

Notes on 2 Timothy

2012 Edition

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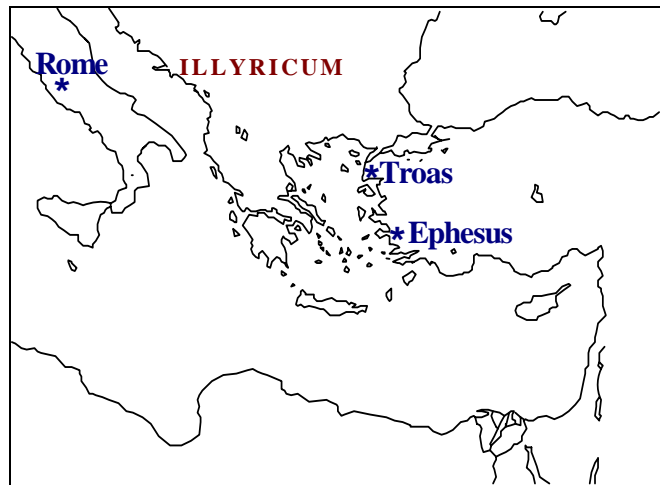
Introduction

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Following his release from house arrest in Rome in A.D. 62, Paul resumed his itinerant ministry in the Mediterranean world. Writing to Titus from somewhere in Macedonia, probably between A.D. 62 and 66, he said that he planned to visit Nicapolis (Titus 3:12). Assuming that he did visit Nicapolis, 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. It may be that Paul's arrest required his leaving his cloak, books, and parchments there, but that is only speculation. In any case, 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).

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 A.D. 64 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.¹ 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 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.

¹See D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Timothy*, p. 8.

Paul probably wrote 2 Timothy in the fall of A.D. 67.² There are two reasons for this date. According to early church tradition Paul suffered execution shortly before Nero committed suicide in June of A.D. 68. Second, Paul penned this last of his canonical epistles fairly near the time of his execution, though before the winter of A.D. 67-68 (4:21).

"2 Timothy is unlike either 1 Timothy or Titus. It is an intensely personal letter written to encourage Timothy in his difficult task and to ask him to come to Rome. Since it was written to one of Paul's best friends who knew his theology, and not to a church who did not know his theology (Titus) or to a church who knew his theology but was choosing to ignore it (1 Timothy), one is not surprised if 2 Timothy does not sound like other letters. It was not intended to be a theological treatise."³

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²See Donald A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 578.

³William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. lxxvii.

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Exposition

I. SALUTATION 1:1-2

As usual, Paul wrote what he did in his salutation partially to set the tone for his emphasis in the rest of the epistle. There are only three particulars in which this salutation differs from the one in 1 Timothy.

First, Paul attributed his calling as an apostle to "the will of God" (v. 1) rather than to the command of God. The wording here is what Paul used in several of his other epistles (1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians). The two terms are very similar in meaning. When friends desert us and opposition becomes intense there is nothing that gives Christians confidence like the assurance that we are doing God's will.

Second, the apostle said his calling as an apostle was "according to" (i.e., "because of," or "in harmony with," or both) "the promise of life in Christ Jesus" (v. 1). This promise is part of the gospel message, and here the phrase probably refers to the gospel as a whole (cf. vv. 9-11).

". . . Paul in his circumstances probably thinks of 'life' (eternal) as something yet to be fully obtained—thus the reference to a *promise* (compare 1 Tim 6:19)."⁴

In this epistle Paul emphasized the importance of faithfulness: God's faithfulness, Paul's faithfulness, Timothy's need to remain faithful, and the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of Paul's fellow workers and other servants of Christ. Paul was counting on God being faithful and providing what He had promised, namely, eternal life in Christ. God had called him to proclaim this promise as an apostle.

Third, Paul referred to Timothy as his "beloved son" (v. 2). This description emphasized the affection Paul felt for Timothy and his relationship to him as a spiritual son and protégé whom he had nurtured in the faith. Paul mentioned Timothy in all 13 of his inspired epistles except Galatians, Ephesians, and Titus.

II. THANKSGIVING FOR FAITHFUL FELLOW WORKERS 1:3-18

In this first major part of the epistle Paul thanked God for Timothy and encouraged him to remain faithful. He recalled the unfaithfulness of other fellow workers and used their example to challenge Timothy to remain faithful to the Lord and to his calling.

A. TIMOTHY'S PAST FAITHFULNESS 1:3-7

Paul gave thanks to God for Timothy's past faithfulness to his Lord and encouraged him to continue faithful to strengthen Timothy's resolve in view of ever increasing apostasy and the decision of many to abandon Paul.

⁴Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, p. 155.

1:3-4

Paul voiced in his first epistle to Timothy thanks for his own salvation and ministry (1 Tim. 1:12). In this second epistle he began with thanks for Timothy's salvation and ministry.

Paul's reference to his forefathers (God-fearing Jewish believers who lived before Christ's death) seems unusual. However throughout this epistle Paul looked backward into the past and ahead into the future, when he would no longer be alive. This reference reveals that Paul regarded his own ministry as part of the continuation of God's great ongoing plan of the ages. He was one of the faithful throughout history that have loyally served God sincerely, with a "clear conscience."

"These two themes—association with Paul and a spiritual heritage—form the basis of Paul's encouragement in the first half of the epistle and are woven throughout the second half. They provide a personal look into Paul's heart and reveal his love and concern for his good friend Timothy."⁵

Paul undoubtedly prayed for Timothy often, and when he did he thanked God for his friend. Timothy had been one of Paul's closest associates, and he was evidently still laboring in Ephesus (cf. 4:19-20), the city where Paul had spent so much time. Paul had plenty of time to pray since he was again in prison (cf. 4:9, 16, 21). It is not only good to pray for individuals, but it encourages them when we tell them that we do, as Paul did here.

Even though Paul rejoiced continually his life was not "filled with joy" when he wrote this letter. He longed for Timothy to visit him. Evidently when they had parted last—perhaps the event referred to in 1 Timothy 1:3—Timothy had taken their separation very hard. A reunion would encourage Timothy too.

"One of the fascinating aspects of Pauline studies is the very real humanity of this man of God. Paul was a stalwart soldier, but he had a tender heart."⁶

1:5

Paul rejoiced over Timothy's genuine faith that his remaining faithful to the Lord for so long had proved. Timothy's faith was pure, unmixed with distrust and unbelief. His mother and grandmother had also demonstrated sterling faith in Christ. Undoubtedly they were instrumental in Timothy's salvation. Spiritual as well as physical traits often come down from one generation to the next. The more personal the letter of Paul, the more often he mentioned personal names.⁷ He mentioned 22 in this letter and nine in Philemon.

⁵Mounce, p. 468.

⁶Ralph Earle, "2 Timothy," in *Ephesians-Philemon*, vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 394.

⁷Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 223.

1:6 In view of the quality of his faith Paul urged his younger friend not to neglect the use of his God-given abilities for the service of Christ. Any person can become less effective in the exercise of his abilities if he or she does not use them regularly. This was Paul's concern. He wanted Timothy to keep active. He was not implying that Timothy's gift had left him.

"General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, once sent this message to those under him: 'The tendency of fire is to go out; watch the fire on the altar of your heart.' Anyone who has tended a fireplace fire knows that it needs to be stirred up occasionally."⁸

Timothy may have received special abilities from the Lord through Paul at his ordination (cf. 1 Tim. 4:14). The bestowal of these may have been a unique apostolic ministry that ceased with that office (Eph. 2:20; Heb. 2:3-4).

"Every Christian minister needs at times to return to the inspiration of his ordination, to be reminded not only of the greatness of his calling, but also of the adequacy of the divine grace which enables him to perform it. Indeed, every Christian worker engaged in however small a task requires assurance that God never commissions anyone to a task without imparting a special gift appropriate for it."⁹

It seems more likely, however, that what Timothy received was divine enablement to do the work into which God was leading him. We could understand the gift, then, as a special endowment or enablement by the Holy Spirit (cf. v. 7).¹⁰ Paul may have been referring to Timothy's conversion at which time Paul laid hands on him and he received the Holy Spirit.¹¹

"The laying on of hands was not the cause of Timothy's receipt of a spiritual gift but was a visible representation and symbol of it."¹²

1:7 Timothy had apparently held back from some ministry because of timidity. Paul reminded him that such a spirit is not from God. God makes us spiritually powerful (i.e., having a forceful character that uses authority boldly, cf. 1 Cor. 2:4), loving (Gal. 5:22), and self-disciplined (Gal. 5:23). Self-disciplined refers to a person who has a "wise head."¹³

⁸Earle, p. 395.

