

Second Timothy

Scripture: 2 Timothy

Code: MSB55

Title

This epistle is the second of two inspired letters Paul the apostle wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy (1:2; 2:1). For biographical information on Timothy, see Introduction to 1 Timothy: Title. It is titled, as are the other personal letters of Paul to individuals (1 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon), with the name of the addressee (1:2).

Author and Date

The issue of Paul's authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is discussed in the Introduction to 1 Timothy: Author and Date. Paul wrote 2 Timothy, the last of his inspired letters, shortly before his martyrdom (ca. A.D. 67).

Background and Setting

Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment for a short period of ministry during which he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. Second Timothy, however, finds Paul once again in a Roman prison (1:16; 2:9), apparently rearrested as part of Nero's persecution of Christians. Unlike Paul's confident hope of release during his first imprisonment (Phil. 1:19,25,26; 2:24; Philem. 22), this time he had no such hopes (4:6–8). In his first imprisonment in Rome (ca. A.D. 60–62), before Nero had begun the persecution of Christians (A.D. 64), he was only under house arrest and had opportunity for much interaction with people and ministry (Acts 28:16–31). At this time, 5 or 6 years later (ca. A.D. 66–67), however, he was in a cold cell (4:13), in chains (2:9), and with no hope of deliverance (4:6). Abandoned by virtually all of those close to him for fear of persecution (cf. 1:15; 4:9–12,16) and facing imminent execution, Paul wrote to Timothy, urging him to hasten to Rome for one last visit with the apostle (4:9,21). Whether Timothy made it to Rome before Paul's execution is not known. According to tradition, Paul was not released from this second Roman imprisonment, but suffered the martyrdom he had foreseen (4:6).

In this letter, Paul, aware the end was near, passed the non-apostolic mantle of ministry to Timothy (cf. 2:2) and exhorted him to continue faithful in his duties (1:6), hold on to sound doctrine (1:13,14), avoid error (2:15–18), accept persecution for the gospel (2:3,4; 3:10–12), put his confidence in the Scripture, and preach it relentlessly (3:15–4:5).

Historical and Theological Themes

It seems that Paul may have had reason to fear that Timothy was in danger of weakening spiritually. This would have been a grave concern for Paul since Timothy needed to carry on Paul's work (cf. 2:2). While there are no historical indications elsewhere in the NT as to why Paul was so concerned, there is evidence in the epistle itself from what he wrote. This concern is evident, for example, in Paul's exhortation to "stir up" his gift (1:6), to replace fear with power, love, and a sound mind (1:7), to not be ashamed of Paul and the Lord, but willingly suffer for the gospel (1:8), and to hold on to the truth (1:13,14). Summing up the potential problem of Timothy, who might be weakening under the pressure of the church and the persecution of the world, Paul calls him to 1) generally "be strong" (2:11), the key exhortation of the first part of the letter, and to 2) continue to "preach the word" (4:2), the main admonition of the last part. These final words to Timothy include few commendations but many admonitions, including about 25 imperatives.

Since Timothy was well versed in Paul's theology, the apostle did not instruct him further doctrinally. He did, however, allude to several important doctrines, including salvation by God's sovereign grace (1:9,10; 2:10), the person of Christ (2:8; 4:1,8), and perseverance (2:11–13); plus Paul wrote the crucial text of the NT on the inspiration of Scripture (3:16,17).

Interpretive Challenges

There are no major challenges in this letter involving theological issues. There is limited data regarding several individuals named in the epistle; e.g., Phygellus and Hermogenes (1:15), Onesiphorus (1:17; cf. 4:19), Hymenaeus and Philetus (2:17,18), Jannes and Jambres (3:8), and Alexander (4:14).

Outline

I. Greeting and Thanksgiving (1:1–5)

II. The Perseverance of a Man of God (1:6–18)

A. The Exhortation (1:6–11)

B. The Examples (1:12–18)

1. Paul (1:12–14)

2. Onesiphorus (1:15–18)

III. The Patterns of a Man of God (2:1–26)

- A. Paul (2:1, 2)
- B. A Soldier (2:3, 4)
- C. An Athlete (2:5)
- D. A Farmer (2:6, 7)
- E. Jesus (2:8–13)
- F. A Worker (2:14–19)
- G. A Vessel (2:20–23)
- H. A Servant (2:24–26)

IV. The Perils of a Man of God (3:1–17)

- A. Facing Apostasy (3:1–9)
- B. Defeating Apostasy (3:10–17)

V. The Preaching of the Man of God (4:1–5)

- A. The Charge to Preach (4:1, 2)
- B. The Need for Preaching (4:3–5)

VI. Concluding Remarks (4:6–18)

- A. Paul's Triumph (4:6–8)
- B. Paul's Needs (4:9–18)

VII. Paul's Farewells (4:19–22)

COPYRIGHT (C) 2013 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).