

Notes on 2 Timothy

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Introduction

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Following his release from house arrest in Rome in A.D. 62, Paul resumed his itinerant ministry in the Mediterranean world. Writing to Titus from somewhere in Macedonia, probably between A.D. 62 and 66, he said that he planned to visit Nicapolis (Titus 3:12). Assuming that he did visit Nicapolis, Paul went from there to Rome, evidently indirectly. His visit to Troas (2 Tim. 4:13) probably took place shortly before he wrote 2 Timothy. It may be that Paul's arrest required his leaving his cloak, books, and parchments there, but that is only speculation. In any case, Paul ended up in Rome as a prisoner again (2:9). He had already had his initial hearing and was awaiting trial when he wrote this epistle (4:16). He believed that the Roman authorities would execute him soon (4:6).



"According to tradition which goes back at least to the fifth century, the Mamertine prison is the place where both Paul and Peter were confined before their execution under Nero."¹

Timothy seems to have remained at Ephesus for some time, following his reception of Paul's first epistle to him, and then, presumably, Paul's personal visit of him there (1 Tim. 3:14). He was evidently in Ephesus when Paul wrote this second epistle to him (2 Tim. 1:16-18; 4:14 cf. 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:19).

Ever since Rome had burned in July of A.D. 64, and Nero had blamed the Christians, it had become dangerous to be a Christian. It was also dangerous to have contact with leaders of the church such as Paul.² Consequently many believers, including some of Paul's coworkers, had chosen to seek a much lower profile and become less aggressive in their ministries. Timothy faced the temptation to do the same. Paul wrote this epistle to urge him to remain faithful to his calling and loyal to his father in the faith. Timothy needed to stand shoulder to shoulder with Paul and the other believers, and to continue to "preach the Word" as he had done.

Paul probably wrote 2 Timothy in the fall of A.D. 67.³ There are two reasons for this date. According to early church tradition, Paul suffered execution shortly before Nero committed suicide in June of A.D. 68. Second, Paul penned this last of his canonical epistles fairly near the time of his execution, though before the winter of A.D. 67-68 (4:21).

"2 Timothy is unlike either 1 Timothy or Titus. It is an intensely personal letter written to encourage Timothy in his difficult task and to ask him to come to Rome. Since it was written to one of Paul's best friends who knew his theology, and not to a church who did not know his theology (Titus) or to a church who knew his theology but was choosing to ignore it (1 Timothy), one is not surprised if 2 Timothy does not sound like other letters. It was not intended to be a theological treatise."⁴

¹Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, p. 377. See also A. S. Barnes, *The Martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul*, p. 67.

²See D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Timothy*, p. 8.

³See Donald A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 578.

⁴William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. lxxvii.

As Paul's final farewell address (cf. Acts 20), or "swan song," this book compares with the last words of Moses (Deut. 31:1-8), Joshua (Josh. 23), David (1 Kings 2:1-9), the Lord Jesus (John 13—16), and Peter (2 Peter).¹

OUTLINE

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- II. Thanksgiving for faithful fellow workers 1:3-18
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¹Walter Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 79.

1. Adherence to the truth 3:14-17
 2. Proclamation of the truth 4:1-5
- C. Paul's role in the last days 4:6-8
- V. Concluding personal instructions and information 4:9-22
- A. Fellow workers and an opponent 4:9-15
 - B. Paul's preliminary hearing in court 4:16-18
 - C. Additional greetings and instructions 4:19-21
 - D. Benediction 4:22

MESSAGE

Paul had previously written to Timothy, explaining that the local church is a supporting pedestal ("pillar and foundation") for God's *truth* (1 Tim. 3:15). He had said that the purpose of the local church is the *proclamation* of God's truth to the world. He had also said that the purpose of church leaders is the *exposition* of God's truth in the church.

Conditions facing the church had worsened considerably since Paul had written 1 Timothy. Characteristics of the last days were becoming increasingly obvious (2 Tim. 3:1-7). Godlessness and worldliness were invading the church. If the church failed to fulfill its purpose, God's truth would cease to go out into the world. The church would fail if its leaders failed to expound God's truth to the saints in the church. Consequently, Paul wrote this letter to encourage Timothy to fulfill his responsibility as a leader in the church. This epistle, therefore, is particularly for church leaders, and deals mainly with their duties.

This epistle reveals the true minister of Jesus Christ. It reveals his resources, his methods, and his most important work. Of course, every Christian is a true minister of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:12), so every Christian can benefit from this epistle, not just church leaders.

According to what Paul wrote to Timothy in this letter, the essential resources of the Christian minister are God's gifts and God's grace.

A person can become a minister of God's truth only when the Head of the church (Jesus Christ) bestows a "gift" on him or her through the Holy Spirit. This is the primary qualification for ministry (1:6). Some leaders have great

gifts, others have lesser gifts, but all have at least one gift (1 Pet. 4:10). These gifts are abilities for service that God gives us.

"Grace" is also necessary. Grace refers to all of God's resources that are available to us through Christ. God works through the gifts that He has given to us. Grace is His power at work to accomplish what is supernatural. His grace brings power to our public ministries and godliness into our personal lives. Its ultimate purpose is to bring everything about us into harmony with God's character (2:1; 2 Cor. 12:9). No matter how much work we may do, unless God adds His grace (help), our work will fall short. And even though He provides grace, we must work diligently too, or our work will fall short.

The *methods* of the Christian minister, according to 2 Timothy, are construction and demonstration.

The leader of God's people must aim at the development of holy character and conduct in the lives of those under his or her care. He or she should seek to build up the saints so they can fulfill their function. Second Timothy 3:16-17 gives the process. This takes place through authoritative instruction, correction, restoration, and patient guidance.

Second, the minister must also demonstrate in his or her own life what godliness and righteousness are. He or she must give people an example they can follow, as well as information they can believe (1:8; 2:22-23)

The most important work of the minister is also twofold: he must *know the Scriptures* and *proclaim the Scriptures*. Knowledge of the whole counsel of God is essential (3:14-15). We must know the Word because that is what God uses to build up His people. We must also know it because it is through our mastery of the Word that God masters us, and changes our lives into the examples that we need to be. While proclaiming the Word is not the totality of pastoral ministry, it is without question its most important public function (4:1-2).

Paul's great appeal in this letter was to "fulfill your ministry" (4:5).

Concerning his resources, the minister must "stir up" his or her "gift" (1:6) in order to fulfill his or her ministry. We must rekindle our gifts from time to time. They tend to diminish if we do not use them, as any other unused ability tends to diminish. We are in danger of growing cold. We need to keep using and seeking to improve our gifts. The famous pianist and second

Prime Minister of Poland, Ignacy Jan Paderuski, reportedly said: "If I don't practice one day, I notice it. If I don't practice two days, the critics notice it. If I don't practice three days, everyone notices it."

We have a second responsibility concerning our resources: we must draw strength from God's grace (2:1). To do this, we must make use of the means of grace: prayer, the devotional reading of the Bible, fellowship with other Christians, and meditation on Christ.

Concerning methods, Paul appealed to "give diligence" to our work of construction (2:15). The approval of God requires zeal in ministry, not half-hearted or sloppy service. In our postmodern culture, many people are willing to do just enough to get by. My former pastor occasionally reminded us in the congregation that, "Holy shoddy is still shoddy." I love to watch the athletic events of the Olympic Games, because the commitment of those athletes to winning challenges me to do my best in the Christian race.

The leader's work of demonstrating an example for the church requires that we flee some things and pursue others (2:22). Our inner lives affect our ability to demonstrate the truth perhaps more than our ability to proclaim the truth. That is why we need to cultivate purity in our thought lives, as well as in our physical behavior, every day.

We fulfill our responsibility to know the Scriptures when we abide in them (3:14). We must not neglect, much less abandon them, day by day. We need to read, memorize, and meditate on the Word *frequently* and *regularly*. How much do you think about Scripture in your free time? Pray that God will give you an appetite for His Word.

We fulfill our responsibility to proclaim the Scriptures when we are "instant (ready) in season and out of season" (4:2). There is no "season" for heralding God's truth. We should be ready to do it always. I understand that in some of the United States, a physician can be brought into court and prosecuted if he or she witnesses a life-threatening accident and does nothing to render aid. How much more should those with the life-saving gospel be ready and willing to provide help at any time or place.

These are Paul's revelations of the secrets of success in ministry. Let me now make a few applications of the message of this epistle.

First, consider some applications to the church. It is the proclamation of God's truth, both in the church and in the world, that will keep the church

solid and secure. The *Word of God* is our most important resource. The church must "preach the Word"!

The church must also give attention to both correct thinking and correct acting. Correct thinking is basic to correct behavior. The church must practice and preach godliness. The Word of God is indispensable to both objectives. Churches that emphasize the proclamation of the Word are most effective on both of these fronts. This is the main reason evangelical churches usually grow.

Also, the church must fully know the Word and faithfully proclaim the Word. This is its great work in the world. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones made the following comments in a sermon that he delivered on April 28, 1929.

"It is not often that I make any kind of personal reference from this pulpit, but I feel this morning that I must speak of an experience which bears on this very subject. [He was preaching on Matt. 22:20-21: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's."] When I came here [as pastor of this church], people said to me, 'Why give up *good* work—a *good* profession—after all the *medical* profession. Why give *that* up? If you had been a bookie, for instance, and wanted to give *that* up to preach the gospel, we would understand and agree with you and say that you were doing a grand thing. But *medicine*—a *good* profession, healing the sick and relieving pain!' One man even said this: 'If you were a solicitor [lawyer] and gave it up, I'd give you a pat on the back, but to give up *medicine*!' I felt like saying to them, 'If you knew more about the work of a doctor you would understand. We but spend most of our time rendering people fit to go back to their sin!' I saw men on their sick beds. I spoke to them of their immortal souls. They promised grand things. Then they got better, and back they went to their old sin! I saw I was helping these men to sin and I decided that I would do no more of it. I want to heal souls. If a man has a diseased body and his soul is all right, he is all right to the end. But a man with a healthy body and a diseased soul is all right for sixty years or so and then he has to face an eternity of hell. Ah, yes! We have sometimes to give up those things which are

good for that which is the best of all: the joy of salvation and newness of life."¹

Obviously, God calls many people to serve Him in the medical field, but I thought Lloyd-Jones' perspective was interesting.

Finally, consider three applications for individual ministers, or church leaders.

First, the Lord will *guard* the lives of those who guard His Word (1:12, 14). There is no safer place to be than doing God's will.

Second, God has given the *Scriptures* to us *in trust*, to pass along so that others will benefit from them (2:2). We have an obligation to do this (cf. 1 Cor. 9:16).

Third, we have a responsibility to be *faithful* to our trust. Paul said this was true in this letter for three reasons: First, Christ will return soon. Second, there is growing apostasy in the church. Third, there are always gaps opening in the ranks of the church's leadership—by death (Paul) and defection (Demas, et al.). Second Timothy emphasizes faithfulness.

There is constant turnover in the leadership of the church. Nevertheless, the proclamation of God's Word by the church's leaders must continue to have priority for the church to fulfill its purpose in the world. This is the message statement.²

¹Iain H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years 1899-1939*, p. 80.

²Adapted from G. Campbell Morgan, *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, 2:2:63-74.

Exposition

I. SALUTATION 1:1-2

As usual, Paul so worded things in his salutation, partially to set the tone for his emphasis in the rest of the epistle. There are only three particulars in which this salutation differs from the one in 1 Timothy.

First, Paul attributed his calling as an apostle to "the will of God" (v. 1), rather than to the *command* of God. The wording here is what Paul used in several of his other epistles (1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians). The two terms are very similar in meaning. When friends desert us and opposition becomes intense, there is nothing that gives Christians confidence like the assurance that we are doing God's will.

