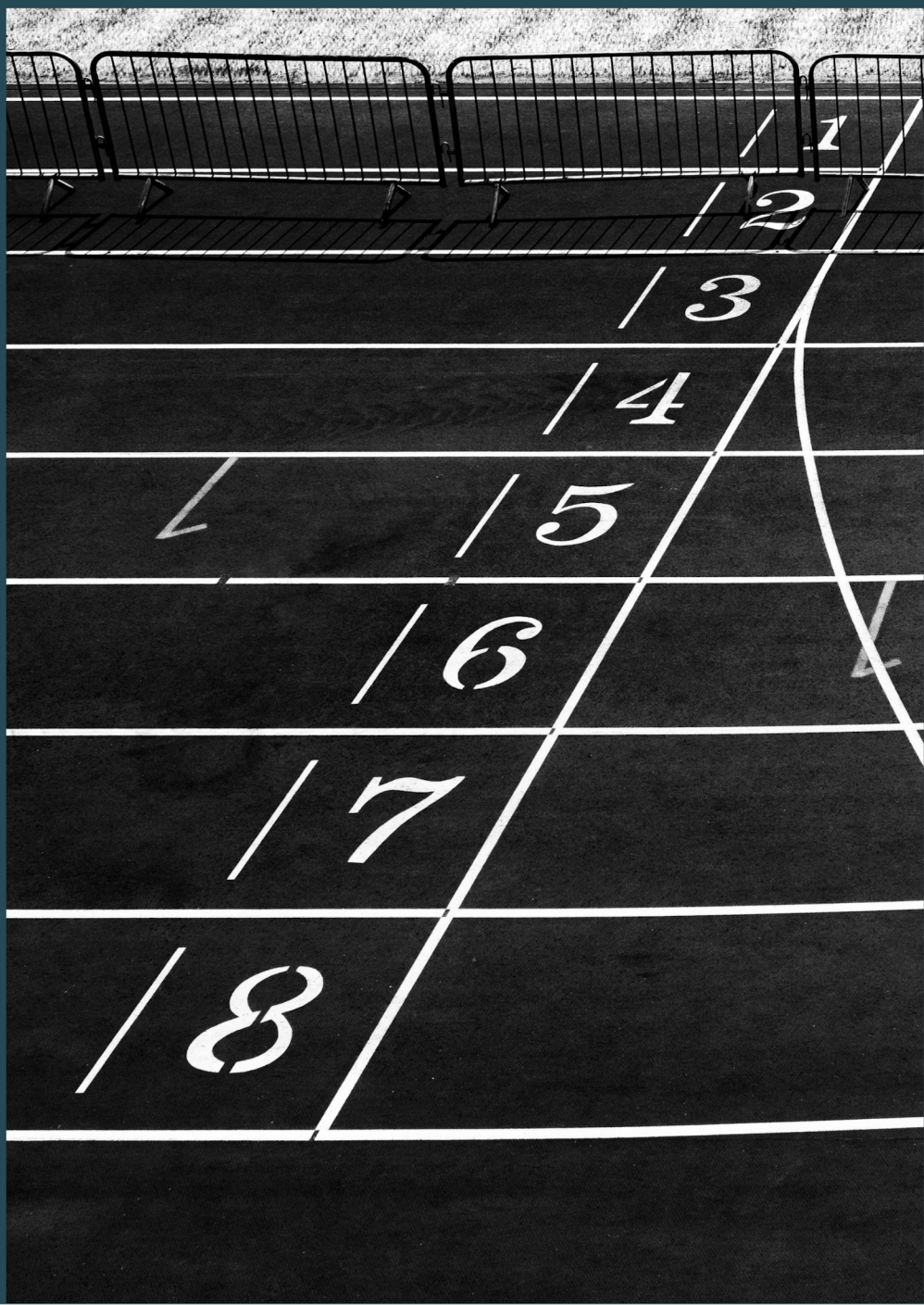


2 Timothy

STUDY GUIDE &
QUESTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Tough times had fallen on the Apostle Paul. When he first wrote to Timothy he was on the road, hoping to visit him in Ephesus (cf. 3:14, 15). Now he is chained in prison (his second Roman imprisonment; cf. 2 Timothy 1:16, 17; 2:9). Many think, as tradition suggests, it was the Mamertine prison in Rome. If so, it was a dismal underground chamber with a single hole in the ceiling for light and air. Paul had already had a court hearing (which he alludes to in 4:16–18), and he expects that he will soon be executed (cf. 4:6–8). He was lonely. Luke was the only one with him. Demas had abandoned him because he was “in love with this present world” (4:10). Crescens had gone to Galatia or, as some translate it, to Gallia (Gaul), and Titus was off to Dalmatia (cf. 4:10, 11). At the same time, things had deteriorated in Ephesus where Timothy was pastoring. Not only were there desertions, but Hymenaeus, whom he had excommunicated, was still doing his evil work (cf. 1 Timothy 1:18–20; 2 Timothy 2:17, 18). Cold and alone, Paul would conclude this letter by requesting that Timothy come quickly and that he bring John Mark and a warm cloak and the apostle’s parchments (4:9–13).

