

2 Timothy

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Introduction

Paul is now in his second term in prison and is awaiting execution so this is literally (and consciously) his last will and testament. During his first term in prison he was under house arrest with rather pleasant conditions:

Acts 28:16 And when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.

Acts 28:30-31 And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, ³¹preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

After release from this first imprisonment Paul left Titus at Crete (Tit 1:5) and Timothy in Ephesus (1 Tim 1: 3, 4). He probably then went to Colossae to see Philemon (Phil 22) and then he went to Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3) where he visited Philippi (Phil 2:24). He then seemed to have wintered in Nicopolis (Tit 3:12) and probably then went to Spain or maybe even to Britain. He seems to have then gone to a port of Miletus where he had to leave Trophimus who had become ill (2 Tim 4:20). He seemed to have then gone to Troas where he stayed with Carpus and had to leave some books and his cloak behind (2 Tim 4:13). He may have been arrested the second time in Troas, which is why he had to leave behind some of his belongings.

This last imprisonment was under very difficult conditions¹: “dismal underground dungeon with a hole in the ceiling for light and air”. Tradition states that this was the Mamertine prison. Wherever it was, Onesiphorus is stated as having a hard time finding him:

2Tim 1:16-17 The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; ¹⁷but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me, and found me—

Paul was in chains (1:16; 2:9) and suffering from the loneliness and cold (4:9-13). His preliminary hearing had already occurred (4:16, 17) and he was awaiting his final trial but with no optimism about its results (4:6-8). The persecution by Nero was going full force (AD 64) and tradition states that he was beheaded on the Ostian Way, about three miles outside of Rome. Shortly before his death he sent this last letter to Timothy.

¹ Hendriksen, William, *The Epistles to Timothy and Titus*, Baker Book House, 1957).

It is quite fitting that he would write this last letter to his trusted friend and colleague Timothy, who had traveled with him for about 15 years. Paul had apparently been involved in his regeneration as he states: *1Cor 4:17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.* He had traveled with Paul during most of Paul's second and third missionary trips and he was with Paul during part of Paul's first imprisonment as he is mentioned all three of Paul's prison Epistles (Philemon 1; Phil 1:1; 2:19-24; Col 1:1). Paul also stated that he had no other fellow worker with such outstanding Christian character: *Phil 2:19-23 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.* ²⁰*For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.* ²¹*For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.* ²²*But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.* ²³*Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me;*

Timothy was still rather young. He was probably in his mid-thirties since he had served with Paul for about 15 years. He had some health problems and Paul advised him to drink a little wine rather than only water (1 Tim 5:23). We would today also probably describe him as an introvert and seems to have had the "Moses' syndrome" of not wanting to be a leader but a follower. But great leadership was thrust upon him by God and the strength displayed by Timothy over the years at Ephesus seems to reflect what Paul stated: *2Cor 12:10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

So we now begin our study of this wonderful book that should bring tears to our eyes as we attempt to be in the mind of Paul during his last time on earth. An outline of the four chapters given by Stott² seems very appropriate:

Chapter 1: The charge to guard the gospel (1:14)

Chapter 2: The charge to suffer for the gospel (2:3, 8, 9)

Chapter 3: The charge to continue in the gospel (3:13, 14)

Chapter 4: The charge to proclaim the gospel (4:1, 2)

All of these charges need to be practiced today by all Christians throughout the world.

² Stott, John R. W., *The Message of 2 Timothy*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1973.