"No Christian is ever chosen to be a Christian entirely for his own sake; he is chosen for what he can do for others."¹

Second, the apostle said his calling as an apostle was "according to" (i.e., "because of," or "in harmony with," or both) "the promise of life in Christ Jesus" (v. 1). This promise is part of the gospel message, and here the phrase probably refers to the gospel as a whole (cf. vv. 9-11).

"... Paul in his circumstances probably thinks of 'life' (eternal) as something yet to be fully obtained—thus the reference to a *promise* (compare 1 Tim 6:19)."²

"It was the *promise* of God that Paul was convinced that he must broadcast throughout the world, not the *threat* of God. To Paul, Christianity was not the threat of damnation; it was the good news of salvation."³

In this epistle Paul emphasized the importance of faithfulness: God's faithfulness, Paul's faithfulness, Timothy's need to remain faithful, and the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of Paul's fellow workers and other servants of Christ. Paul was counting on God being faithful and providing what He

¹William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 164.

²Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, p. 155.

³Barclay, p. 164.

had promised, namely, eternal life in Christ. God had called him to proclaim this promise as "an apostle."

Third, Paul referred to Timothy as his "beloved son" (v. 2). This description emphasized the affection Paul felt for Timothy, and his relationship to him as his *spiritual* son and protégé whom he had nurtured in the faith. Paul mentioned Timothy in all of his inspired epistles except Galatians, Ephesians, and Titus.

II. THANKSGIVING FOR FAITHFUL FELLOW WORKERS 1:3-18

In this first major part of the epistle, Paul thanked God for Timothy and encouraged him to remain faithful. He recalled the unfaithfulness of other fellow workers, and used their example to challenge Timothy to remain faithful to the Lord and to his calling.

"The skillful blending of past, present, and future dominates the structure of the book."¹

A. TIMOTHY'S PAST FAITHFULNESS 1:3-7

Paul gave thanks to God for Timothy's past faithfulness to his Lord, and encouraged him to continue being faithful, in order to strengthen Timothy's resolve in view of ever-increasing apostasy and the decision by many to abandon Paul.

1:3-4 Paul had voiced, in his first epistle to Timothy, thanks for his own salvation and ministry (1 Tim. 1:12). In this second epistle, he began with thanks for *Timothy's* salvation and ministry.

Paul's reference to his "forefathers" (God-fearing Jewish believers who lived before Christ's death) seems unusual. However, throughout this epistle, Paul looked backward into the past and ahead into the future—when he would no longer be alive on earth. This reference reveals that Paul regarded his own ministry as part of the continuation of God's great ongoing plan of the ages. He was one of the faithful,

¹Kenneth G. Hanna, *From Gospels to Glory*, p. 356.

throughout history, who have loyally served God sincerely, with a "clear conscience" (cf. 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9).

"These two themes—association with Paul and a spiritual heritage—form the basis of Paul's encouragement in the first half of the epistle and are woven throughout the second half. They provide a personal look into Paul's heart and reveal his love and concern for his good friend Timothy."¹

"To have a good, or pure, conscience does not mean that we have never sinned or do not commit acts of sin. Rather, it means that the underlying direction and motive of life is to obey and please God, so that acts of sin are habitually recognized as such and faced before God (1 Jn 1:9)."²

Paul undoubtedly prayed for Timothy often ("night and day"), and when he did, he thanked God for his friend. Timothy had been one of Paul's closest associates, and he was evidently still laboring in Ephesus (cf. 4:19-20), the city where Paul had spent so much time. Paul had plenty of time to pray, since he was again in prison (cf. 4:9, 16, 21). It is not only good to pray for individuals, but it encourages them when we tell them that we do, as Paul did here.

Even though Paul rejoiced continually, his life was not "filled with joy" when he wrote this letter. He longed for Timothy to visit him. Evidently when they had parted last—perhaps the event referred to in 1 Timothy 1:3—Timothy had taken their separation very hard ("I [Paul] recall your tears"). A reunion would encourage Timothy too.

"One of the fascinating aspects of Pauline studies is the very real humanity of this man of God. Paul

¹Mounce, p. 468.

²Wilbur B. Wallis, "The Second Epistle to Timothy," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1384.

was a stalwart soldier, but he had a tender heart."¹

"Paul was an intellectual giant, but his heart was bigger than his brain."²

1:5 Paul rejoiced over Timothy's genuine, "sincere faith," that his remaining faithful to the Lord for so long had proven. Timothy's faith was pure, unmixed with distrust and unbelief.

"There is no greater inspiration than to feel that someone believes in us. An appeal to honour is always more effective than a threat of punishment. The fear to let those who love us down is a cleansing fear."³

Timothy's "mother Eunice" (lit. "Good Victory") and "grandmother Lois" had also demonstrated sterling faith in Christ. Undoubtedly they were instrumental in Timothy's salvation. Spiritual, as well as physical traits, often come down from one generation to the next.

"A fine parentage is one of the greatest gifts that a man can have. Let him thank God for it, and let him never bring dishonor to it."⁴

The more personal the letter from Paul, the more often he mentioned personal names.⁵ He mentioned 23 people in this letter, 12 of whom are mentioned nowhere else,⁶ and nine in Philemon.

1:6 In view of the quality of Timothy's faith, Paul urged his younger friend not to neglect, but instead "kindle afresh" the use of his God-given abilities ("the gift of God") for the service of Christ. Any person can become less effective in the exercise of his

¹Ralph Earle, "2 Timothy," in *Ephesians-Philemon*, vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 394.

²Charles B. Williams, *A Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, p. 487.

³Barclay, p. 165.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 223.

⁶Hanna, p. 355.

abilities if he or she does not use them regularly. This was Paul's concern. He wanted Timothy to keep active. He was not implying that Timothy's gift had left him.

"General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, once sent this message to those under him: 'The tendency of fire is to go out; watch the fire on the altar of your heart.' Anyone who has tended a fireplace fire knows that it needs to be stirred up occasionally."¹

Timothy may have received special abilities from the Lord through Paul at his ordination ("through the laying on of my [Paul's] hands"; cf. 1 Tim. 4:14). The bestowal of these may have been a unique apostolic ministry that ceased with that office (Eph. 2:20; Heb. 2:3-4).

"Every Christian minister needs at times to return to the inspiration of his ordination, to be reminded not only of the greatness of his calling, but also of the adequacy of the divine grace which enables him to perform it. Indeed, every Christian worker engaged in however small a task requires assurance that God never commissions anyone to a task without imparting a special gift appropriate for it."²

It seems more likely, however, that what Timothy received was divine enablement to do the work into which God was leading him. We could understand "the gift," then, as a special endowment or enablement by the Holy Spirit (cf. v. 7).³ Paul may have been referring to Timothy's conversion, at which time Paul laid hands on him and he received the Holy Spirit.⁴

¹Earle, p. 395.

²Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, p. 126.

³George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, p. 371.

⁴Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, pp. 462-63.

"The laying on of hands was not the cause of Timothy's receipt of a spiritual gift but was a visible representation and symbol of it."¹

1:7 Timothy had apparently held back from some ministry because of "timidity." Paul reminded him that such a "spirit" is not from God. God makes "us" (either Paul and Timothy or, more likely, all believers²) spiritually powerful (i.e., having a forceful character that uses authority boldly, cf. 1 Cor. 2:4), loving (Gal. 5:22), and self-disciplined (Gal. 5:23). Self-disciplined refers to a person who has a "wise head."³

"He [Paul] is obliquely chiding Timothy for his timidity, but softens the blow by lumping himself with him."⁴

"In writing from Rome as well as to Rome [e.g., cf. Rom. 1:16] he dwells upon power as the essential characteristic of the Gospel, a power which is to prove stronger than the Empire of power; cf. also 1 Co 4:19, 20."⁵

"We should be disciplined Christians rather than slaves to our emotions. We are all moved by our emotions. That is why people will send money to organizations that advertise with the picture of a poor, hungry, little orphan. But Christians are not to be motivated by their emotions. Our emotions are not to master us. We are to be disciplined."⁶

¹Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 81. Lea wrote the commentaries on 1 and 2 Timothy in this volume.

²Newport J. D. White, "The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 4:155.

³Fee, p. 227.

⁴J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, p. 160.

⁵Lock, p. 86.

⁶J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, 5:461.

B. CHARGES TO REMAIN LOYAL 1:8-14

Paul here gave his young protégé some exhortations to further encourage him to remain faithful to the Lord. Hanna identified three exhortations in chapter 1, nine in chapter 2, one in chapter 3, and 14 in chapter 4.¹

1. Exhortation to be courageous 1:8-12

"There are few passages in the New Testament which have in them and behind them such a sense of the sheer grandeur of the gospel of Jesus Christ."²

1:8 In view of the Holy Spirit's enablement just mentioned, Paul instructed Timothy not to let others intimidate him. The aorist tense of the Greek verb, translated "be ashamed" (*epaischunthes*), indicates that Paul was not implying that Timothy was already guilty of this. Because of opposition, Timothy had evidently been tempted to demonstrate some sign of embarrassment with the gospel and with Paul, perhaps because he was in prison.³

The apostle reminded Timothy that he was in prison as "Christ's (His) prisoner." Paul consistently referred to himself as Christ's prisoner (cf. Eph. 3:1; 4:1; Phile. 1, 9). He viewed himself as in prison for no other reason than that he served Christ. The Lord had placed him there, so there was no reason to feel ashamed about that. Rather, Timothy should join his mentor in suffering for the gospel, not by being imprisoned with him necessarily, but by proclaiming it boldly (cf. Rom. 1:16). God would empower him to stand tall by His grace.⁴

"Paul categorizes this behavior very strongly in terms of the values of honor and shame that were central to that culture. ... In this setting, the point is not so much that Timothy *feels* embarrassment

¹Hanna, p. 356.

²Barclay, p. 167.

³See my comments on 4:16.

⁴See Gregory S. MaGee, "Paul's Response to the Shame and Pain of Imprisonment in 2 Timothy," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165:659 (July-September 2008):338-53.

or shame and so fails to give a witness, but more that by his failure he is discrediting or shaming the ones mentioned."¹

"What the Spirit provides is power to endure the stress that comes from bearing witness to God, not removal to some safe place."²

"A retired lawyer sent me this statement which he found in a will. It read: 'To my son I leave the pleasure of earning a living. For twenty-five years he thought the pleasure was mine. He was mistaken.' And a great many Christians expect their heavenly Father to make things easy for them."³

"I am afraid that many Christians are thinking like a little boy in Sunday school whose teacher asked, 'Johnny, which of the parables do you like best?' The little fellow answered, 'The one where everybody loafs and fishes.' No, my friend, the Christian life is not a bed of roses. We are to be 'partakers of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.'"⁴

1:9-11 Paul here enlarged on the *glory* of "the gospel," in order to rekindle a fresh appreciation of it in Timothy. This is one of the seven so-called liturgical passages in the Pastorals, all of which expound the essentials of salvation (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15; 2:5-6; 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:8-13; Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-7).⁵ God has "delivered (saved) us" from the penalty and power of sin. He has "called us" to a special "purpose," not because of us, but by His free choice. He enables us to achieve this purpose by

¹Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 463.

²Ibid., p. 466.

³McGee, 5:461-62.

⁴Ibid., 5:462.

⁵For a brief discussion of these passages, see Mark L. Bailey, "A Biblical Theology of Paul's Pastoral Epistles," in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 349-54; or for a more detailed explanation, see Philip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction*, pp. 75-119.

