

2 Timothy 2:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Analysis

And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. Paul concludes by identifying the true enemy behind human opposition. The hope is "that they may recover themselves" (kai anānēpsōsin, καὶ ἀνανήψωσιν). The verb ananēphō (ἀνανήφω) means come to one's senses, become sober again—like waking from drunkenness or recovering from madness. Sin produces spiritual insanity; repentance is recovering sanity.

They need recovery "out of the snare of the devil" (ek tēs tou diabolou pagidos, ἐκ τῆς τοῦ διαβόλου παγίδος). Pagis (παγίς) means trap, snare—used for catching animals. Satan lays traps to capture souls. "The devil" (diabolos, διάβολος) means slanderer, accuser—the arch-enemy of God and humans. Unbelievers aren't merely intellectually mistaken but spiritually ensnared by demonic deception. This demands spiritual warfare, not merely rational debate (Ephesians 6:12).

The tragic reality: "who are taken captive by him at his will" (ezōgrēmenoi hyp' autou eis to ekeinou thelēma, ἐζωγρημένοι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ ἐκείνου θέλημα). The verb zōgreō (ζωγρέω) means catch alive, take prisoner—used of capturing soldiers or animals. Satan holds unbelievers captive, doing his will. They think they're free but are slaves (John 8:34, 2 Peter 2:19). Only God's intervention through gospel truth can liberate captives. This explains both the urgency of evangelism and dependence on God—human persuasion alone cannot free Satan's prisoners.

Historical Context

Ancient warfare involved taking captives who became slaves, serving captors' purposes. First-century readers understood slavery's horror—loss of freedom, subjection to another's will, compulsory service. Paul applies this literally to spiritual realm: Satan holds unbelievers captive, using them for his purposes. This wasn't metaphor but reality. The invisible war between God and Satan plays out through human agents. False teachers like Hymenaeus weren't merely mistaken but tools of satanic deception. This theology motivated both urgency in evangelism and dependence on prayer—only God liberates Satan's captives.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Do you recognize that unbelievers and false teachers are ultimately captives of Satan, and does this change how you view and engage them?
2. How does understanding spiritual warfare affect your approach to evangelism, apologetics, and confronting error?
3. Are you depending on human wisdom and persuasive arguments, or on God's power through prayer and proclamation of truth to liberate Satan's captives?

Interlinear Text

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|-----------|----------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|--------------|---------|
| καὶ | ἀνανήψωσιν | ἐκ | τῆς | τοῦ | διαβόλου | |
| And | that they may recover themselves | out of | G3588 | G3588 | of the devil | |
| G2532 | G366 | G1537 | | | G1228 | |
| παγίδος | ἐζωγρημένοι | ὑπ' | αὐτοῦ | εἰς | τὸ | ἐκείνου |
| the snare | who are taken captive | by | him | at | G3588 | his |
| G3803 | G2221 | G5259 | G846 | G1519 | | G1565 |
| θέλημα | | | | | | |
| will | | | | | | |
| G2307 | | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 3:7 (Evil): Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Psalms 124:7 (Parallel theme): Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

Isaiah 8:15 (Parallel theme): And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

Ephesians 5:14 (Parallel theme): Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.