

# 2 Timothy - Introduction & Background

## Authorship

*External* evidence favors Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy. The writings of Polycarp, Ignatius, Clement of Rome, Tertullian, and Justin Martyr all testify to Pauline authorship.

*Internal* evidence also favors Pauline authorship. Paul is identified as the author (1:1). The author also depicts Timothy as his "dear son (1:2)." This same phrase is found in Paul's other writings (Titus 1:4). Moreover, the style and vocabulary of 2 Timothy is similar to that exhibited by Paul in his other writings. Also, the biographical details are consistent with what is said of Paul elsewhere.

## Destination

Timothy was in Ephesus when he received Paul's first letter (1 Tim 1:3) and during Paul's presumed visit (1 Tim 3:14). It is probable that Timothy was also in Ephesus when he received Paul's second letter. Paul tells Timothy to greet Onesiphorus (4:19b) who was most likely in Ephesus (1:18). Paul also tells Timothy to greet Priscilla and Aquila (4:19a), who at one time had ministered in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-28; 1 Cor 16:19). It is likely that they returned from Rome (Rom 16:3) to Ephesus when the Neronian persecution began. Paul also makes a reference to Alexander the Coppersmith (4:14) who may have been a resident of Ephesus (1 Tim 1:20; Acts 19:33).

## Date

After spending the winter with Titus in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), Paul went to Spain (Rom 15:24,28). According to tradition, Paul was in Spain from 64-66 AD. Paul then returned to Greece and Asia. He visited Corinth, Miletus, and Troas (4:13,20). Paul was probably arrested in Troas and then imprisoned in Rome. Paul wrote 2 Timothy during his second Roman imprisonment about 67 AD. Because tradition indicates that Paul was executed in June of 68 AD and because Paul indicated that his death was imminent when he wrote the letter (4:6-8), it is safe to conclude that the letter was written in 67 AD. Because Paul was anticipating the winter (4:21), his execution probably took place in the late summer or early fall of 67 AD.

## Place of Writing

Numerous internal clues indicate that 2 Timothy was written while Paul was in prison (1:8,16; 2:9; 4:6-8,13). However, this imprisonment was Paul's second Roman imprisonment rather than his first Roman imprisonment. This point becomes clear upon noting the following differences between the imprisonments:

<b><u>First Imprisonment</u></b>	<b><u>Second Imprisonment</u></b>
Wrote prison epistles	2 Timothy
Accused by Jews of heresy and sedition	Persecuted by Rome and arrested as a criminal against the empire
Local and sporadic persecutions (A.D. 60-63)	Neronian persecution (A.D. 64-68)
Decent living conditions in a rented house (Acts 28:30, 31)	Poor conditions; in a cold, dark dungeon
Many friends visited him	Virtually alone (only Luke with him)
Many opportunities for Christian witness were available	Opportunities for witness were restricted
Was optimistic for release and freedom (Phil 1:24-26)	Anticipated his execution (2 Tim 4:6)

### **Occasion for Writing and Purpose**

Several factors prompted Paul to write 2 Timothy. First, Timothy's core makeup made him naturally non assertive in the ministry. He was youthful (1 Tim 4:12), sickly (1 Tim 5:23), and timid (2 Tim 1:7). Second, Timothy's non-assertiveness was compounded by the Neronian persecution. After Nero destroyed one half of Rome by fire (64 AD), he blamed the situation on the already unpopular Christians. Consequently, Christianity became a *religio illicito* thus ushering in the Neronian persecution (64-68 AD). In an attempt to avoid persecution, Christian ministers began to pursue a lower profile (4:9-11). Timothy most probably followed this pattern as well.