His sufficient "grace," that comes to us "in Christ" (cf. Eph. 2:8-9).¹

"God did not call us because we are holy; God called us to make us holy."²

Our calling took place before the creation of the universe ("from all eternity"; cf. Eph. 1:4; Rom. 16:25; Titus 1:2), but God has "revealed" its full dignity only since Christ has come. Jesus Christ destroyed the effects of ("abolished") "death," and made it possible for us to live with God eternally ("brought life and immortality"). The "gospel" is the revelation of ("brought ... to light") this plan, but Timothy appears to have felt ashamed of it! Paul proudly acknowledged that God had appointed him, of all people, a "preacher" or herald (announcer), an "apostle" (establisher), and a "teacher" (perpetuator) of this good news. What an honor and privilege it is to communicate the gospel!

1:12 Paul suffered imprisonment, and the discomforts associated with it, because he preached the gospel.³ Nevertheless, he was "not ashamed" of the gospel or of himself (cf. Rom. 1:16). His confidence lay in the person of God. He believed that God is faithful. God would protect ("guard") *something* that Paul had placed with God for His protection ("what I have entrusted to Him"), and preserve that "until the (that) day" he would see Christ face to face at the Rapture or death (cf. v. 18; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:9-10).

The "deposit" (v. 14) in view may refer to the truth of the gospel (cf. v. 14; 2:2; 1 Tim. 6:20).⁴ Probably it refers to Paul's life, including his work.⁵ Another, less likely view, is that it refers to the faith entrusted to Paul, that he would figuratively hand back to God when he saw Him.⁶ Paul used the Greek term

¹See James S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ*.

²Barclay, p. 169.

³See Stanley D. Toussaint, "Suffering in Acts and the Pauline Epistles," in *Why, O God? Suffering and Disability in the Bible and Church*, pp. 191-92.

⁴Guthrie, p. 132; Kenneth S. Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 2:3:124.

⁵Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 3:2:373-74; Fee, p. 232.

⁶Kelly, p. 166.

for "deposit" ("what is entrusted," "good deposit," "treasure") in this last sense, here, and also in verse 14 and in 1 Timothy 6:20.

2. Exhortation to guard the gospel 1:13-14

1:13 Timothy felt the temptation to modify his message, as well as to stop preaching it. Paul urged him, therefore, to continue preaching the same message ("Retain the standard of sound words") he had heard from Paul, and to do so with trust ("faith") in God and "love" for people, which Jesus Christ would supply.

"With his usual skillful way with words, Paul is saying in effect that as God has guarded the deposit of his life (and will guard Timothy's) so also Timothy must guard the deposit of the faithful account of the gospel that God has entrusted to him."¹

"Apostasy starts with the giving up of the form of sound words. Critics and other deniers of inspiration speak of the spiritual meaning of the words of the Bible, and, that the Bible contains the Word of god, instead of *is* the Word of God. And that is the starting point of the ever increasing departure from the truth of God in our days, which will soon culminate in the predicted complete apostasy."²

1:14 He should "guard" God's revelation ("the treasure") that God had "entrusted to" him as a minister of the gospel (cf. 1 Tim. 6:20). In antiquity, strict rules and penalties governed the care of something that one person deposited to another for safekeeping.³ The indwelling "Holy Spirit" (as well as the Son, v. 13) would enable him to do so. (This is one of only three

¹Knight, p. 380.

²Arno C. Gaebelien, *The Annotated Bible*, 4:1:185.

³See Lock, pp. 90-92, for examples.

specific references to the Holy Spirit in the Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; and Titus 3:5.)

"The appeal has come full circle. It began with God's Spirit and his power and it has ended with the Spirit's enabling power."¹

Since Timothy was probably in Ephesus when he received this letter, Paul's reference to "guard[ing] ... the treasure" was an appropriate metaphor. Ephesus was a banking center, and the Temple of Artemis was its main depository.

C. EXAMPLES OF FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL SERVICE 1:15-18

To further impress upon Timothy the need for him to remain faithful to his calling, Paul cited records of the ministries of other Christians who were mutual acquaintances.

1:15 The Christians in Ephesus, and in the province of Asia where Ephesus stood, had so thoroughly abandoned Paul that he could say "all" had "turned away from" him. This caused Paul suffering.² Paul may have meant all the leaders, or his former colleagues who had left him by himself in prison in Rome. Probably not all of these people had turned from the gospel; the statement is probably hyperbolic.³ Timothy was the last one among that group to maintain his loyalty to and support of Paul, and he was now being tempted to abandon him. The names "Phygelus" and "Hermogenes" appear nowhere else in Scripture. They had been strong supporters of the apostle in the past, but had eventually turned away from him like the rest.

"These verses [vv. 10, 15, and 16] show that Paul's current imprisonment was decidedly more severe than the one in Acts 28:23, 30-31."⁴

¹Knight, p. 382.

²See Toussaint, p. 193.

³Guthrie, p. 135.

⁴Mounce, p. 492.

1:16-18 Some have suggested that "Onesiphorus" (lit. "help-bringer") may have been dead when Paul wrote this epistle, since Paul spoke only of his household ("house").¹ But that seems unlikely to me in view of Paul's pious wish in verse 18.

"Strange it it [*sic*] is that the prayer of the Apostle for the house of Onesiphorus is used as an authority to pray for the dead. The assumption that Onesiphorus had died is incorrect."²

"In the Apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Onesiphorus is spoken of as a convert of Paul's who gave him hospitality on his first visit to Iconium."³

Onesiphorus' household was an exception to the "all" above (v. 15), or perhaps they had felt differently and had later reaffirmed their loyalty to Paul. In any case, Onesiphorus' family had diligently and unashamedly sought out Paul, and had ministered to him during his current imprisonment. For this, Paul wished the Lord would show Onesiphorus "mercy" at the judgment seat of Christ (cf. "that day" in v. 12). Because Onesiphorus had "found" Paul, Paul hoped that Onesiphorus would "find" mercy from the Lord.

Paul seems to have been envisioning a scene in which all his brethren would stand before the Lord, Onesiphorus among them, namely, at Christ's judgment seat. God would express displeasure with the failure of the others, but Onesiphorus would escape that shame (cf. 1 John 2:28). Paul again used the possibility of shame to motivate Timothy (cf. v. 8). Timothy knew about Onesiphorus' earlier faithful ministry in Ephesus. Paul referred to this as well, to encourage Timothy to throw in his lot with Onesiphorus and his family, rather than with those who had turned against the chained apostle.

¹E.g., White, 4:159; A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 4:615; Wuest, 2:3:126.

²Gaebelein, 4:1:186, footnote.

³Guthrie, p. 135

"Moral behavior is best learned by observing such commitment in others. Children learn this behavior from parents. Young Christians learn it from older Christians. Ultimately moral behavior cannot be taught merely by character-building courses in the public schools. Christians must see moral commitment as a sterling example in others.

"Paul was not ashamed to present himself as the initial example he gave to Timothy. He had no doubt that his behavior was worth imitating. Christian leaders today need to have such a commitment to Christ that they are unashamed to say in humility, 'If you want an example to follow, look at me!'"¹

III. EXHORTATIONS TO PERSEVERE CH. 2

Paul continued to encourage Timothy to remain faithful to the Lord and to his calling, by charging him to endure hardship. Then he stressed again the importance of faithfulness in his public ministry and in his personal life (cf. 1 Tim. 4:6-16).

A. CHARGE TO ENDURE HARDSHIP 2:1-13

Paul continued to encourage Timothy to remain faithful to his calling, in order to motivate him to persevere in his ministry.

"In this first section the subject particularly dealt with is the question of service and rewards."²

1. Timothy's duty 2:1-7

"Following the models of shame and courage (1:15-18), Paul resumes direct exhortation to Timothy and the handover of the Pauline mission."³

¹Lea, p. 200.

²Harry Ironside, *Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p. 182.

³Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 487.

2:1 Paul's charge in this verse is a general one. Specific responsibilities follow. On the basis of what he had already written, Paul urged his "son" (Gr. *teknon*, lit. "child," an affectionate term) to let Christ's "grace" empower him. The present tense of the Greek passive imperative *endunamoo* indicates the need for continual dependence on God. One does this as he or she walks in submission to the Spirit of God, and in harmony with the will of God. God then can and will provide strength.

"Christ is the dynamo for power only when and while we keep in touch with him."¹

2:2 Just as Paul had passed the torch of ministry on to Timothy, so now Timothy should do for other men who gave evidence that they, too, would be "faithful." These should in turn "instruct (teach) others" who would follow them.

"Faithfulness negatively consists in their not losing, neglecting, ignoring, or falsifying (like the false teachers mentioned in this letter) what Paul has said, and positively consists of their 'handling accurately the word of truth' (2:15).

"Since the task committed to these faithful ones is that of teaching others also, it is certain that they are the same group of whom Paul wrote in 1 Timothy, the presbyters who 'work hard in word and teaching' (5:17), and also in Titus, the presbyters/overseers who are 'holding fast the faithful word that is in accordance with the teaching' so that they are 'able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict' (1:9)."²

This discipleship process involved both the instruction in the truths of the faith and companionship in ministry. The reference to "witnesses" would have reminded Timothy of

¹Robertson, 4:616.

²Knight, p. 391.

Paul's bold preaching on many occasions. It would have encouraged him to renew his commitment to Paul's life-changing gospel and to Paul personally.

"This is the true apostolic succession of the ministry: not an uninterrupted line of hands laid on which extends back to the apostles themselves so that all ordinations which are not in that line are null and void; but a succession of true apostolic doctrine, the deposit of what we still hear from Paul in his writings, this held by us in faithful hearts with competency to teach others the same things. The apostle did not evidently expect the future teachers of the church to produce new or different teaching."¹

"The Christian Church is dependent on an unbroken chain of teachers. ... The teacher is a link in the living chain which stretches unbroken from this present moment back to Jesus Christ. The glory of teaching is that it links the present with the earthly life of Jesus Christ."²

2:3-4 Paul's long ministry with Timothy had included many hardships. Now, as Timothy looked forward to training other younger men, he could expect more of the same. Paul urged him to submit to difficulties as "a good soldier."

The apostle used three illustrations here to help Timothy appreciate the logical consistency of this exhortation (cf. 1 Cor. 9:7, 10, 24). The first illustration is the soldier (cf. Eph. 6:11-17; 1 Thess. 5:8). Paul's emphasis in this illustration was on the importance of remaining free from *entanglement* with other, lesser goals and activities, while serving the Lord. This is something about which Paul had previously warned Timothy (1 Tim. 6:3-16; cf. Matt. 13:22; Luke 8:14).

¹Richard C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon*, pp. 778-79. Cf. White, 4:160.

²Barclay, p. 182.

Obviously Paul did not mean that a minister should *always* give all of his time to preaching and teaching, to the exclusion of any tent-making activities. He meant that he should not let other duties drain off his energies or interests, or divert him from his primary responsibilities as a Christian soldier.

"A Christian must concentrate on his Christianity. That does not mean that he must engage on [*sic*] no worldly task or business. He must still live in this world, and he must still make a living; but it does mean that he must use whatever task he is engaged upon to live out and to demonstrate his Christianity."¹

Demas, whom Paul mentioned later, turned out to be a bad soldier in this respect (cf. 4:10). As an ordinary soldier must be single-minded in his purpose, rigorous in his self-discipline, and unquestioning in his obedience, so must every soldier of Christ.

"Paul's appeal shows the importance of developing an ability to distinguish between doing good things and doing the best things. Servants of Christ are not merely to be well-rounded dabblers in all types of trivial pursuits. They are tough-minded devotees of Christ who constantly choose the right priorities from a list of potential selections."²

2:5 Paul's second illustration, the "athlete," emphasized the need to minister according to "the rules" that God has prescribed. To do this, we must minister with proper motives, with purity of life, and obedience to all of God's will to win His approval.