⁹Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, p. 126.

¹⁰George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, p. 371.

¹¹Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, pp. 462-63.

¹²Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 81. Lea wrote the commentaries on 1 and 2 Timothy in this volume.

¹³Fee, p. 227.

"He [Paul] is obliquely chiding Timothy for his timidity, but softens the blow by lumping himself with him."¹⁴

B. CHARGES TO REMAIN LOYAL 1:8-14

Paul gave his young protégé exhortations to encourage him further to remain faithful to the Lord.

1. Exhortation to be courageous 1:8-12

1:8 In view of the Holy Spirit's enablement just mentioned, Paul instructed Timothy not to let others intimidate him. The aorist tense of the Greek verb translated "be ashamed" (*epaischunthes*) indicates that Paul was not implying that Timothy was already guilty of this. Because of opposition Timothy had evidently experienced temptation to demonstrate some sign of embarrassment with the gospel and with Paul, perhaps because he was in prison.¹⁵ The apostle reminded Timothy that he was in prison as Christ's prisoner. Paul consistently referred to himself as Christ's prisoner (cf. Eph. 3:1; 4:1; Phile. 1, 9). He viewed himself as in prison for no other reason than that he served Christ. The Lord had placed him there, so there was no reason to feel ashamed about that. Rather, Timothy should join his mentor in suffering for the gospel, not by being imprisoned with him necessarily, but by proclaiming it boldly (cf. Rom. 1:16). God would empower him to stand tall by His grace.¹⁶

"Paul categorizes this behavior very strongly in terms of the values of honor and shame that were central to that culture. . . . In this setting, the point is not so much that Timothy *feels* embarrassment or shame and so fails to give a witness, but more that by his failure he is discrediting or shaming the ones mentioned"¹⁷

"What the Spirit provides is power to endure the stress that comes from bearing witness to God, not removal to some safe place."¹⁸

1:9-11 Paul enlarged on the glory of the gospel to rekindle a fresh appreciation of it in Timothy. This is one of the seven so-called liturgical passages in the Pastorals all of which expound the essentials of salvation (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15; 2:5-6; 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:8-13; Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-7).¹⁹ God has delivered us

¹⁴J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, p. 160.

¹⁵See my comments on 4:16.

¹⁶See Gregory S. MaGee, "Paul's Response to the Shame and Pain of Imprisonment in 2 Timothy," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165:659 (July-September 2008):338-53.

¹⁷Towner, *The Letters . . .*, p. 463.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 466.

¹⁹For a brief discussion of these passages, see Mark L. Bailey, "A Biblical Theology of Paul's Pastoral Epistles," in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 349-54; or for a more detailed explanation, see Philip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction*, pp. 75-119.

from the penalty and power of sin. He has called us to a special purpose, not because of us but by His free choice. He enables us to achieve this purpose by His sufficient grace that comes to us in Christ. Our calling took place before the creation of the universe (cf. Eph. 1:4; Rom. 16:25; Titus 1:2), but God has revealed its full dignity only since Christ has come. Jesus Christ destroyed the effects of death and made it possible for us to live with God eternally. The gospel is the revelation of this plan, but Timothy appears to have felt ashamed of it! Paul proudly acknowledged that God had appointed him, of all people, a herald (announcer), an apostle (establisher), and a teacher (perpetuator) of this good news. What an honor and privilege it is to communicate the gospel!

- 1:12 Paul suffered imprisonment and the discomforts associated with it because he preached the gospel. Nevertheless, he was not ashamed of the gospel or of himself (cf. Rom. 1:16). His confidence lay in the person of God. He believed that God is faithful. God would protect something that Paul had placed with God for His protection and preserve that until the day he would see Christ face to face at the Rapture or death (cf. v. 18; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:9-10). The "deposit" (v. 14) in view may refer to the truth of the gospel (cf. v. 14; 2:2; 1 Tim. 6:20).²⁰ Probably it refers to Paul's life, including his work.²¹ Another less likely view is that it refers to the faith entrusted to Paul that he would figuratively hand back to God when he saw Him.²² Paul used the "deposit" in this last sense in verse 14 and in 1 Timothy 6:20.

2. Exhortation to guard the gospel 1:13-14

- 1:13 Timothy felt temptation to modify his message as well as to stop preaching it. Paul urged him therefore to continue preaching the same message he had heard from Paul and to do so with trust in God and love for people, which Jesus Christ would supply.

"With his usual skillful way with words, Paul is saying in effect that as God has guarded the deposit of his life (and will guard Timothy's) so also Timothy must guard the deposit of the faithful account of the gospel that God has entrusted to him."²³

- 1:14 He should guard God's revelation that God had entrusted to him as a minister of the gospel (cf. 1 Tim. 6:20). The indwelling Holy Spirit (as well as the Son, v. 13) would enable him to do so.

²⁰Guthrie, p. 132.

²¹Fee, p. 232.

²²Kelly, p. 166.

²³Knight, p. 380.

"The appeal has come full circle. It began with God's Spirit and his power and it has ended with the Spirit's enabling power."²⁴

C. EXAMPLES OF FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL SERVICE 1:15-18

To further impress upon Timothy the need for him to remain faithful to his calling Paul cited records of the ministries of other Christians who were mutual acquaintances.

1:15 The Christians in Ephesus and in the province of Asia where Ephesus stood had so thoroughly abandoned Paul that he could say all had turned from him. Paul may have meant all the leaders or his former colleagues who had left him by himself in prison in Rome. Probably not all of these people had turned from the gospel; the statement is probably hyperbolic.²⁵ Timothy was the last to maintain his loyalty to and support of Paul among that group, and he was now feeling temptation to abandon him. Phygelus and Hermogenes' names occur nowhere else in Scripture. They had been strong supporters of the apostle in the past but had eventually turned from him like the rest.

"These verses [vv. 10, 15, and 16] show that Paul's current imprisonment was decidedly more severe than the one in Acts 28:23, 30-31."²⁶

1:16-18 Some have suggested that Onesiphorus (lit. help-bringer) may have been dead when Paul wrote this epistle since Paul spoke only of his household. But that seems unlikely to me in view of verse 18.

"In the Apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Onesiphorus is spoken of as a convert of Paul's who gave him hospitality on his first visit to Iconium."²⁷

Onesiphorus' household was an exception to the "all" above (v. 15), or perhaps they had felt differently and had later reaffirmed their loyalty to Paul. In any case his family had diligently and unashamedly sought out Paul and had ministered to him during his current imprisonment. For this Paul wished the Lord would show Onesiphorus "mercy" at the judgment seat of Christ (cf. "that day" in v. 12). Because Onesiphorus had "found" Paul, Paul hoped that Onesiphorus would "find" mercy from the Lord. Paul seems to have been envisioning a scene in which all his brethren would stand before the Lord, Onesiphorus among them, namely, Christ's judgment seat. God would express displeasure with the failure of the

²⁴Ibid., p. 382.

²⁵Guthrie, p. 135.

²⁶Mounce, p. 492.

²⁷Guthrie, p. 135

others, but Onesiphorus would escape that shame (cf. 1 John 2:28). Paul again used the possibility of shame to motivate Timothy (cf. v. 8). Timothy knew about Onesiphorus' earlier faithful ministry in Ephesus. Paul referred to this as well to encourage Timothy to throw in his lot with Onesiphorus and his family rather than with those who had turned against the chained apostle.

"Moral behavior is best learned by observing such commitment in others. Children learn this behavior from parents. Young Christians learn it from older Christians. Ultimately moral behavior cannot be taught merely by character-building courses in the public schools. Christians must see moral commitment as a sterling example in others.

"Paul was not ashamed to present himself as the initial example he gave to Timothy. He had no doubt that his behavior was worth imitating. Christian leaders today need to have such a commitment to Christ that they are unashamed to say in humility, 'If you want an example to follow, look at me!'"²⁸

III. EXHORTATIONS TO PERSEVERE CH. 2

Paul continued to encourage Timothy to remain faithful to the Lord and to his calling by charging him to endure hardship. Then he stressed again the importance of faithfulness in his public ministry and in his personal life (cf. 1 Tim. 4:6-16).

A. CHARGE TO ENDURE HARDSHIP 2:1-13

Paul continued to encourage Timothy to remain faithful to his calling to motivate him to persevere in his ministry.

