

2 TIMOTHY

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BACKGROUND

After writing his first letter to Timothy, Paul left Corinth with Titus and sailed to Crete, where he left Titus to look after the church ([Titus 1:5](#)). Paul then returned to either Greece or Asia Minor, from where he wrote Titus. Then, with Trophimus and Erastus, he headed for Nicopolis, where he intended to spend the winter ([Titus 3:12](#)). He left Trophimus sick at Miletus, and left Erastus at Corinth ([2 Tim. 4:20](#)). He returned to Troas for a short visit and was arrested, apparently at the home of Carpus, and taken to Rome. His arrest was so sudden that he didn't have time to gather his personal possessions, including books, parchments, and a cloak ([2 Tim. 4:13](#)). In the dungeon cell, with the temperature an even 55 degrees and nothing to occupy his time, Paul needed these personal items. He wrote this letter to ask Timothy to bring them to him. However, before asking this favor, he encouraged Timothy in his ministry at Ephesus. The tone of the letter, especially [2 Tim. 4:6-22](#), suggests that Paul expected to be executed very soon.

Tradition says Paul was imprisoned in Rome's Mamertine Prison, which had only two cells, one below the other, with Paul occupying the lower cell.

AUTHOR

Paul ([2 Tim. 1:1](#); see [Romans: Author](#)).

DATE

A.D. 67-68. See [1 Timothy: Date and Location](#).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Epistles of Paul, The](#)

PURPOSE

Though a faithful and trusted disciple of Paul, Timothy seemed to lack natural courage and strength ([2 Tim. 1:7](#); [1 Cor. 16:11](#)). Before making several personal requests ([2 Tim. 4:9-22](#)), Paul therefore exhorted Timothy concerning

- faithfulness ([2 Tim. 1](#))
- endurance ([2 Tim. 2:1-13](#))
- adherence to sound doctrine ([2 Tim. 2:14-26](#))
- the danger of apostasy ([2 Tim. 3](#))
- his ministry ([2 Tim. 4:1-8](#))

UNIQUE FEATURES

- As Paul's final letter, written as he awaited death, 2 Timothy is very personal. Now was the time for honesty and confession. To Timothy he offered no rebuke, only exhortation. He spoke as a dying father to his son, encouraging him to keep on keeping on.
- 2 Timothy contains the Bible's most complete statement concerning its own origin and purpose ([2 Tim. 3:15-17](#)).
- Though written some 1,500 years after the event, 2 Timothy is the only biblical mention of the names of the magicians who opposed Moses ([2 Tim. 3:8](#); see [Exodus 7:11](#)).

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

[John 14-16](#) and *2 Peter*:

- These, like 2 Timothy, are farewell discourses.

[2 Thes. 2](#); [1 Tim. 4](#); [2 Peter 2](#); *Jude*:

- [2 Tim. 3](#), like these, deals with apostasy.

1 Timothy and Titus:

- All concern the care and discipleship of believers.

2 Peter and Revelation:

- Paul's final writing, like Peter's and John's, contains exhortations to study God's Word.

OUTLINE

I. EXHORTATIONS ([2 Tim. 1:1-4:8](#))

1. Exhortation to faithfulness ([2 Tim. 1](#))
2. Exhortation to endurance ([2 Tim. 2:1-13](#))
- C. Exhortation to sound doctrine ([2 Tim. 2:14-26](#))
- D. Warning against apostasy ([2 Tim. 3:1-13](#))
- E. Exhortation to faithfulness in Bible study ([2 Tim. 3:14-17](#))
- F. Exhortation to faithfulness in ministry ([2 Tim. 4:1-8](#))

II. REQUESTS AND GREETINGS ([2 Tim. 4:9-22](#))

- A. Personal requests ([2 Tim. 4:9-13](#))
- B. Warning about Alexander ([2 Tim. 4:14-15](#))
- C. Recollections and assurances ([2 Tim. 4:16-18](#))

D. Greetings, information, benediction ([2 Tim. 4:19-22](#))

TIMELINE

A.D. 35:	Paul's conversion
c. A.D. 51:	Timothy joins Paul on 2nd journey
A.D. 60-64:	Paul imprisoned, released, writes 1 Timothy
c. A.D. 66-67:	Paul imprisoned again, writes 2 Timothy, is martyred

[2 Tim. 1:1-7](#) *"Remember your heritage; stir up your gift."* Paul thanked God for Timothy, reminded him of his solid spiritual upbringing, and expressed confidence that Timothy was carrying on that tradition of faith ([2 Tim. 1:1-5](#); see [Acts 16:1-3](#)). Paul was apparently concerned, however, that Timothy, perhaps because of his youth or natural reticence ([2 Tim. 1:7](#); see exposition on [§1 Corinthians 16:5-12](#)), was not making full use of his pastoral gift, so he encouraged him to do so ([2 Tim. 1:6-7](#)). While Timothy's mother and grandmother had taught him spiritually, his father was apparently an unbeliever (see [Acts 16:3](#)).