"This implies both the training for the contest and the rules governing it."³

¹Ibid., p. 183.

²Lea, p. 203.

³Wallis, p. 1385.

"The Greek athlete was required to spend ten months in preparatory training before the contest. During this time he had to engage in the prescribed exercises and live a strictly separated life in regard to the ordinary and lawful pursuits of life, and he was placed on a rigid diet. Should he break training rules, he would, in the words of the A.V., be a castaway (I Cor. 9:27), *adokimos*, 'disqualified,' barred from engaging in the athletic contest."¹

"... competitors at the Olympic Games had to swear an oath before the statue of Zeus that they had been in strict training for ten months (Pausanias, *Graec. deser.* v. 24. 9)."²

As an athlete who "competes" must deny himself or herself, endure hardship, and persevere to the end, so must every spiritual athlete. William Barclay offered the following illustration of keeping the rules:

"No matter how hot the argument, the Christian must never forget his courtesy. No matter how essential it is to win the argument, he must never be anything else but honest about his own position and fair to that of his opponent. ... There is often no bitterness like religious bitterness. But the real Christian knows that the supreme rule of the Christian life is love, and he will carry that love into every argument and every debate in which he is engaged."³

2:6 Paul's third illustration, "the hard-working farmer," emphasized the toil that is necessary if one wants to enjoy the fruits of his or her labors.⁴ A farmer must continue to *sow* the seed and *water* the seed and soil, if he or she wants to harvest its fruit

¹Wuest, 2:3:129-30.

²Kelly, p. 176. See Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Historical Background of Paul's Athletic Allusions," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161:643 July-September 2004):343-59.

³Barclay, p. 186.

⁴Cf. J. H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 118.

("receive his share of the crops"). Likewise the farmer for Christ must plant and nourish the gospel seed, if he or she expects to eventually reap the fruit of God's Word in the lives of people.

The farmer has to learn to be patient; there is no such thing as quick results when raising crops. Likewise, the Christian must be patient and not expect to see the fruits of his or her labor immediately. The farmer also has to be willing to work at any hour, depending on the needs of his crops. So, too, Christians must be willing to work whenever the need demands.

All three illustrations imply dogged persistence and hold out the prospect of eventual reward for the faithful. Later, Paul would use two more illustrations: a tradesman who skillfully cuts out his goods (v. 15), and a fisherman who tries to catch back those whom the devil has caught (v. 26).¹

In chapter 2, there are actually seven figures of speech that suggest how the believer should function: as a son (v. 1), a soldier (vv. 3-4), an athlete (v. 5), a farmer (v. 6), a workman (specifically a teacher, v. 15), a vessel (v. 21), and a servant (v. 24).

2:7 Paul encouraged Timothy to meditate on ("consider") what he had just written ("what I say"), knowing that "the Lord" (probably Jesus, cf. v. 8) would help him see the wisdom ("give him understanding") of his words. Paul's illustrations yield many practical lessons as one meditates on them.

"The apprehension of spiritual truth is not primarily a matter of mental acumen but of spiritual teachableness."²

¹Lock, p. 79.

²Hiebert, pp. 57-8.

2. The examples of Jesus and Paul 2:8-10

Paul proceeded to undergird his appeal to "suffer hardship" (v. 3) with the examples of Jesus (v. 8) and himself (vv. 9-10). Verses 8-10 form a single sentence in the Greek text, which has the effect of uniting Jesus and Paul in their respective examples. Paul replicated Jesus' example.

2:8 "Jesus Christ" is, of course, the greatest example of suffering hardship for a worthy purpose. Paul urged Timothy to meditate on ("remember") His example, too. This is the only place in this epistle where Paul arranged Jesus' names in this order (cf. 1 Tim. 6:3, 14; Titus 1:1; 2:13; 3:6). He probably did so to stress Jesus' "humanity," and thus His exemplary conduct.

Paul may have intended his references to Jesus' resurrection and lineage to provoke meditation on our Lord's vindication and reign following His sufferings. Jesus was the culmination of a line of rulers whom God's enemies consistently opposed and persecuted (cf. Acts 7).

"The perfect tense of the participle for 'raised' suggests that Paul was stressing the result of Christ's resurrection, the demonstration of his lordship (Rom 1:4), rather than the fact of the resurrection. ..."¹

Another view is that the perfect tense was intended to remind Timothy that the Lord was presently with him with resurrection power.²

"Second, the mention that Christ 'descended from David' shows that Christ has messianic qualifications and is the heir to the glorious promises of God for David."³

¹Lea, p. 206.

²Barclay, p. 189.

³Lea, p. 206.

It is also a reminder of Jesus' humanity. As we remember Him, we need to remember that He too was a man, and that He "suffer[ed] hardship" faithful to His God, as we can.¹

"The memory of Christ cloaked with resurrection power and messianic dignity is an inspiration for Christian service."²

The record of Jesus Christ was part of the gospel that Paul preached, the same gospel that Timothy was in danger of neglecting (1:8). Paul could call the gospel "my gospel" because God had entrusted it to him.

"The Davidic Messiah who suffered and was raised from the dead is the very essence of Paul's gospel."³

2:9 Paul, too, was willing to "suffer hardship" for the gospel. He had done so all his Christian life, and was presently in prison because of it. The Greek word translated "criminal" (*kakourger*) is a strong one, and occurs only in Luke 23:32, 33, and 39 elsewhere in the New Testament. There it describes the criminals crucified with Jesus. Under Nero's persecution, many non-Christians viewed Christians as serious criminals. Timothy needed to remember that "the [W]ord of God" was just as powerful to change lives as ever. Its power was *as great as it ever was*—even though its champion defender was in chains. So Timothy should continue to proclaim it.

2:10 Because the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation," Paul was content to endure anything so long as this message went forth (cf. Phil. 1:12-20).

"The body they may kill;

God's truth abideth still;

¹Barclay, p. 189.

²Lea, p. 207.

³Knight, p. 398. Cf. 1 Tim. 3:16.

His kingdom is forever."¹

Paul had once been the chief suppresser of the gospel (Acts. 22:4; 26:9-11). Now he was its chief promoter. He had been the greatest oppressor of the saints. Now he was the most greatly oppressed among them.

"While the majority of the commentators understand the 'elect' to refer to the unregenerate who have not yet believed (but certainly will), there is good reason to understand the term in this context as a virtual synonym for a regenerate saint. First of all, in *every* usage of the term applied to men, in the New Testament it *always* refers to a justified saint. Conversely, it *never* refers to someone who was elect in eternity past but who has not yet entered into the purpose of their election, justification. ... It is best to understand by 'the elect' Timothy and the faithful men of v. 2. Timothy is being exhorted to suffer in his ministry to the faithful men just as Paul has been imprisoned for his ministry to the 'elect.' The idea of Paul suffering for the sanctification and growth of the churches is a common New Testament theme, and is easily seen in this passage as well.

"Here then are saved people in need of salvation! The salvation in view is necessarily sanctification or, perhaps, more precisely, victorious perseverance through trials (1:8; 2:3, 9)."²

3. A popular saying 2:11-13

To encourage Timothy further to endure hardship, Paul cited—or perhaps adapted—a commonly accepted and used quotation that encouraged believers to remain faithful to their Christian profession (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15;

¹Martin Luther, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*.

²Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, pp. 127-28. Cf. Knight, p. 400; and Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 504.

3:1; 4:9; Titus 3:8). It may have been part of a baptismal ceremony, a hymn, or a catechism. It consists of four couplets, two positive and two negative. Each couplet represents a condition that Paul assumed *for the sake of his argument* to be real—not hypothetical—since each is a first class condition in the Greek text.

"Each protasis (the 'if' clause) describes an action of a believer."¹

2:11-13 The first couplet (v. 11) is a comforting reminder that, since the believer "died with" Christ (Col. 2:20; 3:1, 3), he or she has also experienced resurrection with Him to newness of life (cf. Rom. 6:2-23, esp. v. 8). This seems to be a better interpretation than the one that views this statement as a reference to dying as a martyr.² The first class condition and the aorist tense of the verb *synapethanomen*, translated "died," argue for the former view.³

Knight suggested that since Paul wrote this epistle from Rome, it is possible that the church in Rome developed this first line by reflecting on Romans 6, especially verse 8. Water baptism symbolizes the death and resurrection of the believer.⁴

The second couplet (v. 12a) is also a comfort. If the believer successfully "endure[s]" temptations to apostatize, he or she will one day "reign" with Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 4:8; Rev. 3:21; 5:10). While all Christians will reign with Christ, in the sense that we will be with Him when He reigns, the faithful will reign with Christ in a more active sense (cf. Matt. 10:33; Luke 12:9).⁵

"To *reign*, and to be *saved*, are not necessarily synonymous."⁶

¹Lea, p. 209.

²Hiebert, pp. 62-3; et al.

³Cf. White, 4:163.

⁴Knight, p. 408.

⁵See Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, p. 1377; Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, pp. 67-81.

⁶Jamieson, et al., p. 1198.

The Bible seems to teach that there are *degrees* of reigning, just as there are differences in rewards (cf. Luke 19:11-27; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21). The idea that *all* Christians will remain faithful is neither true to revelation nor to reality (cf. Luke 8:13; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12; cf. 2 Tim. 4:4).

The third couplet (v. 12b) is a warning. If the believer departs from following Christ faithfully ("If we deny Him") during his or her life (i.e., apostatizes), Christ will "deny him" or her at the judgment seat of Christ (Matt. 10:33; Mark 8:38; Luke 12:9; cf. Luke 19:22; Matt. 22:13; cf. Matt. 25:41-46).¹ The unfaithful believer will not lose his salvation (1 John 5:13) or all of his reward (1 Pet. 1:4), but he will lose some of his reward (1 Cor. 3:12-15; cf. Luke 19:24-26).²

"If believers deny the enduring of persecution for Christ, He will deny them the reward and reign that could have been theirs."³

To deny Christ clearly does not mean to deny Him only *once* or *twice* (cf. Luke 22:54-62), but to deny Him *permanently*, since the other three human conditions in the couplets are also permanent.

"Denial of Christ manifests itself in various ways in the NT. It can consist in denying his name (Rev. 3:8) or faith in him (Rev. 2:13). It can thus take the form of forsaking or repudiating the Christian faith and its truths, particularly the truth concerning Jesus. In doing so one personally denies Christ (and the Father, cf. 1 Jn. 2:22-23). The denial can also manifest itself in the moral realm. Some may 'profess to know God, but by their deeds deny him' (Tit. 1:16; cf. 1 Tim. 5:8)."⁴

¹Mounce, p. 517.

²See Davey S. Ermold, "The Soteriology of 2 Timothy 2:11-13 — Part III," *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 15:45 (August 2011):71-89.

³*The Nelson Study Bible*, p. 2058.

⁴Knight, p. 406. Cf. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:245.

The fourth and final couplet (v. 13) is another comforting reminder that, if the believer is unfaithful to God, Christ will still remain "faithful" to him or her. The Greek word *apistoumen* can mean either "unbelief" or "unfaithful." The context makes clear that "unfaithful" is the meaning here, since the contrast is with "faithful."

The present tense of the Greek word translated "faithless" denotes a continuing attitude. Christ will not renege on His promises to save us (cf. 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18-20; 1 Thess. 5:24; et al.), even though we may go back on our commitments to Him (1 John 5:13). God's dealings with the Israelites in the Old Testament are the great proof that God will not cast off or abandon those He has redeemed and adopted—even if they prove unfaithful and unbelieving! Christ's *faithfulness* to us should motivate us to remain faithful to Him (cf. Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-22).