Third, Timothy was negatively impacted by Paul's arrest. The exact cause of the arrest is unknown. Some speculate that Nero blamed the believers for the burning of Rome since they taught that the world would be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:1-14). Because Paul was a visible leader of the Christian movement, he was arrested. Others theorize that Alexander the Coppersmith (4:14; 1 Tim 1:20; Acts 19:33) brought charges of treason against Paul at either Ephesus or Rome. According to this theory, Alexander was a disgruntled Judaizer who Paul had disciplined. He retaliated against Paul by bringing against him the charge of insurrection. Although some speculate that the place of the arrest was Nicapolis, it is more likely that Paul was arrested in Troas since that is where Paul left his cloak, books, and parchments (4:13). Perhaps his arrest was so sudden that he left these items behind and consequently requested that Timothy bring them to him in Rome. At the time that Paul wrote the letter, he already had his first hearing (4:16a), most of his associates had left him (4:9-11, 16b), and he anticipated his imminent martyrdom (4:6-8). Perhaps Timothy thought that he could also be persecuted if Paul had been persecuted (1:8). The threat of such persecution added to his timidity.

Fourth, Timothy had also become less assertive due to increasing apostasy and persecution within the church (2:18; 3:1-9,12-13; 4:3-4). Timothy's non-assertiveness concerned Paul since his own death was imminent (4:6-8,18). Paul needed someone to carry the gospel forward to the next generation. Thus, Paul wrote 2 Timothy for the purpose of encouraging Timothy not to shrink back from ministry duties but rather to be faithful and endure in the ministry. Tychicus may have been the bearer of the letter (4:12).

### **Message**

The *message* of 2 Timothy is faithful endurance in the ministry, even in the midst of encroaching persecution and apostasy, so that the Christian message will be preserved for the next generation.

### **Sub-Purposes**

In addition to the above-described main purpose for writing, Paul had several auxiliary purposes in mind when writing the letter. First, Paul wanted Timothy to come to Rome from Ephesus (4:9, 21).<sup>6</sup> Second, he wanted Mark to come with Timothy to Rome as well (4:11). Third, he wanted Timothy to bring along with him the items he left behind in Troas (4:13). Fourth, Paul wanted to remedy divisiveness within the Ephesian congregation (2:14-26). Fifth, Paul wanted to describe the character of the coming apostates (3:1-5). Sixth, he wanted to issue a warning concerning Alexander the Coppersmith (4:14-15). Seventh, he wanted to urge maturity based upon the proclamation of Scripture (3:17). Eighth, he wanted to inform Timothy of his imminent martyrdom (4:6-8). Ninth, he wanted to inform Timothy of the results of his first trial (4:16-18). Tenth, he wanted to greet those who he knew in Ephesus (4:19). Eleventh, he wanted to extend a greeting from the brethren in Rome (4:21-22).

### **Unique Characteristics**

2 Timothy boasts several outstanding characteristics. First, the letter is personal. Second, because Paul wrote the letter to a friend who knew his theology, it is not a theological treatise but rather a personal letter. Third, the letter is known for the numerous metaphors it uses in chapter two to depict the Christian life. Fourth, the letter contains one of the clearest statements in the entire Bible on the inspiration of the Scripture (3:15-17). Fifth, the phrase "in Christ Jesus" is used in seven distinct contexts (1:1,9,13; 2:1,10; 3:12,15). Sixth, the letter represents Paul's last will and testament. Seventh, the letter shows that just as Paul offered his body to the Lord for service in life (Rom 12:2), he was willing to make a similar offering of his body in death (4:6).

Eighth, the letter contains an evaluation of Paul's ministry (4:6-8). Ninth, the letter predicts Paul's imminent martyrdom (4:6-8). Tenth, the letter contains various prophecies concerning the coming apostasy (3:1-9,13; 4:3-4). Eleventh, the letter is full of various names that were personal friends of both Paul and Timothy. Twelfth, the letter is filled with numerous sharp imperatives (1:6,8,13-14; 2:1,3,15,22,23; 4:15). Thirteenth, the letter

represents Paul's final days in a way that is similar to the final days of Christ. For example, both Paul and Christ were alone, both predicted their imminent death to their disciples, both anticipated death, and both encouraged their disciples to faithfulness in view of imminent death.

