

**2 TIMOTHY 1-2 STIRRING GOD'S SPIRIT; APPROVED WORKER OF THE WORD**

As we will see, this Epistle of Second Timothy shall really tug at our heart strings. It amounts to Paul's last will and testament to Timothy and the Church. Although he is in prison and about to be sentenced to death, he never complains about his situation but remains spiritually-minded, positive, encouraging and courageous to the end. What a great example he sets as we go through our trials!

If the traditional dating for this Epistle is correct (around A.D. 66), and we have no good reason to doubt it, the terrible fire in Rome of A.D. 64 had already taken place. The demonic emperor Nero, attempting to divert accusations that he had ordered the fire to make room for a Rome he could rebuild to his glory, ended up falsely accusing the Christians as its instigators. Nero's decree read, "If any one confesses that he is a Christian, he shall be put to death, without further trial, as a convicted enemy of mankind." Thus, thousands died in this first great persecution, some sown in animal hides and fed to beasts, others were crucified, while many became human torches in Nero's gardens.

Paul, as a chief leader of Christianity, was finally caught and brought to Rome. Although a Roman citizen, the preliminary hearing went badly and it was just a matter of time before he would be executed. Yet one of his coworkers, Onesiphorus, still searched all over in Rome until he found him chained in a dank jail and guarded by a soldier. So Paul penned this letter to Timothy, his beloved assistant, giving him encouragement and his final instructions. His teachings are so valuable to us.

He begins, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord" (2 Tim. 1:1-2).

As customary, Paul first focuses on his apostleship as coming from God and not man. He could never forget the instructions Christ gave Him on the road to Damascus and later relayed to Ananias, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16). This is an apt summary of his life. He was determined to remain faithful to the end, true to

that commission, for he knows he will inherit, along with the saints, "the promise of life, which is in Christ Jesus." He is talking here about *eternal* life. Notice also that "grace" (unmerited favor), "mercy" (unmerited pardon) and "peace" (inner peace) come *only* from God the Father and Christ, and *not* from a supposedly third person in heaven.

He adds, "I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also (2 Tim. 1:3-5). We see the warmth Paul felt for Timothy and wanted him to come and see him one final time before dying. He lauds Timothy for his "genuine faith," which was also present in his mother and grandmother. So Timothy was a third generation Christian that had not lost his zeal and dedication for God's ways and is praised for this.

Paul says, in the Amplified version, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (of cowardice, of a craven, cringing, and fawning fear), but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of a calm and well-balanced mind, and discipline and self-control" (2 Tim. 1:6-7). Because Timothy came from such a good religious stock, Paul tells him not to let down but rather to rouse God's spirit in him, just as a fire needs to be stoked or it can go out. Timothy was still a relatively young man with a timid personality, so he stirs him up to be brave and persevere in the vital tasks at hand.

He reminds him, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 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 given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles" (2 Tim. 1:9-11).

Paul, although in a filthy dungeon, could still lift his eyes upward and inspire him to be proud of his calling and ministry, which did not come from anything he had done to earn them, but from God having predestined or preplanned the *positions* in His work and Kingdom before time began. They were to be filled by those He would call, although it would always be *contingent* on being faithful to the end. It is a great privilege to be called, but it is not a guarantee. He says Christ had “abolished death” although he soon would be dying, but he regarded this death as only a temporary sleep (1 Thes. 5:9-11). As Jesus said, “And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: *Fear* Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!” (Lk. 12:4-5). So it is the *second death* that he no longer fears. This is why he says Christ *brought* us “immortality,” or the possibility of having eternal life, something we were not born with, nor having an immortal soul.

He then affirms, “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

Paul is comforted knowing he can firmly rely on God’s promises to keep “his spirit” safe (Lk. 23:46) until “that Day” finally arrives, which occurs only at Christ’s coming and the First Resurrection.

As Paul faces death, he reminds Timothy, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit [which] dwells in us” (2 Tim. 1:13-14). The Gk. term describing the Holy Spirit here is “which” meaning a thing and not a person, as the Greek grammarian A. T. Robertson points out about the Holy Spirit, “*which dwells in us*” (*Word Pictures in the NT*).

He is most concerned that Timothy faithfully conveys the truths Paul received from Christ, which have now been entrusted to him.