Chapter One

2Tim 1:1-2 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,² to Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

As just a letter to Timothy, Paul did not need to verify his position with the Lord but he wanted this to be read to and by many people. Certainly Paul could not have possibly imagined how many people through almost 2000 years would have read and heard this letter. He wanted all readers to know both who he was and the reliability of Timothy to whom the letter was originally sent. His message was intended for the entire church and it is still reaching new believers today. The letter has validity because Paul was an apostle of Christ Jesus and because his being an apostle was by the will of God and the promise of life in Christ Jesus. He maintained that his apostleship was not by a commissioning from some local church or from any group of men and he certainly was not self-appointed as some today call themselves apostles. His appointment was by the will of God and by God only. He then says that his apostleship is based upon the promise of life in Christ Jesus for only through Him can anyone have life eternal in the presence of God. It is very appropriate that he would be writing this now as he was facing sure physical death. Jesus said that He was life: *John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.* Paul will also write in verse 10 that Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality through the gospel. Thus the gospel promises life evermore for all believers in Jesus Christ: *1John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.*

Jesus gave His specially chosen disciples the title Apostle (Luke 6:13). Paul includes himself as one chosen later by Jesus but with all the authority and assistance by the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus to the others.

Acts 26:15-18 "And I said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; ¹⁷delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, ¹⁸to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

The Greek words translated as "I am sending you" are *ego apostello*, which translate literally as "I apostle you". Paul defended his apostleship against many detractors such as in Gal 1:1, 11, 12.

Paul then tells all that will read this letter that he is writing this last letter to Timothy who has a very special status both with him and with the Lord. He then gives his great greeting of grace,

mercy and peace from the Father and the Son. These three words tell a lot about the sorry status of mankind and of the great love and promises of God to His chosen people. Grace is God's action toward those who are totally undeserving and without any merit before Holy God. Mercy is the action God chooses to have toward those same people and peace is reconciliation to those lives that can have nothing but discord through their own actions. The words grace and peace are often used by Paul in his letters. People must first have peace with God for without the mercy and grace of God all people would be at war with God. After being given this peace through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, people can then practice that peace with other Christians throughout the world. The kingdom of God is peace and joy: *Rom 14:17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

2Tim 1:3-4 I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, ⁴longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.

Paul writes that he thanks God for Timothy and he states that he (Paul) serves God the way his forefathers did, which may be a bit confusing. However Paul as a Christian and Paul as a Jew did serve the same God but Mohammed did not serve God. However that is not to say that all Jews are Christians! God has never changed and salvation has always been by faith given by God. Paul is referring to Abraham, Moses and Isaac as his forefathers and they certainly served God fervently in all ways that God had revealed to them. With the coming of Jesus the revelation of God to men was fulfilled and finally there was a way for salvation apart from an impossible obedience to the Law as was discussed above. Paul has a clear conscience in his service to God as he is completing his time on earth in that service. He will elaborate on that clear conscience later in this letter.

Timothy's father was Greek and his mother was Jewish (Acts 16:1). Although his father was evidently an unbeliever his mother Eunice became a Christian and his grandmother, Lois, became a Christian before his mother (5). Timothy was also taught the Old Testament from childhood (3:15) before being led to Christ by Paul (2). Paul prayed constantly for Timothy as he had a great love for this young man who had served so faithfully with him for many years. Paul remembers Timothy's tears when they last parted and he longs to see him again so that his joy might be made full.

2Tim 1:5-7 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. ⁶And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

Paul now turns his attention to the gift of faith from God that resides in Timothy who had also received some gift of the Holy Spirit through Paul's laying on of hands. He had referred to this gift in an earlier letter to Timothy: *1Tim 4:14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.* We do not know exactly what the *charisma* was but it certainly was related to Timothy's ministry. It could then be the gift of pastor or teacher or evangelist:

Eph 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

Whatever the gift, Paul asks Timothy to rekindle it but that does not mean that he has let it die out. The Greek word translated rekindle does not appear anywhere else in the NT and apparently means that he should always "fan the flame" by continually using it and praying for God to intensify it in his ministry. Paul then gives the reason that he should rekindle the gift and that is that the Holy Spirit given to each Christian does not make us timid but full of power, love, and discipline. Since we are indwelt by the power of the Holy Spirit we can exercise our gift with confidence that God's will is going to be completed through it. Since He is love, we exercise the gift by serving others and not by any self aggrandizement. The gift also comes with discipline so we exercise it with self-control, reverence and restraint. The gifts of the spirit are given to each Christian for the edification of the church and not for the benefit only of the individual: *Eph 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;* This advice applies to every Christian of every age.

