

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Paul's Second Letter to Timothy – Part 1

I. Introduction: Today we begin a new study through the second letter Paul writes to Timothy. This letter is the second of what are called **“The Pastoral Epistles”** which includes First Timothy and Titus as well. The reason they are called this is summed up in the following excerpt:

“First, all three letters show pastoral concern for their recipients, Timothy and Titus. Second, all three deal with pastoral matters involving the care of souls and the orderly conduct of God’s people in the church as well as in the world.”¹

Unlike the letters to the Thessalonians, which were some of the earliest letters of Paul, all three of these letters are believed to have been written near the end of Paul’s life. Scholars agree that Paul wrote this letter shortly before his death and is the last epistle Paul wrote. Therefore, since he was probably executed before Nero’s death in A.D. 68, the letter was written somewhere around A.D. 66/67. The following quote gives us an idea of the setting surrounding the writing of this letter:

“In 2 Timothy, Paul focused on the personal ministry of Timothy himself more than the ordering of the church. According to tradition, Paul wrote this second letter from an underground chamber in Rome’s Mamertine prison. Based on the end of 2 Timothy, it seems Paul had already received a court hearing (2 Tim 4:16-18) and expected to be executed soon (4:6-8). Even though Paul mentioned that Luke was with him (4:11), we still picture the war-torn apostle alone and cold. He wanted his cloak, his scrolls (especially the parchments!), and to see Timothy. In light of his writing context, the passion and personal tone of 2 Timothy is understandable.”²

II. Who is Timothy?

- A. He is usually considered a convert of Paul, along with his mother and grandmother, during Paul’s first missionary journey (**Acts 13:49-14:25 and II Timothy 1:5; 3:11**).
- B. Timothy was from Lystra in the Roman province of Galatia and during Paul’s second visit to this area, he decided to take Timothy along on his travels. But because Timothy had a Greek father and Jewish mother, he had never been circumcised, and in order to not hinder his ministry to the Jews, he circumcised Timothy (**cf. Acts 16:1-5**).
- C. Paul called Timothy his **“beloved and faithful son in the Lord”** (**I Corinthians 4:17; cf. Philippians 2:22; I Timothy 1:2; II Timothy 1:2**) and his **“fellow worker”** in the gospel (**Romans 16:21; cf. I Thessalonians 3:2; I Corinthians 16:10; Philippians 2:22**). He became a very close friend of Paul’s. Dr. Gordon Fee writes: **“As his son, he became Paul’s most intimate and enduring companion, who followed him closely (1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:10–11; cf. 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2), shared his point of view (Phil. 2:20) and could articulate his ways to the churches (1 Thess. 3:2–3; 1 Cor. 4:17)... He also collaborated in six of Paul’s extant letters (1 and 2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians; cf. Rom. 16:21). In the present letters he is on yet another assignment, this time a most difficult one. He has been left in Ephesus to stop some false teachers who were in the process of undoing the church as a viable Christian alternative for that city.”³**
- D. At this time, Timothy was pastoring the church in the city of Ephesus.

III. Purpose and Relevance of this Letter.

“This epistle is immensely relevant for the life of today’s church. It was written when Christians were suffering persecution under the Emperor Nero, and when falsehood had become fashionable within the church itself. But Paul urges Timothy not to yield to the pressures of the age, but to ‘preach the Word in season and out of season’, and to remain faithful to the Apostolic faith. That is a message we need to take to heart today.”⁴

¹ Walter A. Elwell & Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. Third Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 317.

² David Platt, Daniel L. Akin and Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: 1&2 Timothy and Titus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013)

³ Gordon D. Fee, *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988)

⁴ Peter Williams, *Opening up 2 Timothy*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2007), 8.

IV. Exposition of Chapter One.

A. Verses 1-2 – “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.”

1. “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ...” – The word “apostle” means; “‘to send a message,’ 15.67) one who is sent with a message”⁵ In the ancient Greek culture, the word evolved in meaning. Bill Scheidler includes the following meaning:

“An apostle later came to be an official ambassador or an emissary for a higher authority. As such, he was to be the embodiment and true representation of the sender. The “sent one” was to be absolutely faithful to the purposes and the intentions of the sender.”⁶

2. “...by the will of God...” – After coming to Christ, it’s no longer a matter of what we want but what He wants in our lives. On the Mount of Olives, Jesus prayed to the Father and states: “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” – Luke 22:42.
3. “...according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus...” – The word “according” here means; “with regard to, in relation to”⁷. The word “life” here means; “of *the absolute fulness of life, both essential and ethical, which belongs to God...*”⁸ So, obviously Paul is talking about eternal life which not only includes a quantity of life but also a higher quality of life which is the life of God.

“This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I have been sent out to tell others about the life he has promised through faith in Christ Jesus.” – II Timothy 1:1 – New Living Translation

4. “To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace...” – Paul expresses his affection for Timothy in referring to him as “...a beloved son”. The word “grace” means; “a favorable attitude toward someone or something—‘favor, good will’”⁹. The word “peace” is defined as; “*the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and So fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is*”¹⁰. It’s pointed out by several scholars that the word “mercy” is added in the salutation of the two letters to Timothy. (Most translations do not include it in Titus 1:4, although the NKJV does.) The word “mercy” means; “to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need”¹¹ Dr. Warren Wiersbe writes:

“It is worth noting that Paul added ‘mercy’ to his greetings when he wrote to the pastors—1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4. Paul knew that pastors need mercy!”¹²

B. Verse 3 – “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,”

1. “...whom I serve with a pure conscience...” – The word “pure” means; “pertaining to being ritually clean or pure”¹³ The word “conscience” means; “the psychological faculty which can distinguish between right and wrong—‘moral sensitivity’”¹⁴

“The conscience is the capacity, or seat, of moral consciousness, common to all people (Rom. 2:15; 2 Cor. 4:2). In Paul’s earlier letters (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians only) the conscience arbitrates one’s own—and others’—actions (see esp. 1 Corinthians 8–10). But it is also clear that it can be informed, either by one’s pagan past or present existence in Christ. In the PE, the term conscience is often, as here, accompanied by a descriptive adjective (good, pure, seared), implying the seat of moral decision-making to have been ‘purified’ by Christ or ‘seared’ or ‘defiled’ by Satan (see disc. on 1 Tim. 4:2 and Titus 1:15–16). It is clear from this context and from 1:19 that a pure heart and good conscience are synonymous ideas.”¹⁵

⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 409.

⁶ Bill Scheidler, *Apostles: The Fathering Servant* (Portland, OR: City Bible Publishing, 2001), 14.

⁷ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

⁸ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 273.

⁹ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 298.

¹⁰ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 182.

¹¹ Louw and Nida, 750.

¹² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 240.

¹³ Louw and Nida, 535.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 323.

¹⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988) I Tim.1:5.