

2nd Timothy

2 Timothy appears to be Paul's last letter, written from Rome in a 2nd Roman imprisonment (1:8, 17). Timothy's location isn't definitely stated. Commentators typically suppose Timothy was (still) in Ephesus and that 2nd Timothy was written fairly soon after 1st Timothy. However, the circumstances are quite different, and the 2 references to Ephesus in the letter (1:18, 4:12) don't necessarily place Timothy there. Rather 4:12 might suggest he wasn't in Ephesus, or he would have already known about Tychicus. On the other hand, Troas was on the route Paul expected Timothy to take toward Rome (4:13), so he may well have been somewhere in western Asia at the time Paul wrote (1:15).

Nevertheless, it is very plausible that the 1st letter to Timothy was written in about 58 AD, from Macedonia before Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, while 2 Timothy was written 8 or 9 years later when Paul had enjoyed a few years of freedom to travel again (62-66), perhaps as far as Spain (Romans 15:24, and comments written by Clement of Rome in 95 AD), as well as Crete and Nicopolis (Titus 1:5, 3:12).

Paul's circumstances when he wrote this letter, in about 66-67 AD, were less comfortable than the rented house (Acts 28:16, 23, 30) of his 1st imprisonment. Twice he mentioned the chains that made his 2nd imprisonment more humiliating and more uncomfortable (1:16, 2:9). His appeal for a cloak left behind in Troas (4:13) suggests the cold and discomfort of his imprisonment.

As in the 1st letter to Timothy, Paul opened with warm familiarity, "my beloved child." Even in what we know to be harsh circumstances Paul said that thankfulness and prayers for Timothy were constant. Paul's affirmation of keeping a clear conscience is also typical (1:3, Acts 23:1, 24:16, 1 Cor 4:3-4).

Paul was not completely alone, but he was lonely in his dire circumstances and wanted very much to see Timothy again (1:4). Paul fondly remembered Timothy's genuine faith, and that of his mother and grandmother (1:5) who had nurtured his faith as a child. His reminder to Timothy about some spiritual gift that was imparted by Paul's hands being laid upon him (1:6-7) offers glimpses of the reality that such gifts were not

innately functional, but needed to be put to use like any gift or talent in order to be useful (recall 1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:1) and become more useful. The nature and effect of the Spirit God has given (v7) is not limited to some specific spiritual gift, but is the reality of who the Spirit is and what comes of our cooperation with Him.

Shame (1:8, 12, 16) was a real consequence of being harassed and imprisoned by governing authorities, and to be guarded against, when the “crime” was preaching Christ.

Reminders in 1:9-10 are consistent with all of the New Testament that salvation is God’s work, God’s gift and eternal purpose, not something we’ve achieved or earned. Sometimes we overlook or forget the magnitude of what Jesus accomplished as described in 1:10.

Paul’s statement of personal faith in 1:12b is something any Christian should be able to echo.

Note that in 1:12 it is the Lord who guards the deposit (what has been entrusted to me), while in 1:14 Timothy is enjoined to “guard the good deposit entrusted to you” by “the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” This is a harmonious work, empowered (v7) by the Spirit, we work with him to guard what he has given, to work with him to keep God’s gift.

Paul’s arrest and the harsh circumstances of his imprisonment were exacerbated by many brethren he’d known abandoning him, due to shame or fear (1:15), though some had gone to great lengths to help, even traveling to Rome in his behalf (1:16-18).

Note again the personal warmth of Paul’s language in 2:1, and the focus on the future in v2. The church is a “one another” body, and as some fade from the present scene others need to be ready to fill the voids, always looking to the next generation of capable teachers to fight the battles of faith (2:3) with full allegiance to the One who called us, and without compromising entanglements in the loyalties of the world (2:4). Timothy must have heard Paul many times use these illustrations of soldier, athlete, and farmer, which are in his letters, and having the brief reminders of v3-7 would resonate with Paul’s former teaching in his memory.

The core of the gospel, and the reason for Paul's suffering, is briefly stated again in 2:8-13. God in Jesus Christ has powerfully shown that we can trust him, and only in trusting him will be saved.

Useless wrangling over words, whether speculative or distracting from more important truth, or blatantly wrong, is harmful to the church and to be avoided (2:14-19). Note that getting the Lord's return and the resurrection wrong creates very serious problems (2:17-18).

In keeping with the words of the Good Shepherd in John 10, "The Lord knows those who are his." The Lord doesn't wonder who will be saved, he knows his people, and if we are his people we must behave accordingly (2:19).

Not everything in a household is lovely or expensive, some very useful items are not attractive at all. Nevertheless, a Christian aspiration is to be attractive, honorable, in the sight of God by doing what is right and good (2:20-21). Whatever we have been before Christ, we can be honorable and useful in Christ, and should work to that purpose.