## **Outline**

### **I. Call to faithful endurance in the ministry (1:1-18)**

#### **(1) Salutation (1:1-2)**

(A) Sender: Paul (1:1)

(B) Recipient: Timothy (1:2a)

(C) Benediction (1:2b)

#### **(2) Thanksgiving (1:3-5)**

(A) Paul's prayers for Timothy (1:3)

(B) Paul's longing for Timothy (1:4)

(C) Paul's reminder of Timothy's heritage (1:5)

#### **(3) Call to faithfulness in use of gift (1:6)**

#### **(4) Call to courage (1:7)**

#### **(5) Call to be unashamed (1:8-12)**

(A) Unashamed of evangelism (1:8a)

(B) Unashamed of Paul (1:8b)

(C) Unashamed of the gospel (1:9-12)

(a) Because of its saving power (1:9a)

(b) Because of its grace (1:9b)

(c) Because of its eternity (1:9c)

(d) Because it conquers death (1:10)

(e) Because of Paul's connection to the gospel (1:11-12)

(i) Paul's role in disseminating the gospel (1:11a-c)

(a) Paul as a herald of the gospel (1:11a)

(b) Paul as an apostle of the gospel (1:11b)

(c) Paul as a teacher of the gospel (1:11c)

(ii) Paul's confidence in the gospel (1:12)

#### **(6) Call to faithfulness in guarding the gospel (1:13-14)**

#### **(7) Negative examples of faithfulness (1:15a-c)**

(A) Province of Asia (1:15a)

(B) Phygelus (1:15b)

(C) Hermogenes (1:15c)

#### **(8) Positive example of faithfulness: Onesiphorus (1:16-18)**

(A) Onesiphorus refreshed Paul (1:16a)

(B) Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul (1:16b)

- (C) Onesiphorus searched for Paul in Rome (1:17)
- (D) Onesiphorus earned his reward (1:18a)
- (E) Onesiphorus helped Paul in Ephesus (1:18b)

## II. Illustrations of faithful endurance (2 Tim 2:1-26)

- (1) Key to endurance (2:1)
- (2) Illustrations of endurance (2:2-26)
  - (A) Teacher (2:2)
  - (B) Soldier (2:3-4)
  - (C) Athlete (2:5)
  - (D) Farmer (2:6)
  - (E) Christ (2:7-8)
    - (a) Christ's illumination (2:7)
    - (b) Christ's resurrection (2:8)
  - (F) Paul (2:9-10)
  - (G) Trustworthy saying (2:11-13)
    - (a) All believers will live with Christ (2:11)
    - (b) Enduring believers will reign with Christ (2:12)
    - (c) God will not renege on his promise of eternal life to disobedient believers (2:13)
  - (H) Workman (2:14-18)
    - (a) Avoid trivial arguments leading to false doctrine (2:14)
    - (b) Embrace true doctrine (2:15)
    - (c) Avoid trivial arguments leading to false doctrine (2:16-18)
  - (I) Clean vessel illustration (2:19-23)
    - (a) General admonition toward sanctification (2:19)
    - (b) Vessels described (2:20-21)
    - (c) Applications (2:22-23)
      - (i) Avoid sexual impurity (2:22)
      - (ii) Avoid quarrelsomeness (2:23)
  - (J) Servant (2:24-26)

## III. Faithful endurance in the midst of coming apostasy (2 Tim 3:1—4:8)

- (1) Characteristics of the apostasy (3:1-9)
  - (A) General description of the apostasy (3:1)
  - (B) Characteristics of the apostates (3:2-7)
  - (C) Illustration of Jannes and Jambres (3:8)
  - (D) Conclusion: apostates are known by their works (3:9)
- (2) Proper conduct in the midst of the apostasy (3:10—4:8)
  - (A) Imitate Paul's example in nine ways (3:10-13)

(B) Reasons for continuing in and preaching the word (3:14—4:8)

