

## **Book of 2 Timothy Explained**

### **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: Authorship).

Paul wrote 2 Timothy, the last of his inspired letters, shortly before his martyrdom (ca. A.D. 67).

### **Background – 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; Philemon 22), this time he had no such hopes (4:6-8).

In his first imprisonment in Rome before Nero had begun the persecution of Christians (A.D. 64), he was only under house arrest and had opportunity for much intersection with people and ministry (Acts 28:16-31).

Paul was freed from his house arrest in Rome in the spring of A.D. 63 and traveled to Macedonia (Philippians 2:24; Philemon 22), across the Adriatic Sea, visiting Philippi, Ephesus, Colossae, and Laodicea.

The great Roman fire occurred in A.D. 64.

Paul possibly went to Spain, probably by sea, in A.D. 64 and 65.

In the summer of 66 he returned to Ephesus in Asia Minor and left Timothy in charge (see 1 Timothy 1:3).

In the summer of 67 he wrote to Timothy from Macedonia and then probably visited both Philippi and Corinth.

He went on to Crete and left Titus there (Titus 1:5).

He wrote Titus from Ephesus in the autumn of A.D. 67, visited Miletus (4:20), Troas (4:13), Corinth from Ephesus in the autumn of A.D. 67, visited Miletus (4:20), Troas (4:13), Corinth (4:20), and spent some time at Nilopolis (Titus 3:12).

He was imprisoned again in the spring of 68, having been free about five years.

He may have been arrested in Corinth, because of an accusation made by Alexander (4:14, 20).

Paul was tried by the city prefect, imprisoned, and sent to Rome where he was placed in a dungeon cell of the Mamertine Prison, from which he knew he would never be set free (4:6).

His only contact with the outside world was a hole, which was about 18 inches square, in the ceiling of his cell.

Through that opening passed everything that came to and from the apostle, including his second letter to Timothy, in the fall or winter of A.D. 67.

He was beheaded in Rome in May or June of 68 A.D.

In this letter, Paul, aware the end was near, passed the non-apostolic mantle of ministry to Timothy (compare 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 – Theological Themes:**

It could be that Paul may have had some reason to fear that Timothy was in danger of his weakening spiritually.

This would have been a grave concern for Paul, since Timothy needed to carry on Paul's work (compare 2:2).

While there are no historical indications elsewhere in the New Testament 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 "kindle afresh" 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 problems 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" (2:1), 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 all of Paul's theology, the apostle did not instruct him any 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 New Testament on the inspiration of Scripture (3:16-17).

Second Timothy is the latest of the Pauline letters.

As such it is of special interest not only because of what it reveals concerning the last days of Paul's life, but also because of what it reveals about its recipient.

The last words of people are particularly treasured by their loved ones.

In 2 Timothy, we have the last known words to flow from the apostle's pen.

In a very real way, this epistle represents Paul's last will and testament.

If ever there was a time to set the record straight, it was then.

If Paul was going to make any complaints, he would have to make them then, for he was at the end of his life.

However, in this letter, there is not one word of apology, explanation, caution, or complaint.

Paul used his last letter to deliver five exhortations to his son in the faith, which in summary tell Timothy to "keep on keeping on" just as he had told him all along.

Second Timothy claims to have come from the pen of "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1).

Though widely contested, both internal and external evidence support this claim.

The style, vocabulary, and contents of the epistle are in keeping with what would be expected of the apostle when he knew he was near the end of his life (4:6).

He had four purposes in writing:

- (1) To exhort Timothy in his ministry at Ephesus;
- (2) To warn Timothy of trouble both inside and outside the church;
- (3) To request Timothy to come to Rome to visit him in prison and bring certain personal effects to him (4:5-13; 21); and
- (4) To instruct all the churches in Timothy's territory.