Paul then reveals why this weighs so heavily on his mind, “This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes” (2 Tim. 1:15).

*The Believer’s Bible Commentary* explains the probable cause of this defection, “It is likely that the Christians in Asia severed their connections with Paul when they learned that he had been arrested and imprisoned. They forsook him at the very time he needed them most. Probably their reason was that they feared for their own safety. The Roman government was on the lookout for all who sought to propagate the Christian faith. The Apostle Paul was one of the best-known representatives of Christianity. Any who dared to contact him publicly would be marked out at once as being sympathetic to the cause.”

In contrast, Paul says, “The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus” (2 Tim. 1:16-18).

Instead of focusing on those who abandoned him, he fondly remembers the faithfulness of Onesiphorus and his family (2 Tim. 4:19). He was not ashamed of Paul’s chains, risking serving him in this dangerous situation. So Paul prays his deeds and those of his family are mercifully taken into account when their judgment comes up.

He tells Timothy, “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

He focuses on the vital mentoring process--where he hands the truths to Timothy, who hands them to faithful men, who in turn will pass them to others--from one generation to another, up to now and this is what we are trying to continue today.

He then exhorts him, “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things” (2 Tim. 2:3-7).

Paul uses three vivid illustrations to encourage and inspire him to be an effective minister. First needed is the *single-mindedness and toughness of a soldier*, who is not distracted by worldly pursuits, but faithfully fulfills his duties. Next is having the *discipline of an athlete*, who carefully prepares and follows the rules in order to qualify for his event. In fact, competitors in the Olympic Games were required to take an oath that they had trained diligently for at least 10 months. Finally is the example of the *patient farmer*, who must toil hard and long before seeing and enjoying the fruits of his labors. Such are the rigors of ministerial life, having the single-minded focus to stay the course to the end, having the discipline to stay close to God and His Word and far from worldly ways, and being patient and laborious in God's paths until reaping the rewards – now and in the future.

In effect, Paul was practicing in prison this very thing, and thus reminds him, "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:8-10).

He brings to mind the great example set by Jesus, who walked and suffered among us as a man, "the seed of David," and yet was "raised from the dead" and now sits at the right hand of God the Father. This truth is not bound in chains, as Paul is, so Timothy must continue with this task. He is conscious he must continue to feed and care for God's flock to the very end to help them "obtain" salvation, since it can be forsaken or lost.

This is why he says, "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, he also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:11-13). This phrase is probably a lyric from a Church hymn sung back then and teaches that salvation is *conditional*, for it says we must remain *faithful* to the end. For if we eventually deny Christ, then He will also deny us in the judgment, for even if we stray, He must remain true to His divine nature as a faithful and righteous judge.

He goes on to say, "Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:14-15).

They lived in a superstitious and a speculative age, so Timothy, as a skilled worker of God's Word, must teach only solid Bible truths. The term, "approved," from the Gk. *dokimos*, means being tested and passing the grade. "Rightly dividing" the truth comes from the Gk. *orthotomeo*, to cut straight, such as plowing a straight furrow or steering a boat down the middle. As God said, "Therefore you shall be careful to *do* as the Lord your God has commanded you; *you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left*" (Dt. 5:32).

Paul warns him, "But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:16-18).

Actually, the term is not cancer, but gangrene, from the Gk. *gangraina* -- a disease that spreads and rots. Members such as Hymenaeus and Philetus were disseminating false doctrine, and Hymenaeus had been removed from the Church (1 Tim. 1:20). Both claimed "the resurrection is already past," probably referring to a "spiritual" resurrection (such as at baptism) but not a literal one. Since the prevailing view in Greek and Roman religion was that man had an immortal soul imprisoned in a temporal body, the idea of a bodily resurrection was foreign to them. Hence it was natural to develop heresies which rejected a bodily resurrection (see Acts 17:32; 1 Cor. 15:12).

As *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* notes, "The heresy of Philetus and Hymenaeus probably involved the idea that resurrection was a purely spiritual affair which occurred at conversion or baptism. But bodily resurrection is the keystone of Christian doctrine, as Paul showed (1 Cor. 15:1-58). Without it, the entire edifice of the gospel collapses. Little wonder then that Paul said these two false teachers destroyed the faith of some." In fact, Gnostics would later capitalize on this idea.