- (a) The effect of the word on Paul (3:14)
- (b) The effect of the word on salvation (3:15)
- (c) The divine origin of the word (3:16a)
- (d) The effect of the word on sanctification (3:16b)
- (e) The equipping function of the word (3:17)
- (f) Evaluation of ministry at the Bema (4:1b)
- (g) Paul's charge to Timothy (4:1a,2)
- (h) The preference of men to avoid the word (4:3-4)
- (i) The need for Timothy to complete his ministry (4:5-8)
  - (i) The charge (4:5)
  - (ii) The reason: Paul's coming absence (4:6-8)

IV. Conclusion (2 Tim 4:9-22)

- (1) Paul's fellow workers (4:9-13)
    - (A) Timothy is to come to Paul (4:9)
    - (B) Demas abandoned Paul (4:10a)
    - (C) Those Paul sent elsewhere (4:10b-12)
      - (a) Crescens (4:10b)
      - (b) Titus (4:10c-11)
      - (c) Tychicus (4:12)
    - (D) Only Luke remains with Paul (4:11a)
    - (E) What Timothy is to bring (4:11b,13)
      - (a) Mark (4:11b)
      - (b) Cloak (4:13a)
      - (c) Scrolls (4:13b)
      - (d) Parchments (4:13c)
  - (2) Paul's opponent (4:14-15)
  - (3) Results of first trial (4:16-18)
    - (A) Paul's friends deserted him (4:16)
    - (B) God's faithfulness to Paul (4:17-18)
  - (4) Additional information, greetings, instruction (4:19-21)
    - (A) Greetings to Priscilla, Aquila, Onesiphorus (4:19)
    - (B) Information regarding Erastus and Trophimus (4:20)
    - (C) Instruction to come before winter (4:21a)
    - (D) Greetings from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, brothers (4:21b)
  - (5) Benediction (4:22)
-

## Review: Events in Paul's Life

- Held coats while Stephen stoned
- Converted on road to Damascus
- In Arabian desert during next three years
- Forced to flee Damascus in a basket
- Spends 10 years in Tarsus
- Barnabas brings him to Antioch
- 1st Missionary Journey
- The Council in Jerusalem
- 2nd Missionary Journey
- Timothy joins Paul
- 3rd Missionary Journey
- Arrested in Judea (58 AD)
- Imprisoned in Caesarea for two years
- Appealed to Caesar
- Shipwrecked en route to Rome
- On Malta for three months
- House arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30-31). The Book of Acts breaks off at the beginning of this imprisonment.
- Wrote the "Prison epistles" : *Ephesians, Philippians, & Colossians*
- Acquitted of charges and released
- Wrote *1st Timothy* and *Titus* from Macedonia
- Arrested and put in a dungeon
- Wrote *2nd Timothy* (apparently his final one)

Following his release from house arrest in Rome in 62 AD, Paul resumed his ministry.

Writing to Titus from somewhere in Macedonia, probably between 62-66 AD, he said that he planned to visit Nicapolis (Titus 3:12). Assuming that he did this, Paul went from there to Rome, evidently indirectly. His visit to Troas (2 Tim 4:13) probably took place shortly before he wrote 2 Timothy. Paul ended up in Rome as a prisoner again (2:9). He had already had his initial hearing and was awaiting trial when he wrote this epistle (4:16). He believed that the Roman authorities would execute him soon (4:6). According to tradition which goes back at least to the fifth century, the Mamertine prison is the place where both Paul and Peter were confined before their execution under Nero.

Timothy seems to have remained at Ephesus for some time, following his reception of Paul's first epistle to him, and then, presumably, Paul's personal visit of him there (1 Tim 3:14). He was evidently in Ephesus when Paul wrote this second epistle to him (2 Tim 1:16-18; 4:14; Cf. 1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 4:19). Ever since Rome had burned in July of 64 AD, and

Nero had blamed the Christians, it had become dangerous to be a Christian. It was also dangerous to have contact with leaders of the church such as Paul. Consequently many believers, including some of Paul's coworkers, had chosen to seek a much lower profile and become less aggressive in their ministries. Timothy faced the temptation to do the same. Paul wrote this epistle to urge him to remain faithful to his calling and loyal to his father in the faith. Timothy needed to stand shoulder to shoulder with Paul and the other believers, and to continue to "preach the Word" as he had done.