It is not known whether Timothy and Mark reached Paul before his execution. As you would expect, these were also tough times for Timothy. However much the teachings of Paul’s first letter had been applied by the young man, the church at Ephesus was still under siege from heretics. And now, apparently, even heavier burdens were about to fall on Timothy... While 2 Timothy also refers to the false teachers and urges sound doctrine as in Paul’s first letter, in 2 Timothy the focus is almost entirely on Timothy.

Paul’s writing here is intensely personal. It is his last will and testament, “written,” as Calvin said, “not merely in ink but in Paul’s life blood.” Passion and urgency ooze from Paul’s pen as he addresses Timothy. The purpose of the letter is to charge Timothy to persevere in the ministry of the gospel—to fill the apostle’s immense gospel sandals. Paul will urge Timothy in various verses to “fan into flame the gift of God” (1:6), to “guard the good deposit” (1:14), and to “preach the word” (4:2).²

As intensely personal as this letter is, Paul intended that his letter also be read by and to the church in Ephesus, and ultimately by the church universal. If his writing was for Timothy alone, he would never have begun with such a formal and lofty assertion of his apostleship: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus” (v. 1). How had he been made an apostle? “By the will of God.” Paul’s authority came from God (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1). Why had he been made an apostle? “According to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus”—that is, the gospel, which has as its main purpose bringing people into new life. The teaching in this personal letter is universally authoritative and is essential to the experience and perpetuation of “the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus.”

2 TIMOTHY 1

“Timothy was called by God to take on the role of pastor. He was not endowed with a powerful body and iron constitution—he was frail. He was not bold but reticent. And he was not a natural leader. If the job was to get done, he would have to rely upon God. Everything would have to be the result of Timothy’s profound dependence upon God’s power and grace. Timothy was surely heartened by Paul’s introductory remarks in which the apostle reminded him that he was in the apostle’s constant prayers and of his longing affection for his young disciple and of his confidence in the sincerity of Timothy’s faith. And Timothy undoubtedly took further heart from Paul’s reminder of the giftedness for ministry that he was to “fan into flame” and of the Holy Spirit’s gifts of “power” and “love” and “self-control” for ministry. These bracing realities primed Timothy for the solemn charges to stand tall, suffer, and keep the faith...”

- Who is the most inspiring Christian you’ve ever known or seen, and how did they inspire you?
- Paul kept praying for Timothy. How do our prayers for others make a difference in their lives and ours?
- Can you think of a time the Holy Spirit has helped you move beyond fear in serving God?
- Do you have any examples in which the Holy Spirit has given you a supernatural love for someone you'd otherwise find hard?
- How might focusing on God’s call on our lives help us persevere when times are hard?
- Paul encouraged Timothy to be loyal to God’s Word. what might that loyalty look like today?
- Paul encouraged the people who had helped him. How can we provide encouragement and support for others in our church family?

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13

“So far Paul has been laying before Timothy the hardships and hard work of the gospel. In 2 Timothy 1:1–7 he encouraged Timothy via a heartening retrospect about his and Timothy’s past and some bracing realities about Timothy’s giftedness for ministry. Then in verses 8–14 he challenged Timothy to stand tall and suffer and guard the gospel. Next in verses 15–18 Paul presented motivational examples, negative and positive: “Don’t be like those deserters Phygelus and Hermogenes. Instead rise to the glittering example of Onesiphorus.” Now in 2:1–7 the apostle enlarges on what Timothy must do to guard the gospel deposit as he was charged in 1:14. Then, in 2:8–13, he will conclude the long challenge by urging upon Timothy the essential memory of Jesus Christ himself...”

- What would you say are the most important characteristics for someone with a christian ministry (not just full-time/paid/leadership ministry but all types)?
- What is this treasure that Timothy is to steward and why is it so precious?
- What does Paul think can be learned from a good soldier?
- How can we ‘stay in training’ like an athlete in our faith?
- What does Paul mean about receiving a share of the crops, especially for those in full time ministry?
- How can Paul be motivated to share the gospel whilst in prison (vv8-10)?
- Do you have ways of keeping going by reminding yourself of what Jesus has done?
- What can you take away from Paul’s ‘trustworthy saying’ in v11 for your day to day faith?

*...be strong in the
grace that is in
Christ Jesus*

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-26

“Now from verse 14, Paul leaves off his appeal to Timothy to stand tall and suffer, and turns to his overarching concern of countering false teachers who subvert the Word, he commands Timothy to “Remind them of these things” (v. 14a)—that is, to remind the Ephesian church of the faithful saying, of both its comfort to believers and its warning to those who deliberately walk away. “Keep reminding the church of what is at stake...”