2Tim 1:8-11 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,

Because of all that he has written before this, Timothy is urged to never be ashamed of the gospel, as he also wrote to the church at Rome: *Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* There is an extreme warning for those who are ashamed of the gospel: *Mark 8:38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."*

The gospel message is presented by every Christian with the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of Jesus are the truth:

John 1:17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

John 8:32 and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. "

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

John 15:26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me,

John 16:13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.

From the interchange between Jesus and Pilate we see that non-believers cannot understand the truth as Pilate replied with a typical worldly philosophical rhetorical question:

John 18:37-38 Pilate therefore said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."³⁸ Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him.

Paul urges Timothy to join him in suffering for that message of truth perhaps in a reference to some who had left him as he will mention later. Jesus was ordained to suffer:

Luke 9:22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day."

Luke 24:26 "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

We also will suffer for His sake as the truth will always bring opposition:

Rom 8:17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Phil 1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

2 Tim 1:9-11 who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, ¹⁰but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

God has saved all his people from his wrath: *John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* He has also given each of His children a calling according to His purpose: *Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* This gift of salvation and the calling were ordained from all eternity: *Eph 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.* Paul continues to stress the purpose of the gospel in his last letter as he

did in his first letter (Galatians). Paul also elaborates on the source of this salvation that began before creation and was then revealed to man: *Rom 16:25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,*

Note that Paul writes that Jesus accomplished two goals. **One was to abolish death.** The Bible speaks of three deaths: physical death that separates the soul from the body, spiritual death that separates the soul from God, and eternal death that separates both the soul and the body from God forever. All three of these deaths are caused by sin: *Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Obviously people still die so what does it mean that Jesus abolished death? Sinners are still dead spiritually even though they still walk in the world until the Holy Spirit makes them alive in Christ: *Eph 2:1-2 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.* All humans physically die until the final day when Christ returns in glory. Some people will die the eternal death or the ‘second death’ (Rev 20:14; 21:8). The final death of death will not occur until Christ returns:

Rev 21:4 and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.

1Cor 15:54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory.

So what does Paul mean by Christ abolishing death? The Greek word translated “abolished” is *katargeo* and can have a variety of meanings depending upon the context in which it is used. Its major meaning is “to make ineffective, powerless, or idle”. The same Greek word is used in the following where the underlined are its translations:

Heb 2:14 Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Rom 6:6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin;

So the work of Jesus Christ did not immediately totally remove death or Satan but the power of each has been made ineffective for those who are in Christ. The physical death that all Christians will face until the second coming of Christ no longer has power over us and no longer fills us with dread for it is actually a positive gain for them. Physical death is so innocuous that Jesus could even say that even though he dies he shall never die:

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this? "

So Jesus abolished the power and fear of death for those who are in Him.

The **second goal** Jesus achieved was to bring life and immortality to light through the gospel. To bring something to light means to make it clear to all who can spiritually see. Jesus is light and so He illuminates this mystery: *John 8:12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."* Except for some hints in the Old Testament about life after death there was no certainty of such until the coming of Jesus Christ. The Sadducees did not believe in a life after death but most Pharisees did and we know that some of the people such as Martha in the New Testament times understood about the resurrection of believers but the complete understanding came only with the gospel message:

John 11:24-25 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies,

Paul then states that he was appointed as a teacher, apostle, and preacher for this gospel message. The apostles formulated the gospel, the preachers proclaim it, and the teachers instruct others in its doctrines and actions required because of it. There have not been any apostles since the death of John but there are many preachers and teachers. Theology distinguishes between kerygma (what was preached) and the didache (what was taught). The kerygma is the good news that Jesus Christ was crucified and resurrected and contains a summons to repent and believe. The didache is mainly the ethical instructions to converts. Both concern the gospel but the kerygma is its proclamation and the didache contains action principles of the gospel in the lives of believers.

