



2 Timothy - Introduction

Author and Title

The first two verses of 2 Timothy clearly present the author as Paul and the recipient as Timothy. As with 1 Timothy and Titus, the other two Pastoral Epistles, the authorship of 2 Timothy has been challenged in the past 200 years or so. The challenges to Pauline authorship are the same as those levelled against 1 Timothy. Refer to the corresponding section of 1 Timothy for the discussion on this.

However, a number of the scholars who deny Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy and Titus still affirm Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy. The arguments for the authenticity of 1 Timothy apply to 2 Timothy as well, providing a good basis for affirming the straightforward claims of 2 Timothy, as with 1 Timothy and Titus, to be authentic letters written by the apostle Paul.

Date

The letter pictures Paul in prison in Rome, awaiting death. Almost certainly then, this letter was written during Paul's second Roman imprisonment, later than the imprisonment recorded in Acts Chapter 28, circa AD60. Therefore this letter would have been written after 1 Timothy and Titus.

Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History 2.25 and 3.1), claims that Paul was martyred sometime during Nero's reign, which ended in AD68, and it is known that intense persecution began in AD64. Since Paul wrote 2 Timothy shortly before his death, it was probably written in AD64-65, although some would place it as late as AD67.

Theme

Second Timothy is a bold, clear call for perseverance in the Gospel in spite of suffering. Paul calls on his young co-worker to continue the fight of faith, even as Paul approaches the end of his own life of truly obedient service.

Purpose

Paul wrote this letter while in prison in Rome. He mentions that several have abandoned him in this difficult time, while several others are away on various

ministry duties: <<*You are aware that all who are in Asia have turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes*>> (2 Timothy 1:15), and: <<*Do your best to come to me soon, for Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry. I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus*>> (2 Timothy 4:9-12). In such a time, Paul's recollection of the sincerity and devotion of Timothy is especially poignant: <<*I am grateful to God – whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did – when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you*>> (2 Timothy 1:3-5). Paul anticipates death soon: <<*As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing*>> (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Therefore he writes a final exhortation to Timothy to urge him to stand firm and to ask him to come for one final visit before Paul is executed.

Although death was imminent, the timing is uncertain, so Paul also asks Timothy to bring his books and parchments with him. Presumably Paul intended to keep studying and writing until the end.

Second Timothy is very personal, as would be expected in a final letter to a close friend and co-worker. Paul exhorts Timothy to continue in faithfulness and points to his own life as an example for Timothy to follow. What he calls on Timothy to do, he himself has done already, the mark of true leadership.

Summary of Salvation History

Christians are to endure suffering for the sake of Christ, looking back on Christ's suffering and forward to the consummation of salvation at his Second Coming. Their treatment of one another in Christ is to be transformed in the light of his grace toward them.

God's plan brings the blessings of Christ's salvation to people partly by means of the church and its ministries.

Writing Style

The genre of 2 Timothy is at least similar to the farewell discourse, and many would classify it as such. There are famous farewell discourses in the Bible, e.g. by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, Joshua in Joshua Chapters 23-24, David in 1 Chronicles Chapters 28-29, and, of course, Jesus in the Upper Room Discourse, John Chapters 14-16.

Conventional motifs include the speaker's announcement of his imminent departure, directives to keep God's commandments, predictions of what will happen after the speaker's departure, words of comfort and instruction for the

benefit of those who will survive the speaker, and appeals to the addressees to remember what the speaker has taught.

If 2 Timothy, Paul's last letter, is read with these features in mind, the book will fall neatly into place. Paul's charges to Timothy in this letter are not limited to a specific situation, in the way that 1 Timothy was, but are what Paul most wants Timothy to heed for the rest of his life and ministry – the last word from a spiritual father. The reader is led to share Paul's reflective mood as he looks back over past experiences.

The Setting of 2 Timothy (circa AD64-67)

Paul almost certainly wrote 2 Timothy during a second imprisonment in Rome, following a fourth missionary journey, which is not recorded in the book of Acts, and during which he probably wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. Expecting that death would come to him soon, Paul wrote this farewell letter to Timothy, who had probably remained in Ephesus following the commission Paul had given him in his first letter, urging him to stand firm and asking him to come for one final visit.



The map shows Ephesus, where Timothy probably was ministering, in relation to Rome, where Paul was in prison awaiting execution on the orders of Emperor Nero.

Key Themes

| <u>Theme</u> | <u>Verses</u> |
|---|---|
| 1. Suffering is a standard part of Christian experience. | 1:8, 1:12, 2:3, 2:9, 3:11-12, 4:5, 4:14-18. |
| 2. The Christian response to suffering is faithful perseverance by God's power. | 1:8, 2:1, 2:11-13, 4:1-8. |
| 3. The Gospel is the ground for the Christian's endurance. | 1:9-11, 2:8-10. |
| 4. The Scriptures have power to save and preserve. | 2:15, 3:15-17, 4:1-2. |
| 5. True believers will persevere; failure to persevere proves one is not converted. | 2:11-13, 2:19, 3:14, 4:7, 4:10. |
| 6. False teaching is deadly and must be dealt with firmly. | 2:16-18, 2:23-26, 3:1-9, 4:3-5. |

Outline

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. Exhortation to Endurance for the Gospel (1:3-2:13)
 - a. Thanksgiving and Encouragement (1:3-18)
 - i. Thanksgiving for Timothy's sincere faith (1:3-5)
 - ii. A call to bold endurance in ministry (1:6-14)
 - iii. Examples, positive and negative (1:15-18)
 - b. A Good Soldier of Christ Jesus (2:1-13)
- III. Dealing with False Teachers (2:14-3:9)
 - a. A Worker Approved by God (2:14-26)
 - b. Godlessness in the Last Days (3:1-9)
- IV. Paul's Charge to Timothy (3:10-4:8)
 - a. Call to hold fast to Scripture and Paul's example (3:10-17)
 - b. The ultimate charge (4:1-8)
- V. Conclusion (4:9-22)
 - a. Personal Instructions (4:9-18)
 - b. Final Greetings and Benediction (4:19-22)