"In this first section the subject particularly dealt with is the question of service and rewards."²⁹

1. Timothy's duty 2:1-7

"Following the models of shame and courage (1:15-18), Paul resumes direct exhortation to Timothy and the handover of the Pauline mission."³⁰

2:1 Paul's charge in this verse is a general one. Specific responsibilities follow. On the basis of what he had already written, Paul urged his son (Gr. *teknon*, lit. child, an affectionate term) to let Christ's grace empower him. The present tense of the Greek passive imperative *endunamoo*

²⁸Lea, p. 200.

²⁹Harry Ironside, *Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p. 182.

³⁰Towner, *The Letters . . .*, p. 487.

indicates the need for continual dependence on God. One does this as he or she walks in submission to the Spirit of God and in harmony with the will of God. God then can and will provide strength.

"Christ is the dynamo for power only when and while we keep in touch with him."³¹

2:2 Just as Paul had passed the torch of ministry on to Timothy, so now Timothy should do so to other men who gave evidence that they too would be faithful. These should in turn instruct others who would follow them.

"Faithfulness negatively consists in their not losing, neglecting, ignoring, or falsifying (like the false teachers mentioned in this letter) what Paul has said, and positively consists of their 'handling accurately the word of truth' (2:15).

"Since the task committed to these faithful ones is that of teaching others also, it is certain that they are the same group of whom Paul wrote in 1 Timothy, the presbyters who 'work hard in word and teaching' (5:17), and also in Titus, the presbyters/overseers who are 'holding fast the faithful word that is in accordance with the teaching' so that they are 'able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict' (1:9)."³²

This discipleship process involved instruction in the truths of the faith and companionship in ministry. The reference to "witnesses" would have reminded Timothy of Paul's bold preaching on many occasions. It would have encouraged him to renew his commitment to Paul's life-changing gospel and to Paul personally.

"This is the true apostolic succession of the ministry: not an uninterrupted line of hands laid on which extends back to the apostles themselves so that all ordinations which are not in that line are null and void; but a succession of true apostolic doctrine, the deposit of what we still hear from Paul in his writings, this held by us in faithful hearts with competency to teach others the same things. The apostle did not evidently expect the future teachers of the church to produce new or different teaching."³³

³¹A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 4:616.

³²Knight, p. 391.

³³Richard C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon*, pp. 778-79.

2:3-4 Paul's long ministry with Timothy had included many hardships. Now, as Timothy looked forward to training other younger men, he could expect more of the same. Paul urged him to submit to difficulties as a good soldier.

The apostle used three illustrations to help Timothy appreciate the logical consistency of this exhortation (cf. 1 Cor. 9:7, 10, 24). The first illustration is the soldier (cf. Eph. 6:11-17; 1 Thess. 5:8). Paul's emphasis in this illustration was on the importance of remaining free from entanglement with other lesser goals and activities while serving the Lord. This is something about which Paul had previously warned Timothy (1 Tim. 6:3-16; cf. Matt. 13:22; Luke 8:14). Obviously Paul did not mean that a minister should always give all of his time to preaching and teaching to the exclusion of any tent-making activities. He meant that he should not let other duties drain off his energies or interests or divert him from his primary responsibilities as a Christian soldier. Demas, whom Paul mentioned later, turned out to be a bad soldier in this respect (cf. 4:10). As an ordinary soldier must be single-minded in his purpose, rigorous in his self-discipline, and unquestioning in his obedience, so must every soldier of Christ.

"Paul's appeal shows the importance of developing an ability to distinguish between doing good things and doing the best things. Servants of Christ are not merely to be well-rounded dabblers in all types of trivial pursuits. They are tough-minded devotees of Christ who constantly choose the right priorities from a list of potential selections."³⁴

2:5 Paul's second illustration, the athlete, emphasized the need to minister according to the rules that God has prescribed. To do this we must minister with proper motives, with purity of life, and obedience to all of God's will to win His approval.

". . . competitors at the Olympic Games had to swear an oath before the statue of Zeus that they had been in strict training for ten months (Pausanias, *Graec. deser.* v. 24. 9)."³⁵

As an athlete must deny himself or herself, endure hardship, and persevere to the end, so must every spiritual athlete.

2:6 Paul's third illustration, the farmer, emphasized the toil necessary if one wants to enjoy the fruits of his or her labors.³⁶ A farmer must continue to sow seed and water it if he or she wants to harvest its fruit. Likewise the

³⁴Lea, p. 203.

³⁵Kelly, p. 176. See Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Historical Background of Paul's Athletic Allusions," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161:643 July-September 2004):343-59.

³⁶Cf. J. H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 118.

farmer for Christ must plant and nourish the gospel seed if he or she eventually expects to reap the fruit of God's Word in the lives of people.

All three illustrations imply dogged persistence and hold out the prospect of eventual reward for the faithful.

2:7 Paul encouraged Timothy to meditate on what he had just written knowing that the Lord (probably Jesus, cf. v. 8) would help him see the wisdom of his words. Paul's illustrations yield many practical lessons as one meditates on them.

"The apprehension of spiritual truth is not primarily a matter of mental acumen but of spiritual teachableness."³⁷

2. The examples of Jesus and Paul 2:8-10

Paul proceeded to undergird his appeal to suffer hardship with the examples of Jesus (v. 8) and himself (vv. 9-10). Verses 8-10 form a single sentence in the Greek text, which has the effect of uniting Jesus and Paul in their respective examples. Paul replicated Jesus' example.

2:8 Jesus Christ is, of course, the greatest example of suffering hardship for a worthy purpose. Paul urged Timothy to meditate on His example too. This is the only place in this epistle where Paul arranged Jesus' names in this order (cf. 1 Tim. 6:3, 14; Titus 1:1; 2:13; 3:6). He probably did so to stress Jesus' humanity and thus His exemplary conduct.

Paul may have intended his references to Jesus' resurrection and lineage to provoke meditation on our Lord's vindication and reign following His sufferings. Jesus was the culmination of a line of rulers whom God's enemies consistently opposed and persecuted (cf. Acts 7). The record of Jesus Christ was part of the gospel Paul preached and the gospel Timothy was in danger of neglecting (1:8). Paul could call the gospel "my gospel" because God had entrusted it to him.

"The perfect tense of the participle for 'raised' suggests that Paul was stressing the result of Christ's resurrection, the demonstration of his lordship (Rom 1:4), rather than the fact of the resurrection. . . .

"Second, the mention that Christ 'descended from David' shows that Christ has messianic qualifications and is the heir to the glorious promises of God for David. . . .

³⁷Hiebert, pp. 57-8.

"The memory of Christ cloaked with resurrection power and messianic dignity is an inspiration for Christian service."³⁸

"The Davidic Messiah who suffered and was raised from the dead is the very essence of Paul's gospel."³⁹

2:9 Paul, too, was willing to suffer hardship for the gospel. He had done so all his Christian life and was presently in prison because of it. The Greek word translated "criminal" (*kakourger*) is a strong one and occurs only in Luke 23:32, 33, and 39 elsewhere in the New Testament. There it describes the criminals crucified with Jesus. Under Nero's persecution non-Christians viewed Christians as serious criminals. Timothy needed to remember that the Word of God was just as powerful to change lives as ever. Its power was as great as it ever was even though its champion defender was in chains. So Timothy should continue to proclaim it.

2:10 Because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation Paul was content to endure anything so long as this message went forth (cf. Phil. 1:12-20).

"The body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still;
His kingdom is forever."⁴⁰

Paul had been the chief suppresser of the gospel (Acts. 22:4; 26:9-11). Now he was its chief promoter. He had been the greatest oppressor of the saints. Now he was the most greatly oppressed of them.

"While the majority of the commentators understand the 'elect' to refer to the unregenerate who have not yet believed (but certainly will), there is good reason to understand the term in this context as a virtual synonym for a regenerate saint. First of all, in *every* usage of the term applied to men, in the New Testament it *always* refers to a justified saint. Conversely, it *never* refers to someone who was elect in eternity past but who has not yet entered into the purpose of their election, justification. . . . It is best to understand by 'the elect' Timothy and the faithful men of v. 2. Timothy is being exhorted to suffer in his ministry to the faithful men just as Paul has been imprisoned for his ministry to the 'elect.' The idea of Paul suffering for the sanctification and growth of the churches is a common New Testament theme, and is easily seen in this passage as well.