[2 Tim. 1:8-12](#) *"Don't be ashamed, for I'm not ashamed."* The strength of Paul's faith made him proud to proclaim the gospel ([2 Tim. 1:12](#); see [Romans 1:16](#)). He admonished Timothy to also be proud of the gospel and of his association with Paul, even though Paul was now in prison ([2 Tim. 1:8](#)). Paul had committed everything—his life of service as well as his very salvation—to Christ, being fully persuaded that it was safe in his keeping ([2 Tim. 1:12](#)).

[2 Tim. 1:13-14](#) *A call to loyalty.* Paul urged Timothy to be loyal to the "right teaching," that is, the correct doctrine, which Paul had taught him—a theme he would return to later (see [2 Tim. 2:14-26](#); [1 Tim. 1:10-11](#); [1 Tim. 6:3](#)).

[2 Tim. 1:15-18](#) *Many betrayers, one befriender.* When Paul was rearrested, most of his friends from Asia, where the arrest probably took place, had deserted him (see *Background*). Onesiphorus, a happy exception, had been like a breath of fresh air, searching for and finding Paul in prison. Recalling how faithful Onesiphorus had been even in earlier days, Paul commended him to the Lord.

[2 Tim. 2:1-2](#) *Passing the baton of belief.* Paul urged Timothy to pass on to others the truth he had learned. Christians must do three things with God's Word: Read it, heed it, and deed it.

[2 Tim. 2:3-10](#) *Timothy: Soldier, athlete, and farmer.* Paul compared the endurance necessary in the Christian life to that required of soldiers, athletes, and farmers ([2 Tim. 2:3-6](#); compare [1 Cor. 9:24-26](#); [Ephes. 6:11-17](#)). He reminded Timothy of Christ's resurrection, the solid historical fact on which the Christian faith is founded ([2 Tim. 2:8](#); see [1 Cor. 15:1-8](#)), and for which Paul was willing to suffer all things ([2 Tim. 2:9-10](#)). On "those God has chosen" ([2 Tim. 2:10](#)), see exposition on [§1 Peter 1:1-2](#).

[2 Tim. 2:11-13](#) *A song of secure salvation.* Quoting perhaps from an early Christian hymn (compare [1 Tim. 3:16](#)), Paul declared that all who have died with Christ can be assured of one day living with him (see [Romans 6:4-5](#)). Likewise our present suffering should be seen in light of the fact that we will one day reign with him in his Kingdom.

[2 Tim. 2:12-13](#) can seem contradictory; this is one possible interpretation:

- If we "deny" Christ, that is, if we deny him first place in our lives, he will also "deny" us, that is, we will suffer the loss of our rewards at his judgment seat (see exposition on [§1 Corinthians 3:10-17](#)).
- But no matter how "unfaithful" we are, that is, no matter how much we fail him, he will remain "faithful" and will never "deny himself," that is, he will never go back on his promise to save us (see [2 Tim. 2:19](#); [2 Cor. 1:19-22](#); [Ephes. 1:13-14](#); [1 Peter 1:3-5](#)).

[2 Tim. 2:14-18](#) *"Absorb God's precepts; avoid human philosophy."* Rather than get involved in foolish philosophical discussions as some had done, to the great detriment of their followers ([2 Tim. 2:14, 16-18](#)), Timothy should learn to correctly interpret God's Word. The Greek for "correctly explains" ([2 Tim. 2:15](#)) means to "cut straight." Paul may have been thinking of his work as a tentmaker, where each knife stroke on the canvas helped determine the strength of the finished tent.

[2 Tim. 2:19-26](#) *A consecrated container for Christ.* Amid all the problems brought on by false teaching, Timothy could be sure of God's witness in his life if he would always strive to be a "utensil God can use" ([2 Tim. 2:19-21](#)). He could do this by maintaining personal holiness ([2 Tim. 2:22](#)) and by relating to his opponents with humility, patience, and a readiness to stand for the truth ([2 Tim. 2:23-26](#)). On "clean" ([2 Tim. 2:21](#), "sanctified," KJV), see exposition on [§Hebrews 10:1-18](#).