Paul probably wrote 2 Timothy in the fall of 67 AD. There are two reasons for this date. According to early church tradition, Paul suffered execution (beheading) shortly before Nero committed suicide in June of 68 AD. Second, Paul penned this last of his canonical epistles fairly near the time of his execution, though before the winter of 67-68 AD (4:21).

### **The Message**

Paul had previously written to Timothy, explaining that the local church is a supporting pedestal ("pillar and foundation") for God's *truth* (1 Tim 3:15). He had said that the purpose of the local church is the *proclamation* of God's truth to the world. He had also said that the purpose of church leaders is the *exposition* of God's truth in the church.

Conditions facing the church had worsened considerably since Paul had written 1 Timothy. Characteristics of the last days were becoming increasingly obvious (2 Tim 3:1-7).

Godlessness and worldliness were invading the church. If the church failed to fulfill its purpose, God's truth would cease to go out into the world. The church would fail if its leaders failed to expound God's truth to the saints in the church. Consequently, Paul wrote this letter to encourage Timothy to fulfill his responsibility as a leader in the church. This epistle, therefore, is particularly for church leaders, and deals mainly with their duties.

This epistle reveals the true minister of Jesus Christ. It reveals his resources, his methods, and his most important work. Of course, every Christian is a true minister of Jesus Christ (Eph 4:12), so every Christian can benefit from this epistle, not just church leaders.

The *methods* of the Christian minister, according to 2 Timothy, are construction and demonstration.

The leader of God's people must aim at the development of holy character and conduct in the lives of those under his or her care. He or she should seek to build up the saints so they can fulfill their function. 2 Tim 3:16-17 gives the process. This takes place through authoritative instruction, correction, restoration, and patient guidance.

Second, the minister must also demonstrate in his or her own life what godliness and righteousness are. He or she must give people an example they can follow, as well as information they can believe (1:8; 2:22-23).

The most important work of the minister is also twofold: he must *know the Scriptures* and *proclaim the Scriptures*. Knowledge of the whole counsel of God is essential (3:14-15). We must know the Word because that is what God uses to build up His people. We must also



know it because it is through our mastery of the Word that God masters us, and changes our lives into the examples that we need to be. While proclaiming the Word is not the totality of pastoral ministry, it is without question its most important public function (4:1-2). Paul's great appeal in this letter was to "fulfill your ministry" (4:5).

### **The Coming Apostasy**

An ominous cloud is on the horizon—both in this epistle and *on our own!* Apostasy is not due to ignorance; it is deliberate error and heresy. It is intentional. An apostate is one who knows the truths of the gospel and the doctrines of faith and has repudiated them.

Apostasy = "total desertion of the principles of faith."

"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)

The Greek grammatical construction requires a negative answer... There are two "departures" which will occur at the end of the age:

(1) The *Harpazo*, or "Rapture" (1 Thess 4:16-17)

(2) The departure from the faith

This is not a popular view today: there are those that are committed to a view that the goal of the church is to transform the world by tinkering with its social, political and economic systems. These vain optimists have not patience with the doleful words of 2 Timothy. *The present times would seem to demonstrate the accuracy of Paul.* With the cloud of apostasy on the horizon, both Paul and Peter emphasized the Word of God in their respective "swan songs" (2 Timothy & 2 Peter). Paul emphasizes the Word of God here more than in any other of his epistles.

There are 27 explicit commands given in this epistle, instructing pastors what to focus on. You'd have to be blind to miss the thrust of Pauls' instruction here...because 18 of those commands, fully two-thirds, have to do with the preaching of the Word.