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool*" (Ps. 110:1). The writer of Hebrews declared that this "*word of the oath*" through David, "*appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever*" (v. 28). Jesus is our perfect go-between to the Father, always available to help us connect to God.

October 25 — Hebrews 8 — **New Covenant.** The old covenant, given by God through Moses, established human priests to repeatedly offer sacrifices for the people as a temporary solution for their sins. But that incomplete system pointed to a future Divine Priest who would offer a perfect one-time sacrifice for sin; Christ would establish a better covenant (v. 6), which would open the way for God's laws to be written on people's hearts (v. 10) so that they might "*know the Lord*" (v. 11). We live in that privileged relationship now if we have surrendered our lives to God. We know God and in our deepest hearts, we want to obey the laws of the new covenant laid out in the New Testament. What a privilege!

October 26 — Hebrews 9 — **Real Purity.** The Old Testament cleansing system given by God was temporary and incomplete. It was adequate only "*for the purification of the flesh*" (v. 13). But when Christ shed His own blood, it was to "*purify our conscience*" (v. 14) to serve God. The first was superficial; the second was deep. I recently heard a retired teacher talk about how she once had a foul-mouthed boy in her class put soap in his own mouth to symbolize its need for cleansing. But the problem was really deeper than that. As Jesus said, "*out of the abundance of the heart the mouth*

*speaks*" (Matt. 12:34). The heart, or "*conscience*," needs to be cleansed. That real purity comes from surrendering our lives to Christ, accepting His sacrifice for us.

October 27 — Hebrews 10 — **Encouraging Others**. When we "*stir up one another to love and good works*" (v. 24), we are exercising a responsibility and a privilege to encourage fellow believers. I had not noticed it before but the reason for our "*not neglecting to meet together*" (v. 25) is given as "*encouraging one another*" (v. 25). Why do you attend church services? Is it for personal gain: receiving a blessing, being taught, or being encouraged? These two verses say that our purpose should be more toward encouraging others. At church, we need to both worship and serve. It is not only in church we are to encourage others but in other contexts of service as well: "...*sometimes being partners with those so treated* [with reproach and affliction]. *For you had compassion on those in prison...*" (vv. 33-34). We have a divine assignment to come close to others for the purpose of encouraging them, even in prisons. Remember that next Sunday!

October 28 — Hebrews 11 — **Pleasures and Treasures**. Just as 1 Corinthians 13 is known as the Bible's *love* chapter, Hebrews 11 is considered to be the *faith* chapter. It is also a summary chapter of Israel's history, mentioning the names of 17 people who were commended for their faith, like Sarah, who "*considered* [God] *faithful who had promised*" (v. 11). One example that stood out to me today was that of Moses. Because he was looking forward to God's greater reward, he gave up "*the fleeting pleasures of sin ... [and] the treasures of Egypt*" (vv. 25-26). Those are two current things that keep many people from a full commitment to living for and serving Christ: pleasures and treasures. Could you be hanging on to some pleasure of sin that is hindering your fellowship with God and your usefulness in ministering to others? Could you be striving for some material goal that is keeping you from being all that Christ wants you to be? Rather, we should be looking toward and working for the eternal blessings God is preparing for us.

October 29 — Hebrews 12 — **Let Us ...** Four times in this chapter we are challenged by the words "*let us*," urging us to be obedient to important commands. They form bookends, with two at the beginning and two at the end, to enclose the other commands and teachings about discipline (vv. 2-11), obtaining grace (vv. 12-17), and having the fear of the Lord (vv. 18-27). The first is, "*let us ... lay aside ... weight and sin*" (v. 1a), which are the things that slow us down or hold us back from our walk with God. The second is, "*let us run with endurance*" (v. 1b) our assigned race with Jesus as our focus so we won't forget our primary purpose in life. The third is, "*let us be grateful*" (v. 28a) for being part of a solid and lasting spiritual kingdom. We belong to God! The last is, "*let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe*" (v. 28b). Four principles that ought to characterize our lives: Give up the bad, keep on track, be grateful for salvation, and worship God in wonder.