³⁸Lea, pp. 206, 207.

³⁹Knight, p. 398. Cf. 1 Tim. 3:16.

⁴⁰Martin Luther, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*.

"Here then are saved people in need of salvation! The salvation in view is necessarily sanctification or, perhaps, more precisely, victorious perseverance through trials (1:8; 2:3, 9)."⁴¹

3. A popular saying 2:11-13

To encourage Timothy further to endure hardship Paul cited, or perhaps adapted, a commonly accepted and used quotation that encouraged believers to remain faithful to their Christian profession (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; Titus 3:8). It may have been part of a baptismal ceremony, a hymn, or a catechism. It consists of four couplets, two positive and two negative. Each one represents a condition Paul assumed for the sake of his argument to be real, not hypothetical, since each is a first class condition in the Greek text.

"Each protasis (the 'if' clause) describes an action of a believer."⁴²

2:11-13 The first couplet (v. 11) is a comforting reminder that since the believer died with Christ (Col. 2:20; 3:1, 3) he or she has also experienced resurrection with Him to newness of life (cf. Rom. 6:2-23, esp. v. 8). This seems to be a better interpretation than the one that views this statement as a reference to dying as a martyr.⁴³ The first class condition and the aorist tense of the verb *synapethanomen*, translated "died," argue for the former view.⁴⁴

Knight suggested that since Paul wrote this epistle from Rome, it is possible that the church in Rome developed this first line by reflecting on Romans 6, especially verse 8. Water baptism symbolizes the death and resurrection of the believer.⁴⁵

The second couplet (v. 12a) is also a comfort. If the believer successfully endures temptations to apostatize, he or she will one day reign with Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 4:8; Rev. 3:21; 5:10). While all Christians will reign with Christ in the sense that we will be with Him when He reigns, the faithful will reign with Christ in a more active sense (cf. Matt. 10:33; Luke 12:9).⁴⁶ The Bible seems to teach that there are degrees of reigning as there are differences in rewards (cf. Luke 19:11-27; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21). The idea that all Christians will remain faithful is true to neither revelation nor reality (cf. Luke 8:13; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12; cf. 2 Tim. 4:4).

⁴¹Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, pp. 127-28. Cf. Knight, p. 400; and Towner, *The Letters . . .*, p. 504.

⁴²Lea, p. 209.

⁴³Hiebert, pp. 62-3; et al.

⁴⁴Cf. Newport J. D. White, "The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 4:163.

⁴⁵Knight, p. 408.

⁴⁶See Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, pp. 67-81.

The third couplet (v. 12b) is a warning. If the believer departs from following Christ faithfully during his or her life (i.e., apostatizes), Christ will deny him or her at the judgment seat of Christ (Matt. 10:33; Mark 8:38; Luke 12:9; cf. Luke 19:22; Matt. 22:13).⁴⁷ The unfaithful believer will not lose his salvation (1 John 5:13) or all of his reward (1 Pet. 1:4), but he will lose some of his reward (1 Cor. 3:12-15; cf. Luke 19:24-26).⁴⁸ To deny Christ clearly does not mean to deny Him only once or twice (cf. Luke 22:54-62) but to deny Him permanently since the other three human conditions in the couplets are permanent.

"Denial of Christ manifests itself in various ways in the NT. It can consist in denying his name (Rev. 3:8) or faith in him (Rev. 2:13). It can thus take the form of forsaking or repudiating the Christian faith and its truths, particularly the truth concerning Jesus. In doing so one personally denies Christ (and the Father, cf. 1 Jn. 2:22-23). The denial can also manifest itself in the moral realm. Some may 'profess to know God, but by their deeds deny him' (Tit. 1:16; cf. 1 Tim. 5:8)."⁴⁹

The fourth and final couplet (v. 13) is another comforting reminder that if the believer is unfaithful to God Christ will still remain faithful to him or her. The Greek word *apistoumen* can mean either "unbelief" or "unfaithful." The context makes clear that "unfaithful" is the meaning here since the contrast is with "faithful." The present tense of the Greek word translated "faithless" denotes a continuing attitude. Christ will not renege on His promises to save us (cf. 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18-20; 1 Thess. 5:24; et al.) even though we may go back on our commitments to Him (1 John 5:13). God's dealings with the Israelites in the Old Testament are the great proof that God will not cast off or abandon those He has redeemed and adopted even if they prove unfaithful and unbelieving. Christ's faithfulness to us should motivate us to remain faithful to Him (cf. Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-22).

The point of this quotation is that Christians should continue to endure hardship and remain faithful to the Lord in view of what Jesus Christ has done and will do.⁵⁰

Some interpreters believe the references to denying the Lord and being denied by him refer to unbelievers. However, there is nothing in the context to indicate that Paul had unbelievers in mind. On the contrary he used "we" and "us," which without further

⁴⁷Mounce, p. 517.

⁴⁸See Davey S. Ermold, "The Soteriology of 2 Timothy 2:11-13 — Part III," *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 15:45 (August 2011):71-89.

⁴⁹Knight, p. 406. Cf. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:245.

⁵⁰See also Brad McCoy, "Secure Yet Scrutinized—2 Timothy 2:11-13," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 1:1 (Autumn 1988):21-33.

explanation would naturally include Paul and Timothy. In the context Paul made frequent references to the judgment seat of Christ (1:12, 18; 4:8). This whole epistle constitutes an exhortation for Christians to remain faithful to the Lord in view of that coming event.

B. CHARGE TO REMAIN FAITHFUL 2:14-26

Paul turned from his emphasis on the importance of enduring hardship in the preceding verses (vv. 1-13) to continue to emphasize Timothy's need to remain faithful to the Lord. He did this to motivate him further to persevere.

"In this section, there is a shift in the didactic strategy from an emphasis on models to instruction with maxims and specific commands."⁵¹

1. Faithfulness in public ministry 2:14-18

2:14 This verse is transitional. Timothy was to keep reminding his "faithful men" of the things Paul had just brought back to his own recollection (i.e., vv. 3-13, but especially vv. 11-13). Furthermore, he should warn them against emphasizing hair-splitting controversies in their ministries since these do more harm than good (cf. 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 6:4-5).

"In the end disputing about words seeks not the victory of truth but the victory of the speaker."⁵²

2:15 Positively, in contrast, Timothy should be "diligent" (lit. zealous) to make sure that when he stood before God he would receive the Lord's approval and not be ashamed (cf. 1 John 2:28).⁵³ Most important in gaining this goal was the way he would proclaim God's truth. He must teach it consistent with God's intended meaning and purpose. "Handling accurately" (lit. cutting straight) is a figure that paints a picture of a workman who is careful and accurate in his work. The Greek word (*orthotomounta*) elsewhere describes a tentmaker who makes straight rather than wavy cuts in his material. It pictures a builder who lays bricks in straight rows and a farmer who plows a straight furrow.⁵⁴ The way a minister of the gospel presents the Word of God was of primary importance to Paul, and it should be to us. The Greek word *ergaten* (workman) stresses the laborious nature of the task rather than the skill needed to perform it.

2:16-17a Timothy should turn away from meaningless discussions that characterize the world, on the other hand (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 4:7; 6:20). These only provide an atmosphere in which ungodliness grows.

⁵¹Towner, *The Letters . . .*, p. 516.

⁵²R. W. Ward, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy & Titus*, p. 171.

⁵³Cf. White, 4:165.

⁵⁴Robertson, 4:619.

"It may be that these people regarded themselves as 'progressives' and that Paul picks up the verb from their usage, ironically indicating that their progress is in ungodliness."⁵⁵

Those who engage in such discussions spread poison that eventually corrupts the body of Christ. Gangrene is decay of tissue in a part of the body when the blood supply is obstructed by injury, disease, or some other cause. Medical writers of Paul's day used this term (Gr. *gangraina*, only here in the New Testament) to describe a sore that eats into the flesh.⁵⁶

2:17b-18 Paul cited concrete examples of two men, probably from Ephesus (cf. 1 Tim. 1:20), whose verbal speculations were derailing other sincere Christians from the track of God's truth.

"Perhaps due to some confusion over the Pauline teaching that believers even now participate in the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:4-5, 8; 2 Tim 2:11), they believed and taught that the resurrection of believers had already occurred in a spiritual sense . . .