2Tim 1:12-14 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. ¹³Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

Paul tells Timothy that he suffers for the gospel message and he is not ashamed of the gospel or of the suffering for it. People hate to hear the gospel message for such tells them that they are grievous sinners, incapable of saving themselves from the wrath of God for their sins, and totally dependent upon the grace of God for their salvation. Some preachers will try to keep from being persecuted by allowing for some meritorious works from people such as circumcision: *Gal 6:12 Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.* Some preach that salvation is by the work of Christ plus their works but salvation is totally dependent upon the grace of God: *Rom 9:16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*

Paul states that he is not ashamed because he knows that he has believed in Jesus Christ and Him alone and that He has given him the gospel message to proclaim to the nations. He also knows that what He has given Paul will be guarded by Jesus so that it would be kept pure and safe from any forces. The deposit then is not what Paul has entrusted to God (myself or my soul) but what Jesus has entrusted to Paul. The gospel message has been given to Paul to proclaim and Jesus will keep it secure until the Second Coming of the Lord. He then tells Timothy to keep the standard of the gospel message pure as Paul is getting ready to pass the baton to Timothy. The gospel contains sound words and a precious deposit. Sound words means healthy or whole as discussed earlier and means that the gospel is not corrupted in any fashion but is pure as when first stated. This same type of expression was used by Paul in relating his declaration of the gospel: *Acts 20:27 "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.* The standard of sound words is sometimes translated pattern of sound words. This expression means that the sound words are to be kept in the same manner as first stated by Paul to him.

Paul then tells Timothy to guard this message through the Holy Spirit who dwells within each of them. Ultimately God is the One who guards the gospel message and we see today how it has been kept pure for almost 2000 years. There have always been those who have tried to modify it and that will continue but God is guarding it for those who have ears to hear. We know this is true because we know Him who entrusts it to His faithful people. Paul then tells Timothy that this wondrous treasure is now entrusted to him and he must keep it pure while depending upon the Holy Spirit for His ultimate care. Timothy and we must guard it, spread it, and suffer for it as we offer ourselves totally to Him.

2Tim 1:15-18 You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; ¹⁷but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me, and found me-- ¹⁸the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day-- and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.

Paul then reminds Timothy that many will fall away from the pure gospel due to suffering and persecution. He mentions an event in Asia that is probably what happened near Ephesus (capital of the Roman province of Asia). This is probably in reference to his second arrest that resulted in his present imprisonment and pending execution. Paul had a great influence in that region but his arrest may have been the factor that caused many of them to turn against him as they thought that the arrest of Paul was an indication of the failure of the gospel message. They would have repudiated the teaching of Paul so that they would not be persecuted by the ones who arrested Paul. We do not know anything about Phygelus or Hermogenes but they seem to have been leaders of the people departing from the teachings of Paul. This must have been particularly

disappointing to Paul because he spent over two years in Ephesus and now there was a great defection from the faith. Luke stated some of the wonderful results of Paul's work there: *Acts 19:10-12 And this took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. ¹¹And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.*

The one bright exception to the great exodus of followers was Onesiphorus who had helped Paul greatly as evident by the meaning of his name: "a bringer of profit". He was not ashamed of the chains binding Paul for he also knew Jesus Christ as his personal savior. He then did not repudiate the teachings of Paul but supported him even though he knew he might be put in prison also. Onesiphorus even had to search to find where Paul was being kept in prison for there were many prisoners there and it would have been dangerous to be searching for Paul. Onesiphorus indeed showed that he was a good, faithful friend of Paul and a servant of Jesus Christ so Paul twice gave a prayer for him and his household (16) and then that he might find mercy from the Lord on the Last Day (18). Some people, especially Catholics, use this prayer of Paul that Onesiphorus will find mercy as an example of a prayer for the dead but that is not consistent with all of Scripture and not required as an exegesis of this verse. It is more likely that Onesiphorus was in Rome and his family was probably still in Ephesus so Paul prayed for both situations. Paul writes that Timothy also was aware of some of the great things Onesiphorus had done for him in Ephesus. We cannot know specifically what those actions were but Timothy would have known and this statement was a way of reminding Timothy of the faithful service of Onesiphorus as an example for Timothy.