

2 Timothy

Authorship: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus” (1:1).

Recipient: “To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (1:2). Timothy was a young man who had joined Paul on his second missionary journey when he was in the city of Lystra in Galatia. Timothy’s mother, Eunice, was a Jew and his father a Greek. He accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey and was with Paul as he wrote the Prison Epistles. By and large, Timothy was Paul’s “right hand.” It is very probable that Paul led Timothy to the Lord.

Date: Because we know that Nero died in June, A.D. 68, it is likely that this letter can be dated prior to that. A.D. 67 is generally the accepted date.

Theme: Christian workers approved by the Lord endure problems, avoid evil people, make known the Good News, and teach the Word of God. The main body of the letter, leading to a climax in 4:6-8, presents two challenges to the first readers: a challenge to share in sufferings and a challenge to separate from evil people. First, we see the challenge to share in suffering (1:3-2:13). The key messages are, “Join with me in suffering” (1:8) and “Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2:3). Paul could patiently accept all the troubles that resulted from the gospel ministry, knowing the end result was the salvation of men (2:10). Now, he challenges Timothy to adopt the same vision, to suffer if necessary, “for the gospel” (1:8). Second, we see the challenge to separate from evil people (2:14-4:5). The key message here is, “Having nothing to do with them” (3:5). This entire paragraph outlines the different sins of these evil people. Paul exhorted Timothy to follow the scriptural path he had been taught since childhood from his mother and other teachers. Paul gave him these instructions: “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season... do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (4:2,5). We see here that Paul draws Timothy’s attention to his own past in an attempt to provide the encouragement he needed. We see that this letter moves toward climax, which is the stirring testimony of Paul himself (4:6-8). He had finished the race, and now a crown was waiting for him that “finishing” is the goal, not merely “running.”

Purpose: Paul wrote out of a lonely heart, saying a genuine and warm “good-bye” to one who was perhaps his dearest friend. His main spiritual purpose was to stimulate, inspire, and challenge Timothy to keep going with the gospel ministry. He also wanted Timothy to visit him in Rome before winter, probably because navigation ceased then, and Paul apparently did not hope to live much longer than that.

Key Passage: “I know whom I have believed, and persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed (deposited) unto Him against that day” (1:12).

Outline:

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. Encouragement to Be Faithful (1:3-18)
 - A. Thanksgiving for Timothy (1:3-5)
 - B. An Appeal for Boldness to Endure Suffering (1:6-14)
 - C. Examples of Disloyalty and Loyalty (1:15-18)
- III. Be Strong and Suffer Hardship (2:1-13)
 - A. The Direct Appeal to Timothy (2:1-3)
 - B. The Soldier, Athlete, and Farmer Images (2:4-7)
 - C. Remember Jesus Christ (2:8-10)
 - D. A Hymn of Endurance in the Face of Suffering (2:11-13)
- IV. What an Approved Workman Needs to Know and Do (2:14-26)
 - A. Exhortation to Resist False Teachers (2:14-19)
 - B. The Analogy of Household Vessels (2:20-21)
 - C. Timothy’s Responsibilities in the Midst of False Teaching (2:22-26)
- V. The Difficult Times of the Last Days (3:1-9)
- VI. Another Appeal to Timothy to Continue in the Faith (3:10-17)
- VII. The Charge to Preach the Word (4:1-5)
- VIII. The Final Testimony of Paul (4:6-8)
- IX. Personal Remarks and Instructions (4:9-18)
- X. Final Greetings (4:19-22)

Source:

Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998).