"That such a mistake could be made may seem strange to us. But the fervency of the first-generation church's hope of Christ's return and certain carryovers from the pagan religions out of which believers came . . . could have led some to the conclusion that all of salvation's blessings were to be experienced now. A modern parallel is what we might describe as Christian triumphalism (or the 'health and wealth' gospel), which tends to present the Christian message as the quick solution to all of life's problems. The same basic mistake seems to be involved."⁵⁷

2. Faithfulness in personal life 2:19-21

2:19 Even though some in the Ephesian church were upsetting and being upset, the universal church itself had stood and would continue to stand firm (Gr. perfect tense; cf. vv. 20-21; Isa. 28:16 LXX; 1 Cor. 3:10-12; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Tim. 3:15; 6:19). The witness (seal) to this was the truth contained in two passages from the Old Testament (Num. 16:5, and Isa. 52:11 or possibly Num. 16:26; cf. Joel 3:5). The first passage assures that God differentiates between His faithful servants and those who are unfaithful. The second calls on those who choose to identify themselves with the Lord to abstain from wicked behavior. Seals in New Testament times indicated ownership, security, and authenticity.

⁵⁵Knight, p. 413.

⁵⁶Earle, p. 402.

⁵⁷Towner, *1-2 Timothy* . . . , pp. 44-45. Cf. also pp. 158-59, and 183; and Knight, p. 414. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:12.

"What is intended is the 'seal' of ownership that the architect or owner would have inscribed on the foundation stone (similar in some ways to our modern cornerstones)."⁵⁸

2:20-21 Paul employed a different illustration to emphasize the same point. In the church there are individuals who honor the Lord as a result of their dedication to follow His truth. These people are useful to the Lord in His work because their commitment to His Word prepares them for His service. However there are also Christians who because of their lack of commitment to God's truth bring dishonor on Him while they seek to be His instruments of service (e.g., false teachers). If someone avoids the defilement of this second group (v. 16), he or she can be a member of the first group (cf. Rom. 9:21).

The major argument for identifying the "large house" as the church is the context. Paul was speaking of faithful and unfaithful Christians (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15).⁵⁹

3. Summary applications 2:22-26

2:22 Paul urged Timothy to run away from the attractive desires that appeal especially to the young. In view of the context he was probably thinking of the desire to argue, to develop a unique theology, to make a reputation for oneself by being doctrinally innovative, and the like. All of these are desires that the individuals Paul warned Timothy to avoid indulged. Nevertheless "youthful lusts" is certainly a broad enough term to include sexual passions as well (cf. Gen. 39:12).⁶⁰ In contrast, Timothy should run toward the goals of right behavior, faith in God, love for all people, and peace with his fellow committed brethren. Other Pauline virtue lists with more than three items are in 3:10; 2 Corinthians 6:6-7; Galatians 5:22-23; and Colossians 3:12-15.

"V. 22 does not simply reiterate what precedes it but gives, rather, a wider perspective on what true sanctification means. It is added to forestall the false impression that avoiding fellowship with false teachers, essential as that is, is all there is to sanctification."⁶¹

2:23 Timothy needed to refuse to participate in unwise and immature debates since these generate arguments that prove divisive (cf. 1 Tim. 1:7).

⁵⁸Fee, p. 257. Cf. Guthrie, p. 150.

⁵⁹Lea, p. 218.

⁶⁰See "How Common Is Pastoral Indiscretion?" and "Private Sin of Public Ministry," *Leadership* 9:1 (Winter 1988):12-13 and 14-23.

⁶¹Knight, p. 420.

"Such questions will be brought before you: refuse to discuss them."⁶²

Those who participate in this activity as a type of sport are ignorant (*apaideutous*). The same Greek word means undisciplined, uneducated, or rude.

"The irrelevancy of much of the controversy then prevalent among Christians seems to have deeply impressed St. Paul; again and again he returns to this charge against the heretical teachers, that their doctrines are unprofitable and vain, and that they breed strife about questions either unimportant or insoluble."⁶³

2:24-26 Such behavior is inappropriate for a servant of the Lord. He or she must promote peace and unity among the brethren (cf. 1 Tim. 1:5). The emphasis in the word translated "able to teach" in the Greek (*didaktikos*, cf. 1 Tim. 3:2) is on the teacher's ability to bring out the best in his students rather than on his knowledge.⁶⁴

He must also gently correct the erring with a view to their restoration to correct doctrine and correct practice. Thus they may escape the devil's trap and be able to do God's will again.⁶⁵

". . . the three characteristics just named, 'gentle,' 'able to teach,' and 'forbearing,' correspond respectively to the three elements in the task to be performed—'in meekness,' 'instructing,' and 'those in opposition' . . ."⁶⁶

"If men will not be the servants of God they inevitably become the captives of the Devil. Man's freedom is his freedom to choose his master."⁶⁷

"This remarkable and helpful section [vv. 24-26] sets forth the duty of the Lord's servant and the attitude with which he should conduct himself. The central focus of this duty is teaching and correcting those in opposition so that they may repent and learn the truth (vv. 24-25). The Lord's servant must seek to communicate this truth in such a way that opponents embrace it and abandon their error with

⁶²White, 4:168.

⁶³Bernard, p. 126.

⁶⁴Kelly, p. 190.

⁶⁵Robertson, 4:622.

⁶⁶Knight, p. 424.

⁶⁷Hiebert, p. 80.

proper remorse. God's servant thus seeks to be the instrument through whose efforts God brings them to himself."⁶⁸

In this second chapter Paul compared the believer-minister to seven things: a son (v. 1), a soldier (v. 3), an athlete (v. 5), a farmer (v. 6), a laborer (v. 15), a vessel (v. 21), and a servant-slave (v. 24).⁶⁹

IV. DIRECTIONS CONCERNING THE LAST DAYS 3:1—4:8

Paul anticipated dark days ahead for the church. He listed several characteristics of this time, clarified the most important conduct in it, and explained his own role to prepare Timothy and all his readers for what lay ahead.

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAST DAYS 3:1-13

Paul instructed Timothy concerning what God had revealed would take place in the last days. He did so to help him realize that he faced no unknown situation in Ephesus and to enable him to combat it intelligently.

1. Evidences of faithlessness 3:1-7

- 3:1 Paul had given Timothy some instruction concerning the apostasy of the last days in his first epistle (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Now he gave much more. The "last days" refers to the days preceding the Lord's return for His own (i.e., the Rapture).⁷⁰ They are "last" not because they are few but because they are the final days of the present age. In another sense the entire inter-advent age constitutes the last days (cf. Heb. 1:2).⁷¹ Timothy was already in the last days, but they would continue and grow worse. These times would be "difficult" for all, especially faithful Christians. A list of 19 specific characteristics of these days follows.
- 3:2 People would be (1) self-centered and narcissistic (Gr. *philautoi*), (2) lovers of money (*philargyroi*, cf. 1 Tim. 3:3, 8), (3) boastful of their own importance (*alazones*), and (4) proud, arrogant in attitude (*hyperephanoi*). They would be (5) abusive toward others (*blasphemoi*), (6) unresponsive to parental discipline, (7) ungrateful, unthankful, unappreciative (*acharistoi*), and (8) impure, unholy (*anosioi*).
- 3:3 Furthermore, they would be (9) heartless, callous, hateful (*astorgoi*), (10) unforgiving (*aspondoi*) and consequently irreconcilable, and (11) slanderous of others (*diabolo*), speaking with malicious gossip. They

⁶⁸Knight, p. 427.

⁶⁹See D. Edmond Hiebert, "Pauline Images of a Christian Leader," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 133:531 (July-September 1976):213-28.

⁷⁰Kelly, p. 193; Earle, p. 406.

⁷¹Lea, p. 223.

would be (12) lacking in self-control, especially self-restraint (*akrateis*), (13) brutal, brutish, uncivilized (*anemeroi*), and (14) antagonistic toward whatever is good (*aphilagathoi*).

- 3:4 They would also be (15) disposed toward betrayal, treacherous (*prodotai*), and (16) headstrong, reckless (*propeteis*). They would be (17) conceited (*tetyphomenoi*), puffed up with pride, wrapped in a mist of self-delusion, and (18) devoted to personal pleasure (*philedonoi*) rather than to God (*philotheoi*).