Note the things to be pursued while turning away from the passions of immaturity in 2:22.

Clearly the multiple mentions of quarreling (2:14, 23-24) indicate a real world challenge of teaching truth in an appropriate way in a world whose nature tends toward conflict and competition. The goal of leading people to repentance and knowledge of the truth (2:25) calls for gentleness, not hostility (recall 1 Peter 3:15-16). "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome." This isn't an option.

We've seen elsewhere that "the last days" (3:1) generally refers to the world after Jesus overcame death. The attitudes and behaviors of 3:1-9 aren't signs of the end, they were already happening when Paul wrote this. Note the present tense "avoid such people" in v5, and present tense "among them are those" in v6. These behaviors reflect the abandonment of God described in Romans 1:18ff and snowballing consequences, and are widespread in our own generation.

Not all women are "weak" (v6), but some are, and seem especially vulnerable to religious charlatans who take advantage of them for funds

and gratification.

Jannes and Jambres (3:8) are names associated with the Egyptian magicians who futilely opposed Moses in Exodus 7-11. The names are nowhere else in the Bible but are in other ancient Jewish texts.

The Antioch referenced in 3:11 was in Pisidia, Acts 13:14ff, on the same road as Iconium and Lystra, all in the area where Timothy grew up and began to teach the word (Acts 16:1ff).

Note 3:12, and expect to have some troubles in this world if you follow Jesus.

In 2:15 and 3:14-16 Paul extolled the value of knowing the Scriptures, which still meant primarily the Old Testament, but another collection was growing too, including some of Paul's letters (see 2 Peter 3:15-16), and the gospels (see 1 Timothy 5:18b and compare Luke 10:7). Paul's assertion of divine authority in v18 does include his own letters and Luke's writing (at least).

The charge in 4:1-5 is very strong, considering the witnesses cited. Various responsibilities of an evangelist are summarized, calling for dedication and self-sacrifice, not just talent for speaking.

Teachers that suit peoples passions (4:3) may include religious teachers, but also may include advocates for political ideas or promoters of various fads that come around, appealing to the flesh and not the truth of God. Voices on TV or radio or social media promoting any number of ideologies and loyalties fall into the category of teachers Paul warned against here in 4:3-4.

Paul alluded to himself as a drink offering in Philippians 2:17, and as he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:6 he saw that allusion being fulfilled as his life in the flesh neared its end. Departure, not termination. Recall Philippians 1:23, to depart and be with the Lord. He'd urged Timothy to fight the good fight (1 Timothy 6:12) and here asserts he himself had done so. v7-8 would be a great epitaph for any Christian. Be one who "loves his appearing."

Paul was sure that his departure was imminent, and so he urged Timothy to hurry (4:9) because he still had some things he wanted to

accomplish. Demas (see Colossians 4:14, Philemon 1:24) was a disappointment, and various other partners in the work were engaged in important work elsewhere, except for Luke.

When Paul mentions the books and parchments in v13 it's unlikely he was wanting reading materials or something to study. Most likely he had in mind letters and writings that would make up the New Testament for the churches when he was gone. He certainly thought about such a future need, as did Peter (2 Peter 1:13-14). Paul intended to use his last days productively. If Peter was also in Rome, and perhaps also a prisoner (1 Peter 5:13, apparently from Rome, but before Peter was arrested), and Luke was with Paul, and Timothy came bringing Mark along, then simultaneously in Rome we'd have writers of 18 of the 27 books of the New Testament, collaborating to sort out the letters to keep and copy widely. They would have already had Matthew and James in hand as well in 66-67 AD. Paul and Peter with Luke, Timothy, and Mark, very likely made a goal of seeing to it that the church had New Covenant writings purposely dispersed before the apostles were put to death.

The coppersmith in 4:14 might be the Jewish man mentioned in Acts 19:33 in the uproar of the metalworkers in Ephesus. Perhaps he also had something to do with Paul's arrest leading to his current circumstances.

Note 4:17 and remember Daniel 3 and Daniel 6. Paul was enabled to endure the test, and proclaim God's message, with the Lord's help. Rescue (v18) doesn't always mean saving the flesh, sometimes it means safe conduct into glory.

Perhaps because of the persecution Nero had initiated in Rome, Priscilla and Aquila were apparently in the neighborhood Timothy was in, no longer in Rome where Paul was (4:19).

The cloak requested in v12 was on account of Paul's discomfort in prison, essentially his wrap, his blanket, and winter (v21) would make him more miserable.

While the letter was written to Timothy, the final words, "Grace be with you" have a plural "you." Paul expected the letter to be shared with other believers.