

Prayer –
request – news
– greetings –
benediction

Then the author of this letter ends with a prayer^{□1}, a request^{□2}, an item of news^{□3}, more greetings^{□4} and a closing benediction^{□5}. They may seem to be fairly unimportant matters, but actually they are more important than we tend to think. For they are examples of how the early Christians took the trouble to stay in touch with each other. They did so by their opening salutations, their bits of news, their final greetings. It is vital that Christians stay in touch with each other and these bits of news-and-greetings is the way they did it! They had no modern electronic communications but they found ways of telling each other what was happening in their lives.

□1 13:20-21
□2 13:22
□3 13:23
□4 13:24
□5 13:25

Consider his request

(i) Exposition

Consider his request. ²²*Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, receive this word of exhortation patiently, for I have written to you briefly.* It is an interesting description of the Word of God and the way in which we are meant to receive it. (i) It is brief. The Word of God might seem to be long but it is not! It is in fact highly condensed. We are not meant so much to summarize it as to **expound** it. Our writer could have spent many months speaking on these things. Instead he sends them a brief summary of what he could have said at much greater length. This is why we should not be very interested in summarizing the Bible. It is summarized already!

(ii) Exhortation

(ii) It is a word of exhortation. That is, it is not simply a lecture addressed to our intellect, and we should not handle it purely intellectually. I doubt if the Bible should ever be lectured. It should only be preached! It is addressed to our entire personality. It demands to be obeyed.

(iii) Attention

(iii) So he asks them to take the time to give his brief letter the attention that it deserves. We tend to be impatient with anything written, but he asks us to ponder it line by line and receive what he says with patient attentiveness.

His news

• Timothy's release

(i) Paul's circle of friends

(ii) Timothy had taken Paul's advice not to be ashamed of the gospel

Consider his news. He says: ²³*You should know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he comes in time, he will be with me when I see you.* It is this verse that proves that our letter was written by someone in Paul's circle of friends. In fact this verse sounds like Paul! But if Paul is responsible for this letter, then he got one of his friends to write it for him! The Greek of this letter is certainly not like the Greek of the thirteen other letters that are known as being by the apostle Paul. More likely Paul died around AD 66 and this letter was written somewhere between about AD 66 and AD 70 when the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. It shows us (i) that Paul's circle of friends continue to serve the churches after Paul had died, (ii) that Timothy apparently followed Paul's advice not to be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord Jesus and to be willing to face imprisonment if necessary. Paul told him to 'share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God' and Timothy did just that^{□1}. Whoever was the actual writer of the letter (Luke? Barnabas? Apollos?) was taking responsibility for these 'Hebrew Christians' and wanted with Timothy to see them soon.

□1 2 Timothy 1:8

His greetings

• *New Testament letters not written to leaders only but to all Christians in the area*

• *The New Testament should be translated into the language of the people*

• *The ordinary Christian must be responsible to read the Word of God for himself*

Consider his greetings. He says: ²⁴*Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings.* As in other letters in the New Testament we have hardly had much mention of 'leaders' in the main parts of the letter. We only discover that they exist as we get to the end of the letter. The significance of this is that New Testament letters were not written to church leaders (not even 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon). They were written to all of the Christians in the area to which the letters were sent. He tells the people to greet their leaders. In other words, the letter is written to the people. This is important. The New Testament is for ordinary people! It was not written for the clergy or for the preachers. The job of the preachers is to help everyone know what God is saying to them in the Scriptures, but that does not mean that the Scriptures are addressed to the preachers only or specially. The entire church is under the Word of God directly. This is why the New Testament should be translated in the language of the people. Preachers are quite fallible! If they get too powerful and start trying to maintain that only they have the authority to say what the Bible says, then the preachers are soon corrupted into money-makers and people of secular power. It has happened many times in the story of the church. It is the greatest reason why the ordinary Christian must be responsible to read the Word of God for himself.

But leaders are important and our writer keeps in touch with them by sending a word to them through the people. Those who are with him send their greetings also (are they Italians away from home or is he writing from Rome?).

His benediction

• *Grace – no other way to live*

Consider his benediction. It is almost inevitable that he should end with a mention of grace. ²⁵*Grace be with all of you,* he says. Of course! There is no other way to live.



slices.org.uk

Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



These specially reformatted chapters "Slices of Bread" produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below

Slices for the Nations	Slices for Sponsors	Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world where resources are scarce and unaffordable In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available free of charge Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the <i>Slices</i> web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those in more prosperous circumstances who can afford to contribute to the development of this material and its distribution with a small monthly donation The same material as Slices for the Nations Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the <i>Slices</i> web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who wish to sample the material or dip into it from time to time, a proportion of the PTTB series is available free of charge Slices for Everyone (as a download) or Slice of the Week (attached to a weekly email) The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive Slices for the Nations

To subscribe please contact: slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at www.slices.org.uk

Details of the availability of *Preaching Through The Bible* books and how they may be purchased can be found on www.ibtr.org.uk