This "vice list" is quite similar to the one in Romans 1:29-31.⁷² Vice lists were commonly used in Greco-Roman rhetoric to caricature an opponent. They often employed the repetition of sound and other rhythmic devices to increase the impact.⁷³

Paul wrote this list of 18 characteristics in a somewhat chiasmic arrangement. His list begins and ends with two groups of two words expressing a misdirection of love. Then come two groups with three terms each that focus on pride and hostility toward others. Then come two groups, five words followed by three words, all of which begin with *a* in the Greek text that negate some good quality that God's common grace affords. These eight words—the first one is in a two-word phrase—depict people who are devoid of the most basic characteristics of human life. The center of the chiasm is the word *diaboloï*, meaning slanderers, devilish people (cf. 2:26; 1 Tim. 3:11; Titus 2:3).⁷⁴

- 3:5 Finally these people would (19) make a pretense of being religious but deny the source of true spiritual power (i.e., God's Word). This last characteristic makes clear that those individuals described in verses 2-4 would even claim to be Christians (i.e., false teachers and their followers). Timothy was to avoid association with people who demonstrated these characteristics except, of course, for purposes of evangelism and instruction.

"Self-love is the basic shortcoming mentioned in the list of vices in 3:2-5. This vice leads to action in vv. 6-9 that is deceitful, determined to dominate, stubborn, and rejected by God."⁷⁵

- 3:6-7 Paul evidently had the false teachers in Ephesus in view in these verses, though what he wrote here applies to all false teachers. Teachers manifesting some of the characteristics he just enumerated made a practice of gaining entrance into households in which the wives were spiritually

⁷²A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 144. See René A. López, "A Study of Pauline Passages with Vice Lists," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168:671 (July-September 2011):301-16.

⁷³See Towner, *The Letters . . .*, pp. 552-53.

⁷⁴Knight, pp. 429-32.

⁷⁵Lea, p. 230.

weak (lit. little). He described these women further as dominated by various sins, responsive to their sinful desires, and seemingly ever learning but never really able to comprehend the truth of God. They cannot learn the truth because what they are learning is falsehood. The false teachers captivated such women with their teaching. Women were probably more susceptible to the influence of false teachers than men because in Paul's culture women occupied a lower status in society.⁷⁶ Furthermore, they did not usually have as much education as their husbands. Another explanation is that they had more time on their hands with which they could dabble in various things.

"It is the immaturity and thus the weakness of these 'childish women' that make them susceptible to the false teachers. Paul does not use the term to derogate women but to describe a situation involving particular women. That he uses a diminutive form shows that he is not intending to describe women in general."⁷⁷

2. Negative and positive illustrations 3:8-13

3:8-9 Paul used the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses in the plagues (Exod. 7:11; 9:11) to illustrate the fate of these false teachers. Jewish oral or written tradition preserved their names even though the Old Testament did not.⁷⁸ Their names, probably nicknames, mean "the rebel" and "the opponent."⁷⁹ Like these magicians, the false teachers opposed God's revealed truth, possessed corrupt minds, and were outside the fold of the faithful. They would proceed only so far, as their Egyptian predecessors did. Their foolishness would become common knowledge when their power would prove inadequate.

3:10-11 Timothy's past character and conduct stood in stark contrast to that of the false teachers. He had fully followed Paul's ministry (teaching, conduct, and purpose) and his life (faith, patience, love, and perseverance). The fact that God had delivered Paul from all his persecutions would have encouraged Timothy to continue following the apostle's example.

"The Lord *ever* rescues his people, frequently *from* death, sometimes *by means of* death. Either way, nothing ever separates them from his love (Rom. 8:38, 39)."⁸⁰

3:12-13 Timothy needed to realize, as all Christians do, especially those to whom "prosperity theology" appeals, that when a person determines to live a godly life he or she will suffer persecution. With his or her commitment to

⁷⁶Wiersbe, 2:250.

⁷⁷Knight, p. 433.

⁷⁸Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 285. See also Fee, pp. 272, 274.

⁷⁹Walter Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 107.

⁸⁰William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, p. 293.

follow Christ faithfully the Christian sets the course of his or her life directly opposite to the course of the world system. Confrontation and conflict become inevitable (cf. Matt. 10:22-23; Luke 21:12; John 15:20; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 3:4).

The wickedness of evil people, particularly charlatans, will increase as time passes. They will not only deceive others, but their sins and other deceivers will deceive them increasingly too. Such is the perversity of sin.

This statement does not contradict what Paul said in verse 9. In verse 13 he meant that evil becomes more intensive as time goes on. In verse 9 he meant that the teaching of evil does not necessarily become more extensive and capture a wider audience as evil becomes worse.⁸¹

B. CONDUCT IN THE LAST DAYS 3:14—4:5

Paul identified two of Timothy's duties in the last days to impress him with what was of highest priority.

1. Adherence to the truth 3:14-17

3:14-15 In his personal life Timothy should continue living as he had rather than turning aside to follow the example of the evil men Paul just mentioned. Timothy's conduct grew out of what he had learned that gave him personal convictions.

"Jewish parents were expected to teach their children the Law from the age of five onwards."⁸²

Timothy's convictions grew stronger because Paul's life had backed up the truth that Timothy had learned from him. Furthermore they were consistent with the sacred Scriptures that he had known all his life (i.e., the Hebrew Scriptures, cf. 1:5). These inspired writings convey wisdom and lead to personal salvation from sin because they point to Christ. Thus they are reliable and powerful.

3:16-17 Paul wanted to reemphasize the importance of Scripture in Timothy's present and future ministry. His emphasis in verse 15 was on its importance in Timothy's life in the past.

There is no reason to limit the universal force of "all" to matters of salvation. When the Greek word translated "all" or "every" (*pas*) occurs with a technical noun such as "Scripture," it is better to render it "all" rather than "every."⁸³ Furthermore, the context seems to suggest that Paul

⁸¹Knight, p. 442.

⁸²Kelly, p. 201. Cf. Mishnah *Pirke Aboth* 5:21.

⁸³H. Wayne House, "Biblical Inspiration in 2 Timothy 3:16," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137:545 (January-March 1980):54-56; Mounce, p. 566; Towner, *The Letters . . .*, p. 587.

had Scripture as a whole in view.⁸⁴ Paul had been speaking of the Old Testament as a whole in verse 15, and he undoubtedly carried that thought over into verse 16. All Scripture is divinely inspired (Gr. *theopneustos*, lit. God-breathed, cf. 2 Pet. 1:21). This fact in itself should be adequate reason for proclaiming it. It does not merely *contain* the Word of God or *become* the Word of God under certain conditions. It *is* God's Word, the expression of His person (heart, mind, will, etc.). This was the view of the Hebrew Bible that Jews in the first century commonly held.⁸⁵ "Scripture" means sacred writing and applies to all divinely inspired writings (Old and New Testaments). The Greeks used the word *graphie*, translated "Scripture," to refer to any piece of writing, but the New Testament writers used it only of holy Scripture. When Paul made this statement the books of our Old Testament were the inspired writings he had in view primarily. However even in Paul's day Christians recognized some New Testament books as inspired (cf. 2 Pet. 3:16).

"God's activity of 'breathing' and the human activity of writing are in some sense complementary (cf. 2 Pet 1:21)."⁸⁶

Scripture is useful. Therefore Timothy should use it in his ministry. It is profitable for teaching (causing others to understand God's truth) and reproof (bringing conviction of error when there has been deviation from God's truth). It is helpful for correction (bringing restoration to the truth when there has been error) and training in righteousness (child-training type guidance in the ways of right living that God's truth reveals). This is a selective rather than an exhaustive list of the ways in which the Scriptures are useful.

"They are profitable for doctrine (what is right), for reproof (what is not right), for correction (how to get right), and for instruction in righteousness (how to stay right)."⁸⁷

Consequently the man (or woman) of God has all that is essential to fulfill his (or her) ministry (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3). The "man of God" refers to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:11) but also anyone who commits himself (or herself) to God, especially, in view of the context, those in positions of spiritual oversight. He is adequate (complete, filled out, equipped with all the essential tools he needs).

⁸⁴See Fee, p. 279.

⁸⁵Kelly, p. 203. See also Louis Igou Hodges, "Evangelical Definitions of Inspiration: Critiques and a Suggested Definition," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37:1 (March 1994):99-114.

⁸⁶Towner, *The Letters . . .*, p. 589.

⁸⁷Wiersbe, 2:253.

"The Christian minister has in his hands a God-given instrument designed to equip him completely for his work."⁸⁸

"Every good work" is the ultimate goal of our lives (Eph. 2:10). The mastery and use of Scripture is only a means to an end, not an end in itself. God did not give us the Bible to satisfy our curiosity alone but to enable us to help other people spiritually.