- What sort of unnecessary quarrels can we sometimes find ourselves involved in?
- If godless chatter is mostly gossip, why is Paul so strongly opposed to it?
- What does it mean to be created like a vessel used for serving?
- Do you think of yourself as something with ‘special purpose’ (v20) and how can we make sure we are?
- Do you have any practical suggestions for how we can ‘pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace’ day to day?
- In what ways does a good pastor, minister, teacher, volunteer etc show their servant spirit, and what type of person does Paul envisage in vv24-26?

*Do your best to present yourself to
God as one approved, a worker
who does not need to be ashamed
and who correctly handles the
word of truth.*

“Paul warned Timothy, “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty” (v. 1)—referring to the time period that had begun with the coming of Christ, continued in Timothy’s day, and continues in our day as we await Christ’s return. The “last days” and the “times of difficulty” have been in effect for 2,000 years. This is clear from the context because in verse 5, where Timothy is commanded in the present tense to “[a]void such people,” the “people” is the false leaders of “the last days” whom Paul so scathingly describes in verses 2–4...”

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- Paul warned Timothy about how to spot dangers in the world around him. What are the indications of things that have gone wrong in the world that we still see?
 - Why might the most deceiving voices come from someone with a religious appearance?
 - One of the negative characteristics Paul listed was a lack of self-control. What are some examples of a lack of self-control in our society?
 - Is self-control something we can pray for and how can we best grow in it as a spiritual fruit?
 - Much of 2 Timothy 3 is about Paul telling Timothy who to listen to. How would you tell a younger Christian how to know which voices to listen to?
 - How do we know who are helpful to listen to, especially in the age of so much information?

2 TIMOTHY 3:10–17

“There is a powerful link between remembrance and continuance. Such connections are part of God’s way of working in our lives. Many older Christians are informed and sustained by similar remembrances, some of which extend back many years. Certain names and events from their spiritually formative years regularly surface in their conversations. Similarly, the memories of youth pastors and their staffs will stand disproportionately tall in many lives for the next fifty to sixty years—beckoning continuance in the gospel. Timothy’s continuance in the apostolic ministry was a vital concern of Paul in the Pastoral Letters. And it is the main concern of 2 Timothy 3:10–17, which has as its central imperative the word continue in verse 14—“But as for you, continue in what you have learned. . . .” Paul grounds this call to continuance on two things—first, remembering the past (vv. 10–13) and, second, focusing on the Scriptures (vv. 14–17).”

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- Is Paul boasting when he uses himself as an example for Timothy?
 - How important is the manner of life we live as well as what we believe in demonstrating our faith to others?
 - Why do you think people like Paul are so often persecuted?
 - Does the persecution mean he’s lost God’s blessing?
 - How can we best prepare ourselves to face the kind of opposition we face? Do you have practical ideas to share that help keep us spiritually safe and centered on Jesus?
 - What are some of the best ideas you’ve come across for parents to raise their children up in the Word of God?
 - Do you have any examples of when you found the Scriptures met you at your point of need?
 - How does Paul describe Scripture here and how should that shape our approach to the Bible?

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness

2 TIMOTHY 4

*The Lord be with
your spirit. Grace be
with you all.*

“Paul’s focus, of course, was on his retiring, sometimes reticent protégé, Timothy. And the heat of the apostle’s focus was intensified by the burning realization that he himself was in truth a dying man—“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come” (v. 6). The charge in verses 1–5 initiates the final thoughts of what is the old apostle’s ministerial last will and testament. Paul’s perspectives at the end of his life, his dying perspectives, covering every conceivable span of Paul’s existence, are awesome. They tell us how to live and how to die.

Nevertheless this was a tough time for Paul, perhaps his toughest. And Paul knew the importance of “tough friends for tough times”—the importance of Christian relationships to Christian continuance...Christ’s presence with him and his Savior’s singular charge—“Courage”—became the refrain of Paul’s incredible life. And here at the very end, it is his coda. The refrain echoes in this passage in Paul’s supreme courage and confidence in death.

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- If you were writing your final words to your protégé (as Paul was), what kinds of things would you want to write about?
 - Why does Paul place such emphasis on preaching to Timothy?
 - We’re not all preachers, so what do we all need to take on board from this focus on the preaching?
 - Why do you think it is so tempting to measure the “success” of a ministry by the amount of people in attendance?
 - How do we determine if our own ministries we are pursuing are God’s call or just a good idea we’ve come up with?
 - What could be our perspective if the ministry we feel called to seems impossible right now?
 - Knowing he was near the end of his life, Paul asked Timothy to bring three things, among them his books. What would you ask for and what is most important?
 - Since we don’t live in threat of Nero, what are some of the greatest dangers to our ministries today and how do we protect ourselves?
 - What are the main things God has been saying to you from this letter, and how will it shape and impact your life and faith?

NOTES

DIGGING DEEPER

Introduction to 2 Timothy from the ESV Study Bible:
www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-2-timothy/

Video Intro to 2 Timothy and further resources:
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/2-timothy/>

[The Gospel in 2 Timothy](https://www.crossway.org/articles/the-gospel-in-2-timothy/)
<https://www.crossway.org/articles/the-gospel-in-2-timothy/>