[2 Tim. 3:1-5](#) *Final days, fearsome days.* Paul predicted that the last days of human history would be "difficult" and listed the kinds of sinful people who would typify those times. The Greek for *perilous* is translated "dangerous" or "exceedingly fierce" in [Matthew 8:28](#), suggesting the severity of Satan's last-ditch efforts against Christ and humanity. On "last days" ([2 Tim. 3:1](#)), see exposition on [§1 Tim. 4:1-11](#).

[2 Tim. 3:6-13](#) *Blinding the blind, persecuting those who see.* Never themselves able to grasp the truth, these latter-day sinners will victimize others who are spiritually weak. They will resist the truth just as Pharaoh's magicians resisted Moses ([2 Tim. 3:6-9](#)). Just as Paul had suffered greatly despite his righteousness, all those who would live for Christ will suffer, even as the enemies of God grow more deceived and more strongly opposed to the truth ([2 Tim. 3:10-13](#)).

[2 Tim. 3:14-17](#) *Confirming, correcting, completely equipping.* Having been taught the OT Scriptures by his mother and grandmother ([2 Tim. 3:15](#); see exposition on [§2 Tim. 1:1-7](#)), Timothy should continue to study them and to absorb as well the writings of the apostles that would become the NT. These would provide everything he needed for a successful Christian life and ministry. On the Bible's inspiration ([2 Tim. 3:16](#)), see [Inspiration](#).

[2 Tim. 4:1-5](#) *A cure for itching ears?* Timothy should be prepared to proclaim the truth at every opportunity, even though many, "wanting to have their ears tickled" ([2 Tim. 4:3](#), NASB), would look for teachers to tell them what they wanted to hear.

[2 Tim. 4:6-8](#) *First the race, then the reward.* Paul evidently sensed that death was near ([2 Tim. 4:6](#)). Yet, having "fought a good fight" (compare [1 Tim. 6:12](#)), he was ready to leave this life and receive his reward from God. Having always seen his life as an offering to God (see [Romans 15:16](#); [Phil. 2:17](#)), he viewed his approaching death as completing the sacrifice. Paul had successfully

"finished" his purpose in life, unlike the wicked Belshazzar, who was simply finished (see [Daniel 5:26](#)).

[2 Tim. 4:9-13](#) *"Come quickly and bring the following . . ."* Having lost several companions through either desertion or reassignment, Paul urged Timothy to come to him quickly, bringing with him some personal items he had left in Troas, possibly at the time of his second arrest (see [Background](#)). The "papers" or "parchments" were probably Paul's copies of the OT. Paul had seen at least four visions of Christ, had written approximately half the books that would become the NT, and had organized most of the first 50 or so Christian churches. Yet now as he awaited death he requested the Scriptures, still eager to learn from those precious pages!

Demas, now a deserter ([2 Tim. 4:10](#)), had been Paul's faithful colleague (see [Col. 4:14](#); [Philemon 1:24](#)). On Mark, see exposition on [§Acts 15:36-41](#). On the chronological significance of events in [4:8-22](#), see [Background](#) and [1 Timothy: Date and Location](#).

[2 Tim. 4:14-18](#) *A forgiving and faithful Father.* Alexander had done much harm to Paul's ministry ([2 Tim. 4:14-15](#); see [1 Tim. 1:20](#)). Paul had apparently been abandoned by most of his friends, yet he prayed that God would forgive them ([2 Tim. 4:16](#)), echoing the similar prayers of Jesus (see [Luke 23:34](#)) and Stephen (see [Acts 7:59-60](#)). Yet God had been, and would be, faithful amid Paul's trials. "Saved me from certain death" ([2 Tim. 4:17](#)) may indicate that Paul's first defense ([2 Tim. 4:16](#)) had gone well. Nonetheless, he sensed martyrdom was near ([2 Tim. 4:6](#)).

[2 Tim. 4:19-22](#) *"Come before winter."* Paul sent greetings to Priscilla and Aquila (see exposition on [§Acts 18:1-6](#)) and to the family of Onesiphorus (see exposition on [§2 Tim. 1:15-18](#)). On Trophimus's illness, see exposition on [§1 Tim. 5:21-25](#). Cold and alone in his dungeon, Paul closed by urging Timothy to try to come before winter.