"The divine inspiration of the Scriptures is stated in the Pastorals more forcefully than anywhere else in the NT."⁸⁹

2. Proclamation of the truth 4:1-5

4:1 Paul wanted Timothy to proclaim the truth in his public ministry as well as to adhere to it in his personal life. He introduced the command in verse 2 with a very solemn preamble in verse 1 (cf. 1 Tim. 5:21; 6:13). He reminded Timothy that God was watching him, as was Jesus Christ who will judge all people. He further reminded him that Christ will return (at any time implied) and set up His kingdom. Timothy should prepare to meet Him by carrying out Paul's command (cf. Mark 13:34-35).

Paul's point was this. Jesus Christ will judge Christians at the judgment seat of Christ and then appear again at the Second Coming (cf. 1:10) and set up His millennial kingdom on the earth. Consequently Timothy needed to herald the Word of God (v. 2) and faithfully carry out the ministry that God had given him (v. 5).⁹⁰

"The [Roman] Emperor's appearance in any place was his *epiphaneia* ["appearing"]. Obviously when the Emperor was due to visit any place, everything was put in perfect order. The streets were swept and garnished; all work was up-to-date. The town was scoured and decorated to be fit for the *epiphaneia* of the Emperor. So Paul says to Timothy: 'You know what happens when any town is expecting the *epiphaneia* of the Emperor; *you* are expecting the *epiphaneia* of Jesus Christ. Do your work in such a way that all things will be ready whenever He appears.'"⁹¹

4:2 Herald the Word of God! That is the primary responsibility of every leader of God's people (cf. 1:14; 1 Tim. 6:20).

⁸⁸Guthrie, p. 165.

⁸⁹Ralph Earle, "1 Timothy," in *Ephesians-Philemon*, vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 345.

⁹⁰See Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament*, pp. 153, 159-60.

⁹¹William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 233.

"*kerysso* ["preach"] is the verbal cognate of *kerych*, the 'herald' whose duty it was to make public proclamation. The verb thus means 'proclaim aloud, publicly' and is used in the NT of public proclamation or 'preaching' of the message that God has given . . ."92

We must preach the Word in season and out of season (continually, always, when convenient or inconvenient, not just during special periods of emphasis). Paul already explained the reason for this in 3:16-17. Timothy was to use the Word of God to reprove (convict) those in error (an appeal to the emotions). He was to use it to rebuke those in sin (an appeal to the mind). He was also to use it to encourage those living in harmony with God's will (an appeal to the will). He was to carry on all of these activities—conviction, warning, and appeal—very patiently and with careful instruction (cf. 2:25; 3:10; 1 Tim. 1:16). There are five imperatives in this verse: preach, be ready, reprove, rebuke, and exhort.

"Christian reproof without the grace of long-suffering has often led to a harsh, censorious attitude intensely harmful to the cause of Christ. But the other requirement is equally essential, for correction must be intelligently understood and hence based on 'teaching'. To rebuke without instruction is to leave the root cause of error untouched."93

"Christian ministry centers on the Word of God, God's own expression of his will for people whom he desires to bless. If God had not spoken, we would not have known about him. Since it is through his Word that he continues to speak with his people, ministry first and foremost must be the communication of his Word."94

4:3-4 Paul explained the reason for this charge next. "They" are the people to whom Timothy and his followers would preach: his listeners. In the end time they would not tolerate the truth but would only listen to speakers who told them what they wanted to hear (false doctrine, entertainment, etc.; cf. 3:6). Paul pictured people who would be bored by, apathetic to, and annoyed by sound doctrine.

"In other words, they have made themselves the measure of who should teach them and what teaching is acceptable."95

Moreover they would choose to believe myths rather than the truth (e.g., atheistic evolution, humanism, reincarnation, etc.; cf. 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; Titus 1:14). The context seems to indicate that these people were believers

⁹²Knight, p. 453. Cf. 1 Tim. 3:16.

⁹³Guthrie, pp. 166-67.

⁹⁴Towner, *1-2 Timothy* . . . , p. 204.

⁹⁵Knight, p. 455.

(cf. Luke 8:13; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:12). Earle believed the phrase "sound doctrine" is the key one in the Pastorals (cf. 1 Tim. 1:10).⁹⁶

"Timothy's major responsibility in Ephesus was to defend and proclaim sound doctrine."⁹⁷

4:5 In view of this increasing opposition Timothy needed to keep alert (cool-headed, "wide awake"⁹⁸) by avoiding false teaching. To do this he needed to maintain self-control under all circumstances.⁹⁹ He needed to endure hardship willingly and to continue proclaiming the gospel to the lost. He would thereby carry out the ministry God had entrusted to him completely. Four more imperatives appear in this verse (cf. v. 2): be, endure, do, and fulfill.

"Thus with the words of the solemn charge in 4:1-5 Paul in effect brings to a conclusion his words of instruction regarding Timothy's duties as a minister of Christ. This charge gathers up the concerns expressed throughout the letter and crystallizes them in nine memorable imperatives that begin with 'preach the word' and end with 'fulfill your ministry.' With these imperatives Paul calls on Timothy to proclaim and apply God's word with much patience and careful instruction, to be clearheaded in every situation, to bear whatever difficulties such a ministry may involve him in, to evangelize, and to do whatever is necessary to accomplish the ministry to which Christ has called him."¹⁰⁰

JOB OR MINISTRY? ¹⁰¹	
A job is one you choose;	
A ministry is one Christ chooses for you.	
A job depends on your abilities;	
A ministry depends on your availability to God.	
In a job you expect to receive;	
In a ministry you expect to give.	
A job done well brings you self-esteem;	
A ministry done well brings honor to Jesus Christ.	
In a job you give something to get something;	
In a ministry you return something that has already been given to you.	
A job well done has temporal remuneration;	
A ministry well done brings eternal rewards.	

⁹⁶Earle, "2 Timothy," p. 411.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸E.K. Simpson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 154.

⁹⁹Earle, "2 Timothy," p. 411.

¹⁰⁰Knight, p. 458.

¹⁰¹Anonymous.

C. PAUL'S ROLE IN THE LAST DAYS 4:6-8

Paul revealed that he was about to die to impress on Timothy further the importance of remaining faithful to the Lord.

4:6 Paul believed that he would die very soon. He used two euphemistic expressions to describe his death. First, his life was presently being "poured out" as a sacrifice to God, like the daily drink offerings in Judaism (Num. 15:1-10; cf. Num. 28:4-7; Phil. 2:17). Soon there would be nothing left. After the Jewish priest offered the lamb, ram, or bull in this ritual, he poured wine beside the altar. This was the last act in the sacrificial ceremony all of which symbolized the dedication of the believer to God in worship. The pouring out of the wine pictured the gradual ebbing away of Paul's life that had been a living sacrifice to God since the apostle's conversion.¹⁰²

Second, Paul was getting ready to depart this earth as a traveler leaves one country for another or as a soldier breaks camp. The apostle believed that Nero would not release him from prison but would execute him. Christian tradition confirms that Paul died as a martyr in Rome.¹⁰³ The impending death of Paul lent added urgency to his charge to Timothy.

4:7 Paul used three more figures to describe his life as he reviewed it. The first two are athletic metaphors (cf. 2:5) describing a boxer or wrestler and a runner (cf. Acts 20:24). The third is that of a faithful steward who has kept (guarded) his charge (cf. 1 Cor. 4:2; Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27). Another view is that the first figure is military, the second athletic, and the third religious.¹⁰⁴ A third view is that all three figures are athletic.¹⁰⁵ Paul had lived the Christian life and served the Lord as He had commanded. Verses 6 and 7 constitute Paul's epitaph.

Paul probably meant that he had run in the noblest race of all, namely, the ministry of the gospel, not that he had done his best in the contest.¹⁰⁶

4:8 Because he had been faithful, Paul did not dread dying but looked forward to seeing His Lord. On the day of rewards for Christians (the judgment seat of Christ; 1:12, 18; 2 Cor. 5:10) Paul was confident that the Lord would give him a reward that was proper.

The "crown of righteousness" may be either the fullness of righteousness as a reward or some unspecified reward for righteous conduct on earth (cf. James 1:12; Rev. 2:10). This seems to be a metaphorical crown (i.e., a reward) rather than a literal material crown since righteousness is non-

¹⁰²Hendriksen, p. 313.

¹⁰³See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 1:329-33.

¹⁰⁴Simpson, p. 159.