The point of this quotation is that Christians should continue to endure hardship and remain faithful to the Lord, *in view of* what Jesus Christ has done and will do.¹

Some interpreters believe the references to denying the Lord and being denied by Him refer to unbelievers. However, there is nothing in the context to indicate that Paul had unbelievers in mind. On the contrary, he used "we" and "us," which without further explanation would naturally include Paul and Timothy. In the context, Paul made frequent references to the judgment seat of Christ (1:12, 18; 4:8). This whole epistle constitutes an exhortation for Christians to remain faithful to the Lord in view of that coming event.

B. CHARGE TO REMAIN FAITHFUL 2:14-26

Paul turned from his emphasis on the importance of enduring hardship, in the preceding verses (vv. 1-13), back to his previous emphasis on Timothy's need to remain faithful to the Lord. He did this to motivate him further to persevere.

¹See also Brad McCoy, "Secure Yet Scrutinized—2 Timothy 2:11-13," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 1:1 (Autumn 1988):21-33.

"In this section, there is a shift in the didactic strategy from an emphasis on models to instruction with maxims and specific commands."¹

1. Faithfulness in public ministry 2:14-18

2:14 This verse is transitional. Timothy was to keep reminding his "faithful men" of the things Paul had just brought back to his own recollection (i.e., vv. 3-13, but especially vv. 11-13). Furthermore, he should warn them against emphasizing hair-splitting controversies ("wrangle about words") in their ministries, since these do more harm than good (cf. 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 6:4-5).

"In the end disputing about words seeks not the victory of truth but the victory of the speaker."²

2:15 Positively, in contrast, Timothy should be "diligent" (lit. "zealous") to make sure that, when he stood before God and his work was inspected, he would receive the Lord's approval and "not (need to) be ashamed" (cf. 1 John 2:28).³ Most important in gaining this goal was the way he would proclaim God's truth. He must teach it consistent with God's intended meaning and purpose. "Handling accurately" (lit. "cutting straight") is a figure that paints a picture of a workman who is careful and accurate in his work. The Greek word (*orthotomounta*) elsewhere describes a tentmaker who makes straight rather than wavy cuts in his material. It pictures a builder who lays bricks in straight rows, a road-maker who constructs a straight road, and a farmer who plows a straight furrow.⁴

As the priests of Israel had to cut up the sacrifices and offer them exactly as God decreed, so the gospel herald must handle the Scriptures carefully and accurately. The way a minister of the gospel presents the Word of God was of primary

¹Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 516.

²R. W. Ward, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy & Titus*, p. 171.

³Cf. White, 4:165.

⁴Lock, p. 99; Robertson, 4:619; Barclay, p. 199.

importance to Paul, and it should be to us. The Greek word *ergaten* ("workman") stresses the laborious nature of the task, rather than the skill needed to perform it.

2:16-17a By the same token, Timothy should turn away from meaningless discussions that characterize the world ("worldly and empty chatter"; cf. 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 4:7; 6:20). These only provide an atmosphere in which "ungodliness" grows.

"It may be that these people regarded themselves as 'progressives' and that Paul picks up the verb from their usage, ironically indicating that their progress is in ungodliness."¹

Those who engage in such discussions spread poison that eventually corrupts the body of Christ. "Gangrene" is the decay of tissue that develops in a part of the body where the blood supply is obstructed by injury, disease, or some other cause. Medical writers of Paul's day used this term (Gr. *gangraina*, only here in the New Testament) to describe a sore that eats into the flesh.²

2:17b-18 Paul cited concrete examples of two men, "Hymenaeus and Philetus," probably from Ephesus (cf. 1 Tim. 1:20), whose verbal speculations were derailing other sincere Christians from the track of God's truth ("upset the faith of some").

"Perhaps due to some confusion over the Pauline teaching that believers even now participate in the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:4-5, 8; 2 Tim 2:11), they believed and taught that the resurrection of believers had already occurred in a spiritual sense ...

"That such a mistake could be made may seem strange to us. But the fervency of the first-generation church's hope of Christ's return and certain carryovers from the pagan religions out of which believers came ... could have led some to

¹Knight, p. 413.

²Earle, p. 402.

the conclusion that all of salvation's blessings were to be experienced now. A modern parallel is what we might describe as Christian triumphalism (or the 'health and wealth' gospel), which tends to present the Christian message as the quick solution to all of life's problems. The same basic mistake seems to be involved."¹

2. Faithfulness in personal life 2:19-21

"Apostasy from the faith is sure soon to be followed by indulgence in iniquity."²

2:19 Even though some in the Ephesian church were upsetting people, and others were being upset, the universal church itself had stood and would continue to stand "firm" (Gr. perfect tense; cf. vv. 20-21; Isa. 28:16 LXX; 1 Cor. 3:10-12; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Tim. 3:15; 6:19).³ The witness ("seal") to this was the truth contained in two passages from the Old Testament (Num. 16:5, and Isa. 52:11 or possibly Num. 16:26; cf. Joel 3:5). The first passage assures that God differentiates between His faithful servants ("those who are His") and those who are unfaithful. The second calls on those who choose to identify themselves with ("everyone who names the name of") "the Lord" to "abstain from wicked behavior." Seals in New Testament times indicated ownership, security, and authenticity.

"What is intended is the 'seal' of ownership that the architect or owner would have inscribed on the foundation stone (similar in some ways to our modern cornerstones)."⁴

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, pp. 44-45. Cf. also pp. 158-59, and 183; and Knight, p. 414. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:12.

²Jamieson, et al., p. 1378.

³See Gregory A. Couser, "'How Firm a Foundation': The Ecclesiology of 2 Timothy 2:19-21," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 173:692 (October-December 2016):460-75.

⁴Fee, p. 257. Cf. Guthrie, p. 150.

2:20-21 Paul employed a different illustration to emphasize the same point. In the church there are individuals who honor the Lord as a result of their dedication to follow His truth. These people, "vessels for honor," are useful to the Lord in His work, because their commitment to His Word prepares them for His service. However there are also Christians, who, because of their lack of commitment to God's truth, bring "dishonor" on Him while they seek to be His instruments of service (e.g., false teachers). If someone avoids the defilement of this second group (v. 16), he or she can be a member of the first group (cf. Rom. 9:21).

The major argument for identifying the "large house" as the church is the context. Paul was speaking of faithful and unfaithful Christians (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15).¹ However, some interpreters believe that the "large house" is Christendom (all people who call themselves Christians).²

"We might paraphrase his argument thus: 'There are some Christians who have become apostate, but the faithful remnant stands firm by virtue of their relation to Christ and by baptism. We must not be dismayed that inside the church itself some should prove to be reprobate. The important thing is that you should free yourself from any association with the apostates ..., and thus become a useful servant.'"³

The New Testament uses many analogies or metaphors to describe how a Christian should live. In this letter, Paul used at least five: soldier (2:3-4), athlete (2:5), farmer (2:6), worker (2:15), and vessel (2:20-21). Elsewhere Paul used at least two others: steward (1 Cor. 4:1-2), and ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20). Jesus used at least four: fisherman (Matt. 4:19), salt (Matt. 5:13), light (Matt. 5:14-16), and branch (John 15:5). And

¹Lea, p. 218.

²E.g., Gaebelien, 4:1:191.

³A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 138-39.

Peter used at least three: living stone (1 Pet. 2:5), priest (1 Pet. 2: 5, 9-10), and sojourner (1 Pet. 2:11).

3. Summary applications 2:22-26

2:22 Paul urged Timothy to run away from the attractive desires that appeal especially to the young: "Flee youthful lusts." In view of the context, he was probably thinking of the desire to argue, to develop a unique theology, to make a reputation for oneself by being doctrinally innovative, and the like. All of these are desires that the individuals, whom Paul warned Timothy to avoid, indulged. Nevertheless "youthful lusts" is certainly a broad enough term to include sexual passions as well (cf. Gen. 39:12).¹ In contrast, Timothy should run toward the goals of: right behavior, faith in God, love for all people, and peace with his fellow committed brethren. Other Pauline virtue lists with more than three items are in 3:10; 2 Corinthians 6:6-7; Galatians 5:22-23; and Colossians 3:12-15.

"V. 22 does not simply reiterate what precedes it but gives, rather, a wider perspective on what true sanctification means. It is added to forestall the false impression that avoiding fellowship with false teachers, essential as that is, is all there is to sanctification."²

2:23 Timothy needed to "refuse" to participate in unwise and immature debates ("foolish and ignorant speculations"), since these generate arguments ("quarrels") that prove divisive (cf. 1 Tim. 1:7).

"Such questions will be brought before you: refuse to discuss them."³

¹See "How Common Is Pastoral Indiscretion?" and "Private Sin of Public Ministry," *Leadership* 9:1 (Winter 1988):12-13 and 14-23.

²Knight, p. 420.

³White, 4:168.

Those who participate in this activity as a type of *sport* are "ignorant" (*apaideutous*). The same Greek word means undisciplined, uneducated, or rude.

"The irrelevancy of much of the controversy then prevalent among Christians seems to have deeply impressed St. Paul; again and again he returns to this charge against the heretical teachers, that their doctrines are unprofitable and vain, and that they breed strife about questions either unimportant or insoluble."¹

2:24-26 Quarreling over hypotheticals is inappropriate for a servant of the Lord. He or she must instead promote peace and unity among the brethren (cf. 1 Tim. 1:5). The emphasis in the word translated "able to teach" in the Greek (*didaktikos*, cf. 1 Tim. 3:2) is on the teacher's ability to bring out the best in his students rather than the teacher's knowledge.²

He must also *gently correct* the erring ones, with a view to their restoration to correct doctrine and correct practice. Thus they may escape the devil's trap ("snare") and be able to do *God's "will"* again.³

"... the three characteristics just named, 'gentle,' 'able to teach,' and 'forbearing,' correspond respectively to the three elements in the task to be performed—'in meekness,' 'instructing,' and 'those in opposition' ..."⁴

"Those are unapt to teach who are apt to strive."⁵

¹Bernard, p. 126.

²Kelly, p. 190.

³Robertson, 4:622.

⁴Knight, p. 424.

⁵Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 1896.

"If men will not be the servants of God they inevitably become the captives of the Devil. Man's freedom is his freedom to choose his master."¹

"This remarkable and helpful section [vv. 24-26] sets forth the duty of the Lord's servant and the attitude with which he should conduct himself. The central focus of this duty is teaching and correcting those in opposition so that they may repent and learn the truth (vv. 24-25). The Lord's servant must seek to communicate this truth in such a way that opponents embrace it and abandon their error with proper remorse. God's servant thus seeks to be the instrument through whose efforts God brings them to himself."²

In this second chapter, Paul compared the believer-minister to seven things: a son (v. 1), a soldier (v. 3), an athlete (v. 5), a farmer (v. 6), a laborer (v. 15), a vessel (v. 21), and a servant-slave (v. 24).³

IV. DIRECTIONS CONCERNING THE LAST DAYS 3:1—4:8

Paul anticipated very dark days ahead for the church. He listed several characteristics of this time, clarified the most important conduct in it, and explained his own role to prepare Timothy and all his readers for what lay ahead.

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAST DAYS 3:1-13

Paul instructed Timothy here concerning what God had revealed would take place in the last days. He did so to help him realize that he faced no unknown situation (to God) in Ephesus, and to enable him to combat it intelligently.

¹Hiebert, p. 80.

²Knight, p. 427.

³See D. Edmond Hiebert, "Pauline Images of a Christian Leader," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 133:531 (July-September 1976):213-28.

1. Evidences of faithlessness 3:1-7

3:1 Paul had given Timothy some instruction concerning the apostasy of the last days in his first epistle (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Now he gave much more. The "last days" refers to the days preceding the Lord's return for His own (i.e., at the Rapture).¹ They are "last" not because they are few but because they are the final days of the present age.

"The last days of the church are not the same as the last days of the nation Israel, which is mentioned repeatedly in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the last days are called the 'end of the age' or 'the time of the end,' which is the Great Tribulation Period. That is quite different from the last days of the church, which precede the rapture of the church."²

In another sense, the entire inter-advent age constitutes "the last days" (cf. Heb. 1:2).³ Timothy was already in the last days, but they would continue and grow worse. These times would be "difficult" for all, especially faithful Christians. A list of 19 specific characteristics of these days follows.

3:2 People would be (1) self-centered and narcissistic ("lovers of self"; Gr. *philautoi*), (2) "lovers of money" (*philargyroi*, cf. 1 Tim. 3:3, 8), (3) "boastful" of their own importance (*alazones*), and (4) proud, "arrogant" in attitude (*hyperephanoi*).

"The participle here is perfect in tense, and speaks of a person who in the past has come to a state of such pride, and is so puffed up, that his mind as a permanent result is beclouded and besotted with pride."⁴

¹Kelly, p. 193; Earle, p. 406.

²McGee, 5:469.

³Lea, p. 223.

⁴Wuest, 2:3:145.

They would be (5) abusive toward others ("revilers"; *blasphemoi*), (6) unresponsive ("disobedient") to parental discipline, (7) "ungrateful," unthankful, unappreciative (*acharistoi*), and (8) impure, "unholy" (*anosioi*).

3:3 Furthermore, they would be (9) heartless, "unloving," callous, hateful (*astorgoi*), (10).

"'Without natural affection' [KJV] means having abnormal relationships. ... Humanity sinks to its lowest level when it accepts homosexuality."¹

People would also be unforgiving (*aspondoi*), and consequently "irreconcilable," and (11) slanderous of others (*diabolo*), speaking with "malicious gossip," i.e., "gossips." They would be (12) lacking in ("without") "self-control," especially self-restraint (*akrateis*), (13) "brutal," brutish, uncivilized (*anemeroi*), and (14) antagonistic toward whatever is ("haters of") "good" (*aphilagathoi*).

3:4 They would also be (15) disposed toward betrayal, "treacherous" (*prodotai*), and (16) headstrong, "reckless" (*propeteis*). They would be (17) "conceited" (*tetyphomenoi*), puffed up with pride, wrapped in a mist of self-delusion, and (18) devoted to ("lovers of") personal "pleasure" (*philedonoi*) (19) "rather than" to "God" (*philotheo*).

"... billions of dollars are being spent for entertainment [e.g., movies, athletic events, etc.] because men are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."²

Note that several of these characteristics are linked together by the repetition of their sounds (in the Greek text): 1 and 2, 9 and 10, 15 and 16, and 18 and 19. The reason for this arrangement was probably literary effectiveness.

This "vice list" is quite similar to the one in Romans 1:29-31. Vice lists were commonly used in Greco-Roman rhetoric to

¹McGee, 5:470.

²Ibid., 5:471.

caricature an opponent. They often employed the repetition of sound and other rhythmic devices to increase the impact.¹

Paul wrote this list of 18 characteristics in a somewhat chiasmic arrangement. His list begins and ends with two groups of two words expressing a misdirection of love. Then come two groups with three terms each that focus on pride and hostility toward others. Then come two groups, five words followed by three words, all of which begin with *a* in the Greek text that negate some good quality that God's common grace affords. These eight words—the first one is in a two-word phrase—depict people who are devoid of the most basic characteristics of human life. The center of the chiasm is the word *diaboloj*, meaning slanderers, devilish people (cf. 2:26; 1 Tim. 3:11; Titus 2:3).²

3:5 Finally, these people would (#19 continued) make a pretense of being religious (hold "to a form of godliness"), but *deny* the source of true spiritual "power" (i.e., God's Word). This last characteristic makes clear that those individuals, described in verses 2-4, would even claim to be Christians (i.e., false teachers and their followers). Timothy was to "avoid" association with people who demonstrated these characteristics except, of course, for purposes of evangelism and instruction.

"Self-love is the basic shortcoming mentioned in the list of vices in 3:2-5. This vice leads to action in vv. 6-9 that is deceitful, determined to dominate, stubborn, and rejected by God."³

3:6-7 Paul evidently had the false teachers *in Ephesus* in view, in these verses, though what he wrote here applies to *all* false teachers. Teachers manifesting some of the characteristics he just enumerated made a practice of gaining entrance "into households" in which the wives were spiritually "weak" (lit. "little").

¹See Towner, *The Letters ...*, pp. 552-53.

²Knight, pp. 429-32.

³Lea, p. 230.

Paul further described these women as dominated by various "sins," responsive to their sinful desires (impulses), and seemingly "ever (always) learning," but "never" really "able" to comprehend "the truth" of God. They cannot learn the truth because what they are learning is falsehood. The false teachers captivated such women with their teaching.

Women were probably more susceptible to the influence of false teachers than men, because in Paul's culture women occupied a lower status in society.¹ Furthermore, they did not usually have as much education as their husbands. Another explanation is that they had more time on their hands with which they could dabble in various things.

"It is the immaturity and thus the weakness of these 'childish women' that make them susceptible to the false teachers. Paul does not use the term to derogate women but to describe a situation involving particular women. That he uses a diminutive form shows that he is not intending to describe women in general."²

"One of the great virtues of womanhood, namely, that of trusting another, is turned into a weakness by Satan here."³

Hanson called attention to the similarity of this passage (vv. 6-7) and the Epistle of Jude.⁴

2. Negative and positive illustrations 3:8-13

3:8-9 Paul used the Egyptian magicians, "Jannes and Jambres," who opposed Moses in the plagues (Exod. 7:11; 9:11), to illustrate the fate of these false teachers. Jewish oral or written tradition preserved their names, even though the Old Testament did

¹Wiersbe, 2:250.

²Knight, p. 433.

³Wuest, 2:3:146.

⁴Hanson, p. 146.

not.¹ Their names, probably nicknames, mean "the rebel" and "the opponent."² Like these magicians, the false teachers opposed God's revealed truth, possessed corrupt ("depraved") minds, and were outside the fold of the faithful. They would proceed only so far, as their Egyptian predecessors did. Their foolishness ("folly") would become common knowledge ("obvious to all") when their power proved inadequate.

3:10-11 Timothy's past character and conduct stood in stark contrast to that of the false teachers. He had fully "followed" Paul's ministry ("teaching," "conduct," and "purpose") and his life ("faith," "patience," "love," and "perseverance"). The fact that God had delivered Paul from all his "persecutions" would have encouraged Timothy to continue following the apostle's example.

"The Lord *ever* rescues his people, frequently *from* death, sometimes *by means of* death. Either way, nothing ever separates them from his love (Rom. 8:38, 39)."³

3:12-13 Timothy needed to realize, as all Christians do, especially those to whom "prosperity theology" appeals, that when a person determines to "live" a "godly" life, he or she will suffer *persecution*. With his or her commitment to follow Christ faithfully, the Christian sets the course of his or her life directly opposite to the course of the world system. Confrontation and conflict become inevitable (cf. Matt. 10:22-23; Luke 21:12; John 15:20; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 3:4).

In 1983, J. Vernon McGee wrote the following, which is more true today than it was when he wrote it:

"Melvin Laird, long before he was Secretary of Defense, made a statement in San Francisco at a

¹Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 285. See also Fee, pp. 272, 274; and Hanson, p. 147.

²Lock, p. 107.

³William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, p. 293.

Republican convention. I do not know the circumstances which prompted the statement, but he said, 'In this world it is becoming more and more unpopular to be a Christian. Soon it may become dangerous.' We are seeing the accuracy of this statement. Real Christianity and real Christians are becoming very unpopular.

"I am not really moved today when the press cries that there is no freedom of the press. The bleeding-heart press has played that theme for all it's worth, but have they said anything about the fact that real Christianity is stifled by the press? When was the last time you read a sympathetic article of the biblical position? The media stifles news that presents real Christianity. If a fundamental preacher gets any publicity, it will be distorted and misrepresented. Of course, if a preacher gets on the wrong side of the law he will make the front page; but if he saves a group of people from going to hell he is ignored. Friend, we are moving into an orbit when Christians may have to pay a price to stand for the faith."¹

The wickedness of "evil people (men)," particularly charlatans ("imposters"), will increase as time passes ("proceed *from bad* to worse"). They will not only deceive others, but their sins and other deceivers will deceive them ("deceiving and being deceived") *increasingly*, too. Such is the perversity of sin.

This statement does not contradict what Paul said in verse 9. In verse 13, Paul means that evil becomes more intensive as time goes on. In verse 9, he meant that the teaching of evil does not necessarily become more extensive—and capture a wider audience—as evil becomes worse,² or that, the false teachers themselves, and their evil influence, eventually become ineffective or come to an end.

¹McGee, 5:472.

²Knight, p. 442.

B. CONDUCT IN THE LAST DAYS 3:14—4:5

Paul identified two of Timothy's duties in the last days to impress him with what was of highest priority.

1. Adherence to the truth 3:14-17

3:14-15 In his personal life, Timothy should "continue" living as he had been ("in the things you have learned"), rather than turning aside to follow the example of the evil men whom Paul had just mentioned.

"It is my contention that the constant study of the Word of God is the only help that any of us has [when it comes to adhering to the truth]."¹

Timothy's conduct grew out of what he had learned, "things" which gave him his personal convictions ("things you have ... become convinced of").

"Jewish parents were expected to teach their children the Law from the age of five onwards."²

"To know the Scriptures from childhood is the greatest blessing a growing child can have."³

Timothy's convictions grew stronger because Paul's life had backed up the truth ("the things") that Timothy had learned from him. Furthermore, they were consistent with the "sacred writings" that he had "known" all his life (i.e., the Hebrew Scriptures, cf. 1:5). These inspired writings convey "wisdom," and lead to personal "salvation" from sin, because they point to "Christ." Thus they are reliable and powerful.

"Possibly also he [Paul] wishes to hint at an antithesis *both* to the unwritten myths and genealogies of the false teachers *and* to the *Ephesia grammata* [Ephesian writings], the sacred

¹McGee, 5:473.

²Kelly, p. 201. Cf. Mishnah *Pirke Aboth* 5:21.

³Williams, p. 499.

books and charms of the magicians at Ephesus, Acts 19:19 ... Your text-books were Scriptures, *not* tradition; they were *hiera* [holy], *not bebelá* [profane]."¹

3:16-17 Paul wanted to reemphasize the importance of "Scripture" in Timothy's present and future ministry. His emphasis in verse 15 was on its importance in Timothy's life in the past.

There is no reason to limit the universal force of "all" to matters of salvation. When the Greek word translated "all" or "every" (*pas*) occurs with a technical noun such as "Scripture," it is better to render it "all" rather than "every."² Furthermore, the context seems to suggest that Paul had Scripture *as a whole* in view.³ Paul had been speaking of the Old Testament as a whole in verse 15, and he undoubtedly carried that thought over into verse 16.

"All Scripture," furthermore, is *divinely* "inspired" (Gr. *theopneustos*, lit. "God-breathed," cf. 2 Pet. 1:21). This fact in itself should be adequate reason for proclaiming it. It does not merely *contain* the Word of God, or *become* the Word of God under certain conditions. It *is* God's Word, the expression of His *Person* (heart, mind, will, etc.). This was the view of the Hebrew Bible that Jews in the first century commonly held.⁴

"Scripture" means "sacred writing," and applies to *all* divinely inspired writings (Old and New Testaments). The Greeks used the word *graphe*, translated "Scripture," to refer to any piece of writing, but the New Testament writers used it only of holy Scripture. When Paul made this statement, the books of our Old Testament were primarily the inspired writings he had in

¹Lock, p. 109.