¹⁰⁵Earle, "2 Timothy," pp. 412-13.

¹⁰⁶Fee, p. 289; Lea, p. 248.

material. This reward (victor's crown, Gr. *stephanos*) will go to all Christians like Paul who, by the way they lived, demonstrated a longing for the Lord's return. Not all Christians are anxious for the Lord to return since some know they need to change their way of living.

BELIEVERS' CROWNS		
Title	Reason	Reference
An Imperishable Crown	For leading a disciplined life	1 Cor. 9:25
A Crown of Rejoicing	For evangelism and discipleship	1 Thess. 2:19
A Crown of Righteousness	For loving the Lord's appearing	2 Tim. 4:8
A Crown of Life	For enduring trials	James 1:12; Rev. 2:10
A Crown of Glory	For shepherding God's flock faithfully	1 Pet. 5:4

Clearly Paul was thinking of the judgment seat of Christ in verses 1-8. He referred to his Judge in verses 1 and 8. Note that it will be the righteous Judge who will bestow the crown of righteousness.

"An expectation of reward is also a recognition of God's grace. Those who anticipate reward will not be able to boast, 'Look at my accomplishments.' They should be able to offer praise to God by saying, 'Thank you, Lord, for what you have produced in me.' The very expectation of reward is an acknowledgment of God's grace."¹⁰⁷

V. CONCLUDING PERSONAL INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION 4:9-22

Paul concluded his last inspired epistle by giving Timothy personal instructions and information to enable him to carry out the apostle's last wishes.

A. FELLOW WORKERS AND AN OPPONENT 4:9-15

4:9-10 Paul urged Timothy to join him in Rome soon. He did not expect to live much longer (cf. v. 6).

"The constitutional method of inflicting capital punishment on a Roman citizen was by the lictor's axe. The criminal was tied to a stake; cruelly scourged with the rods, and then beheaded."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 249. See also Joe L. Wall, *Going for the Gold*, pp. 125-28, 131-39.

¹⁰⁸W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 781, footnote 4.

Demas, a short form of Demetrius (cf. 3 John 12, probably not the same man), Paul's fellow worker, had succumbed to the allurements of the world (instead of loving Christ's appearing; cf. Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:21; 1 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:12; 1 John 2:15). He had departed from Paul and had gone to live in Thessalonica (cf. Col. 4:14; Phile. 24). He, like Hymenaeus and Philetus (2:17), Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20), and others had not continued to follow Christ faithfully.

"He was not willing to pay the price of hardship and suffering that Paul was paying."¹⁰⁹

Crescens had gone to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia (i.e., Illyricum, modern Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) presumably in the Lord's service.

"Tradition says that he [Crescens] went north from Rome into Gaul, founded the churches in Vienne [*sic*] and Mayence near Lyons . . . , and became the bishop of Chalcedon . . ."¹¹⁰

4:11-13

Luke was Paul's only companion, perhaps among his inner circle of co-laborers or day to day. Timothy was to pick up Mark (Acts 15:36-40) and bring him with him because Paul believed Mark could be useful to him (cf. Phile. 11). Mark had, of course, previously left Paul and Barnabas in Perga and had returned to Jerusalem for unexplained reasons (Acts 13:13). Tychicus had gone to Ephesus, or was about to go, if the aorist *apesteila* ("I sent") is epistolary, perhaps to relieve Timothy there (Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9). Timothy should also bring Paul a certain cloak, perhaps for his comfort as colder weather set in (v. 21). Paul also asked him to bring certain unidentified books and especially "the parchments." The parchments may have been copies of Old Testament books and or inspired New Testament writings, and or Paul's legal papers.

"Even as an old man facing certain death, the apostle has not lost his interest for study and mental pursuits. It presents a standing challenge to the minister to be an indefatigable student, especially of the Word of God."¹¹¹

"There is an interesting historical parallel to Paul's request. William Tyndale, who translated the first NT printed in English, was imprisoned in Vilvorde Castle near Brussels before his execution in 1536. In the year preceding his death he wrote to the governor, begging for warmer

¹⁰⁹Earle, "2 Timothy," p. 414.

¹¹⁰Mounce, p. 590.

¹¹¹Hiebert, *Second Timothy*, p. 120.

clothing, a woolen shirt, and above all his Hebrew Bible, grammar, and dictionary."¹¹²

- 4:14-15 The Alexander Paul warned Timothy about may have been the same man he mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20 (cf. Acts 19:33-34), though Alexander was a common name. Paul did not want Timothy to retaliate against him. The Lord would take care of that (Ps. 62:12). Timothy should simply beware of him.

B. PAUL'S PRELIMINARY HEARING IN COURT 4:16-18

- 4:16 Customarily under Roman law accused prisoners underwent a preliminary hearing before their trial. At this hearing, witnesses could speak on behalf of the accused. In Paul's case no one had come to his defense. This was probably because when Rome burned in July of A.D. 64 Nero blamed the Christians, and from then on it was dangerous to be a known Christian in Rome. Neither local Christians nor Paul's fellow workers were willing to stand with the apostle (cf. Matt. 26:56). Paul hoped the Lord would not hold their failure against them (cf. Ps. 32:2; Luke 23:34).
- 4:17 The Lord, however, had not abandoned His faithful servant on that occasion but had strengthened Paul. Evidently Paul was able to give a word of witness at his hearing that furthered his mission to the Gentiles. He had so far escaped death, though he was ready to die as a martyr. The "lion's mouth" may be a reference to the lions in the Roman Coliseum that were then devouring Christians. However the Romans would have beheaded Paul rather than thrown him to the lions since he was a Roman citizen. This phrase may be a veiled reference to Nero or probably a more general allusion to Satan's instruments of evil that have always sought to destroy God's faithful servants (cf. Dan. 6:22; Ps. 22:21; Matt. 6:13; 1 Pet. 5:8).
- 4:18 Paul knew he would die a martyr's death (vv. 6-8), but he saw death as God's vehicle to deliver him from an evil deed (his execution) and to bring him into his Lord's presence. For this prospect he glorified God.

Thoughts of the coming heavenly kingdom that Paul was about to enter lay behind all he wrote in verses 1-18. He referred to Christ's kingdom in verses 1 and 18 specifically. I believe Paul was speaking of Christ's rule in which all Christians will participate when we enter His presence, part of which will include His millennial reign on the earth.

"Three features of Paul's attitude can provide us help and encouragement for today. First, Paul avoided indulging his disappointments. . . . Second, Paul could rejoice in the victory won in the life of Mark. . . . Third, Paul found no room for vindictiveness toward those who hurt or opposed him."¹¹³

¹¹²Earle, "2 Timothy," p. 415.

¹¹³Lea, p. 257.

C. ADDITIONAL GREETINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS 4:19-21

- 4:19 Paul sent greetings to his old friends Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila who then lived in Ephesus (cf. Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19). He also greeted the loyal family of Onesiphorus of whom he had written earlier (1:16).
- 4:20 Erastus and Trophimus were old associates of Timothy (Acts 19:22; 20:4; 21:29). Paul sent news of them. Some authorities believe that Paul's ability to heal people physically had ended. Many of them believe that God gave the gift of healing to the church only in its infancy to help authenticate the apostles as they ministered to the Jews (Eph. 2:20; Heb. 2:3-4).¹¹⁴ A better explanation, I think, is that, though the gift of healing did decline, Jesus' and the apostles' ability to heal always depended on the sovereign will of God (Luke 5:17; Acts 3:12-13). Evidently it was not God's will for Trophimus to experience miraculous healing then (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-9).
- 4:21 Winter severely restricted travel in some parts of the Roman world. Timothy needed to leave Ephesus soon so he could reach Rome without undue difficulty. Paul relayed the greetings of four other brethren, probably local, who Timothy evidently knew, as well as the greetings of all the local Christians.

"Linus is mentioned by Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, iii.3) as the first bishop of Rome after the death of Peter and Paul."¹¹⁵

D. BENEDECTION 4:22

In conclusion, Paul first wished the Lord's ministry of grace on Timothy's spirit, perhaps to encourage him to remain faithful. Then he wished God's grace for all the readers (plural "you" in the Greek text) of this epistle.

¹¹⁴See Gary W. Derickson, "The Decline of Miracles in the New Testament Era," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1986; idem, "The Cessation of Healing Miracles in Paul's Ministry," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155:619 (July-September 1998):299-315.

¹¹⁵Earle, "2 Timothy," pp. 417-18.

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