²H. Wayne House, "Biblical Inspiration in 2 Timothy 3:16," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137:545 (January-March 1980):54-56; Mounce, p. 566; Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 587.

³See Fee, p. 279.

⁴Kelly, p. 203. See also Louis Igou Hodges, "Evangelical Definitions of Inspiration: Critiques and a Suggested Definition," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37:1 (March 1994):99-114.

view. However, even in Paul's day, Christians recognized some New Testament books as inspired (cf. 2 Pet. 3:16).

"God's activity of 'breathing' and the human activity of writing are in some sense complementary (cf. 2 Pet 1:21)."¹

Scripture is *useful*. Therefore Timothy should use it in his ministry. It is "profitable for teaching" (causing others to understand God's truth) and "reproof" (bringing conviction of error when there has been deviation from God's truth). It is helpful for "correction" (bringing restoration to the truth when there has been error) and "training in righteousness" (child-training type guidance in the ways of right living that God's truth reveals). This is a selective, rather than an exhaustive, list of the ways in which the Scriptures are useful. In Romans 15:4, Paul wrote that God also gave the Scriptures so that people could have hope.

"They are profitable for doctrine (what is right), for reproof (what is not right), for correction (how to get right), and for instruction in righteousness (how to stay right)."²

"Here stress is only laid on such [purposes] as affect the teacher's task in face of misleading teaching; cf. 1 [Tim.] 1:8-10."³

"... no one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a pupil of Scripture."⁴

Consequently, "the man (or woman) of God" has all that is *essential* to fulfill his (or her) ministry (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3). The "man of God" refers to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:11), but also to anyone who commits himself (or herself) to God, especially, in view of the context, those in positions of spiritual oversight.

¹Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 589.

²Wiersbe, 2:253.

³Lock, p. 110.

⁴John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:6:2.

He is "adequate" (complete, filled out, "equipped" with all the essential tools he needs) "for every good work."

"The Christian minister has in his hands a God-given instrument designed to equip him completely for his work."¹

"Every good work" is the ultimate goal of our lives (Eph. 2:10). The mastery and use of Scripture is only a means to an end, not an end in itself. God did not give us the Bible just to satisfy our curiosity, but to enable us to help other people spiritually.²

"He [the Christian] must study the Scriptures to make himself useful to God and useful to his fellow men. He must study, not simply and solely to save his own soul, but that he may make himself such that God will use him to help to save the souls and comfort the lives of others."³

"The divine inspiration of the Scriptures is stated in the Pastorals more forcefully than anywhere else in the NT."⁴

2. Proclamation of the truth 4:1-5

4:1 Paul wanted Timothy to proclaim the truth in his public ministry, as well as to adhere to it in his personal life. He introduced this command (in verse 2) with a very solemn preamble in verse 1 (cf. 1 Tim. 5:21; 6:13). Paul reminded Timothy that God was watching him, as was Jesus Christ, who will "judge" all people ("the living and the dead"). He further reminded him that Christ will return ("His appearing," *at any time* implied; *imminently*) and set up "His" messianic

¹Guthrie, p. 165.

²See Sigurd Grindheim, "Biblical Authority: What Is It Good For? Why the Apostles Insisted on a High View of Scripture," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59:4 (2016):791-803.

³Barclay, p. 232.

⁴Ralph Earle, "1 Timothy," in *Ephesians-Philemon*, vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 345.

"kingdom." Timothy should prepare to meet Him by carrying out Paul's command (cf. Mark 13:34-35).

Paul's point was this: Jesus Christ will judge Christians at the judgment seat of Christ (following the Rapture), and then appear again at the Second Coming (cf. 1:10), after which He will set up His millennial kingdom on the earth. Consequently Timothy needed to herald the Word of God ("preach the word"; v. 2), and faithfully carry out the ministry that God had given him (v. 5).¹

"The [Roman] Emperor's appearance in any place was his *epiphaneia* ["appearing"]. Obviously when the Emperor was due to visit any place, everything was put in perfect order. The streets were swept and garnished; all work was up-to-date. The town was scoured and decorated to be fit for the *epiphaneia* of the Emperor. So Paul says to Timothy: 'You know what happens when any town is expecting the *epiphaneia* of the Emperor; *you* are expecting the *epiphaneia* of Jesus Christ. Do your work in such a way that all things will be ready whenever He appears.'"²

4:2 Herald the Word of God! That is the primary responsibility of every leader of God's people (cf. 1:14; 1 Tim. 6:20).

"*kerysso* ["preach"] is the verbal cognate of *kerych*, the 'herald' whose duty it was to make public proclamation. The verb thus means 'proclaim aloud, publicly' and is used in the NT of public proclamation or 'preaching' of the message that God has given ..."³

"We are not to preach *about* the Word of God or *from* the Word of God [i.e., lifting a text from it

¹See Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament*, pp. 153, 159-60.

²Barclay, p. 233.

³Knight, p. 453. Cf. 1 Tim. 3:16.

and then weaving a sermon around that text], but preach the Word of God itself!"¹

We must preach the Word "in season and out of season" (continually, always, when convenient or inconvenient, not just during special periods of emphasis). Paul already explained the reason for this in 3:16-17.

"Do not ask yourself, 'Is this a suitable occasion for preaching?' Ask rather, 'Why should not this be a suitable occasion?'"²

Timothy was to use the Word of God to "reprove" (convict) those in error (an appeal to the emotions). He was to use it to "rebuke" those in sin (an appeal to the mind). He was also to use it to encourage ("exhort") those living in harmony with God's will (an appeal to the will). He was to carry on all of these activities—conviction, warning, and appeal—very *patiently* and with careful "instruction" (cf. 2:25; 3:10; 1 Tim. 1:16). There are five imperatives in this verse: preach, be ready, reprove, rebuke, and exhort.

"Christian reproof without the grace of long-suffering has often led to a harsh, censorious attitude intensely harmful to the cause of Christ. But the other requirement is equally essential, for correction must be intelligently understood and hence based on 'teaching'. To rebuke without instruction is to leave the root cause of error untouched."³

"Christian ministry centers on the Word of God, God's own expression of his will for people whom he desires to bless. If God had not spoken, we would not have known about him. Since it is through his Word that he continues to speak with

¹McGee, 5:475.

²White, 4:176.

³Guthrie, pp. 166-67.

his people, ministry first and foremost must be the communication of his Word."¹

4:3-4 Paul explained the reason for this charge next. "They" are the people to whom Timothy and his followers would preach: his listeners. In the end time, "they" (a different audience) would not tolerate "the truth," but would only listen to speakers who told them what they wanted to hear (false doctrine, "myths," entertainment, etc.; cf. 3:6). Paul pictured people who would be bored by, apathetic to, and annoyed by "sound doctrine."

"In other words, they have made themselves the measure of who should teach them and what teaching is acceptable."²

"The desire for pleasure is insatiable, and is increased or aggravated by indulgence; hence the heaping up of those who may minister to it."³

Moreover, they would choose to believe "myths" rather than the truth (e.g., atheistic evolution, humanism, reincarnation, etc.; cf. 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; Titus 1:14). The context seems to indicate that these people were believers (cf. Luke 8:13; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:12). Earle believed that the phrase "sound doctrine" is the key term in the Pastorals (cf. 1 Tim. 1:10).⁴

"Timothy's major responsibility in Ephesus was to defend and proclaim sound doctrine."⁵

This is the sixth time in this letter that Paul referred to the "truth" (cf. 2:15, 18, 25; 3:7, 8). He also referred to it five times in 1 Timothy (2:4, 7; 3:15; 4:3; 6:5). Obviously the truth was very important to him, and it should be to us.

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 204.

²Knight, p. 455.

³White, 4:177.

⁴Earle, "2 Timothy," p. 411.

⁵Ibid.

4:5 In view of this increasing opposition, Timothy needed to keep alert ("sober," cool-headed, "wide awake"¹) by avoiding false teaching.

"The reference is especially to the clearness and wakefulness of attention and observance which attends on sobriety, as distinguished from the lack of these qualities in intoxication."²

To do this, Timothy needed to maintain self-control under all circumstances.³ He needed to "endure hardship" willingly, and to continue proclaiming the gospel to the lost. He would thereby carry out the ministry God had entrusted to him completely. Four more imperatives appear in this verse (cf. v. 2): be, endure, do, and fulfill.

"... this phrase ["do the work of an evangelist"] rather sums up the whole teaching of the Epistle than adds a new command."⁴

"Thus with the words of the solemn charge in 4:1-5 Paul in effect brings to a conclusion his words of instruction regarding Timothy's duties as a minister of Christ. This charge gathers up the concerns expressed throughout the letter and crystallizes them in nine memorable imperatives that begin with 'preach the word' and end with 'fulfill your ministry.' With these imperatives Paul calls on Timothy to proclaim and apply God's word with much patience and careful instruction, to be clearheaded in every situation, to bear whatever difficulties such a ministry may involve him in, to evangelize, and to do whatever is necessary to accomplish the ministry to which Christ has called him."⁵

¹E.K. Simpson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 154.

²Alford, 3:2:400.

³Earle, "2 Timothy," p. 411.

⁴Lock, p. 113.

⁵Knight, p. 458.

JOB OR MINISTRY? ¹	
A job is service that you choose.	A ministry is service that Christ chooses for you.
A job depends on your abilities	A ministry depends on your availability to God
In a job you expect to receive.	In a ministry you expect to give.
A job done well brings you self-esteem.	A ministry done well brings honor to Jesus Christ.
In a job you give something to get something.	In a ministry you return something that has already been given to you.
A job well done has temporal remuneration.	A ministry well done brings eternal rewards.

C. PAUL'S ROLE IN THE LAST DAYS 4:6-8

Paul revealed that he was about to die, in order to further impress on Timothy the importance of remaining faithful to the Lord.

4:6 Paul believed that he would die very soon. He used two euphemistic expressions to describe his impending death: First, his life was presently being "poured out" as a sacrifice to God, like the daily drink offerings in Judaism (Num. 15:1-10; cf. Num. 28:4-7; Phil. 2:17). Soon there would be nothing left. After the Jewish priest offered the lamb, ram, or bull in this ritual, he poured wine beside the altar. This was the last act in the sacrificial ceremony, all of which symbolized the dedication of the believer to God in worship. The pouring out of the wine

¹Anonymous.

pictured the gradual ebbing away of Paul's life, that had been a living sacrifice to God since the apostle's conversion.¹

"Paul did not think of himself as going to be executed; he thought of himself as going to offer his life to God. His life was not being taken from him; he was laying it down. Ever since his conversion Paul had offered everything to God—his money, his scholarship, his strength, his time, the vigour of his body, the acuteness of his mind, the devotion of his passionate heart. Only life itself was left to offer, and gladly Paul was going to lay life down."²

Second, Paul was getting ready to depart this earth, as a traveler leaves one country for another, or as a sailor looses his moorings, or as a soldier breaks camp.³ The apostle believed that Nero would not release him from prison, but would execute him instead. Christian tradition confirms that Paul indeed died as a martyr in Rome.⁴ The impending death of Paul lent added urgency to his charge to Timothy.

4:7 Paul used three more figures to describe his life as he reviewed it. The first two are athletic metaphors (cf. 2:5), describing a boxer or wrestler ("I have fought the good fight"), and a runner ("I have finished the course"; cf. Acts 20:24). The third is that of a faithful steward who has kept (guarded) his charge ("I have kept the faith"; cf. 1 Cor. 4:2; Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27). Another view is that the first figure is military, the second athletic, and the third religious.⁵ A third view is that all three figures are athletic.⁶ Paul had lived the Christian life and served the Lord as He had commanded. Verses 6 and 7 constitute Paul's epitaph.

¹Hendriksen, p. 313.

²Barclay, p. 240.

³Lock, p. 114.

⁴See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 1:329-33; and Finegan, pp. 382-84, 471-74.

⁵Simpson, p. 159.

⁶Earle, "2 Timothy," pp. 412-13.

Paul probably meant by, "I have finished the course," that that he had run *in the noblest race of all*, namely, the ministry of the gospel, not that he had done *his best* in the contest.¹

4:8 Because he had been faithful, Paul did not dread dying—but looked forward to seeing his Lord! On the day of rewards for Christians (the judgment seat of Christ; 1:12, 18; 2 Cor. 5:10), Paul was confident that "the Lord" would give ("award") him a reward that was proper.

The "crown of righteousness" may be either the *fullness* of righteousness as a reward, or some unspecified reward for righteous conduct on earth (cf. James 1:12; Rev. 2:10). This seems to be a metaphorical crown (i.e., a reward) rather than a literal, material crown, since righteousness is non-material. This reward ("victor's crown," Gr. *stephanos*) will go to all Christians like Paul who, by the way they lived, demonstrated a longing for the Lord's return (i.e., "looked forward with earnest joy to" it²). Not all Christians are eager for the Lord to return, since some know they need to change their way of living.

BELIEVERS' CROWNS		
Title	Reason	Reference
An imperishable crown	For leading a disciplined life	1 Cor. 9:25
A crown of rejoicing	For evangelism and discipleship	1 Thess. 2:19
A crown of righteousness	For living the Lord's appearing	2 Tim. 4:8
A crown of life	For enduring trials	James 1:12; Rev. 2:10

¹Fee, p. 289; Lea, p. 248.

²Alford, 3:2:402.

A crown of glory	For shepherding God's flock faithfully	1 Pet. 5:4
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Clearly Paul was thinking of the judgment seat of Christ in verses 1-8. He referred to his "Judge" in verses 1 and 8. Note that it will be "the righteous Judge" who will bestow the crown of righteousness.

"The thought here is not that of a generous giver, but of a righteous judge."¹

"An expectation of reward is also a recognition of God's grace. Those who anticipate reward will not be able to boast, 'Look at my accomplishments.' They should be able to offer praise to God by saying, 'Thank you, Lord, for what you have produced in me.' The very expectation of reward is an acknowledgment of God's grace."²

"In vv. 6-8 there seems to be a conscious reminiscence of Phil 1:28; 2:17; 3:13, 14. If St. Paul is the writer, he may be deliberately recalling to Timothy's mind the words of that Epistle, of which Timothy was probably the amanuensis. 'What I dictated to you then—that I was willing to depart and to have my life-blood poured out—is now come to the test. I am face to face with it now.'"³

V. CONCLUDING PERSONAL INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION 4:9-22

Paul concluded this, his last inspired epistle, by giving Timothy personal instructions and information to enable him to carry out the apostle's last wishes.

¹Lock, p. 115.

²Lea, p. 249. See also Joe L. Wall, *Going for the Gold*, pp. 125-28, 131-39.

³Lock, p. 112.

A. FELLOW WORKERS AND AN OPPONENT 4:9-15

4:9-10 Paul urged Timothy to join him in Rome "soon." He did not expect to live much longer (cf. v. 6).

"The constitutional method of inflicting capital punishment on a Roman citizen was by the lictor's axe. The criminal was tied to a stake; cruelly scourged with the rods, and then beheaded."¹

"Demas," probably a short form of Demetrius (cf. Acts 19:24; 3 John 12; probably not the same man), Paul's fellow worker, had succumbed to the allurements of the "world" (instead of loving Christ's appearing; cf. Matt. 13:22; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:21; 1 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:12; 1 John 2:15). He had departed from ("deserted") Paul and had gone to live in "Thessalonica" (cf. Col. 4:14; Phile. 24), which may have been his original hometown.² He, like Hymenaeus and Philetus (2:17), Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20), and others—had not continued to follow Christ faithfully.

"He was not willing to pay the price of hardship and suffering that Paul was paying."³

"... perseverance itself is indeed also a gift of God, which he does not bestow on all indiscriminately, but imparts to whom he pleases. If one seeks the reason for the difference—why some steadfastly persevere, and others fail out of instability—none occurs to us other than that the Lord upholds the former, strengthening them by his own power, that they may not perish; while to the latter, that they may be examples of inconstancy, he does not impart the same power."⁴

¹W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 781, footnote 4.

²See White, 4:179.

³Earle, "2 Timothy," p. 414.

⁴Calvin, 2:5:3.

"Crescens" had "gone to Galatia," and "Titus to Dalmatia" (i.e., Illyricum, modern Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina), both presumably in the Lord's service.

"Tradition says that he [Crescens] went north from Rome into Gaul, founded the churches in Vienne [*sic*] and Mayence near Lyons ..., and became the bishop of Chalcedon ..."¹

4:11-13 "Luke" was Paul's "only" companion, perhaps among his inner circle of co-laborers or day to day. Some have inferred from this that he was the amanuensis who wrote this letter.² Timothy was to "pick up Mark" (Acts 15:36-40) and "bring him with" him, because Paul believed Mark could be "useful" to him (cf. Phile. 11). Mark had, of course, previously left Paul and Barnabas in Perga, and had returned to Jerusalem for unexplained reasons (Acts 13:13).

"Tychicus" had gone "to Ephesus," or was about to go, if the aorist *apesteila* ("I sent") is epistolary, perhaps to relieve Timothy there (Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9). Timothy should also "bring" Paul a certain "cloak," perhaps for his comfort as colder weather set in (v. 21). Paul also asked him to bring certain unidentified "books," and *especially* "the parchments."³ The parchments may have been copies of Old Testament books, and or inspired New Testament writings, and or Paul's legal papers.

"Even as an old man facing certain death, the apostle has not lost his interest for study and mental pursuits. It presents a standing challenge to the minister to be an indefatigable student, especially of the Word of God."⁴

"There is an interesting historical parallel to Paul's request. William Tyndale, who translated the first

¹Mounce, p. 590.

²Lock, p. 117.

³See Finegan, pp. 386-401, for information about writing materials and practices in the ancient world.

⁴Hiebert, *Second Timothy*, p. 120.

NT printed in English, was imprisoned in Vilvorde Castle near Brussels before his execution in 1536. In the year preceding his death he wrote to the governor, begging for warmer clothing, a woolen shirt, and above all his Hebrew Bible, grammar, and dictionary."¹

- 4:14-15 The "Alexander" Paul warned Timothy about may have been the same man he mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20 (cf. Acts 19:33-34), though Alexander was a common name.² Paul did not want Timothy to retaliate against him ("The Lord will repay him"). The Lord would take care of that ("I will repay"; Deut. 32:35, 41; cf. Ps. 62:12). Timothy should simply beware of ("be on guard against") him.

B. PAUL'S PRELIMINARY HEARING IN COURT 4:16-18

- 4:16 Customarily under Roman law, accused prisoners underwent a preliminary hearing before their trial. At this hearing, witnesses could speak on behalf of the accused. In Paul's case, at his "first defense," after he had arrived in Rome as a prisoner for the second time, "no one" had come to his defense. This was probably because, when Rome burned in July of A.D. 64, Nero blamed the Christians, and from then on it was dangerous to be a known Christian in Rome. Neither local Christians nor Paul's fellow workers were willing to stand with the apostle ("all deserted me"; cf. Matt. 26:56). Paul hoped the Lord would not hold ("count") their failure "against them" (cf. Ps. 32:2; Luke 23:34).
- 4:17 "The Lord," however, had not abandoned His faithful servant on that occasion, but had "strengthened" Paul. Evidently Paul was able to give a word of witness at his hearing that furthered his mission to "the Gentiles." He had so far escaped death, though he was ready to die as a martyr. The "lion's mouth" may be a reference to the lions in the Roman Coliseum that were then devouring Christians. However, the Roman

¹Earle, "2 Timothy," p. 415.

²See White, 4:181.

government would have beheaded Paul, rather than have thrown him to the lions, since he was a Roman citizen. "Lion's mouth" may be a veiled reference to Nero, or probably a more general allusion to Satan's instruments of evil, that have always sought to destroy God's faithful servants (cf. Dan. 6:22; Ps. 22:21; Matt. 6:13; 1 Pet. 5:8). Wuest believed Paul referred to death.¹ Alford understood this as a reference to Satan.²

4:18 Paul knew he would die a martyr's death (vv. 6-8), but he saw death as God's vehicle to deliver him from an "evil deed" (his execution), and "bring" him "safely" into his Lord's presence ("His heavenly kingdom"). For this prospect, he glorified God with this doxology: "to Him be the glory forever and ever." The "kingdom" that Paul had in view was Christ's messianic kingdom. It is "heavenly" in that its origin is from heaven; God will initiate it.³

Thoughts of the coming heavenly kingdom, that Paul was about to enter, lay behind all that he wrote in verses 1-18. He referred to Christ's "kingdom" in verses 1 and 18, specifically. I believe Paul was speaking of Christ's rule in which all Christians will participate when they enter His presence, part of which will include His millennial reign on the earth.

"Three features of Paul's attitude can provide us help and encouragement for today. First, Paul avoided indulging his disappointments. ... Second, Paul could rejoice in the victory won in the life of Mark. ... Third, Paul found no room for vindictiveness toward those who hurt or opposed him."⁴

C. ADDITIONAL GREETINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS 4:19-21

4:19 Paul here sent greetings to his old friends "Prisca" (Priscilla) and "Aquila," who were then living in Ephesus (cf. Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19). He also greeted the loyal

¹Wuest, *Word Studies ...*, 2:3:170.

²Alford, 3:2:405.

³See Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, p. 433.

⁴Lea, p. 257.

family of "Onesiphorus," of whom he had written earlier (1:16-17).

4:20 "Erastus" and "Trophimus" were old associates of Timothy (Acts 19:22; 20:4; 21:29). Paul now sent news of them. Some authorities believe that Paul's ability to miraculously and physically heal people had ended. Many of them believe that God gave the gift of healing to the church only in its infancy, to help authenticate the apostles as they ministered to the Jews (Eph. 2:20; Heb. 2:3-4).¹ A better explanation, I think, is that, though the gift of healing did decline, Jesus' and the apostles' ability to heal always depended on the sovereign will of God (Luke 5:17; Acts 3:12-13). Evidently it was not God's will for Trophimus to experience miraculous healing then (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-9).

4:21 "Winter" severely restricted travel in some parts of the Roman world. Timothy needed to leave Ephesus soon, so he could reach Rome without undue difficulty. Paul relayed the greetings of four other brethren ("Eusebius," "Pudens," "Linus," and "Claudia"), probably local, whom Timothy evidently knew, as well as the greetings of "all" the local Christians.

"Linus is mentioned by Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, iii.3) as the first bishop of Rome after the death of Peter and Paul."²

D. BENEDICTION 4:22

In conclusion, Paul first wished the Lord's ministry of "grace" on Timothy's "spirit," perhaps to encourage him again to remain faithful. Then he wished God's "grace" for "all" the readers (plural "you" in the Greek text) of this epistle.

¹See Gary W. Derickson, "The Decline of Miracles in the New Testament Era," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1986; idem, "The Cessation of Healing Miracles in Paul's Ministry," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155:619 (July-September 1998):299-315.

²Earle, "2 Timothy," pp. 417-18. See Barclay, pp. 255-56, for a traditional story concerning Pudens' and Claudia's romance.

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