

Message #1

Various Texts

There is no point playing any game if there is no winner. Some people say the idea to playing a game is just to have fun. Well if you play a game, someone wins and someone loses and even though the game may be fun to play, it is more fun when you are a winner.

It always intrigues me when I hear coaches say to their players, who are competing at the highest collegiate or professional level, let's just go out and have fun. Well the truth is winning is fun; losing is not.

There are many people who make this their philosophy of life. Their idea of life is for them to have fun. The idea is it really doesn't matter if we win, just as long as we have fun.

Well the Apostle Paul did not see it that way. Paul was living life to win. He was not interested in just competing in life's game; he wanted to win the game and the book we are about to study teaches us he did win it.

Now I recently read an article on how to win in life. It was an interesting article and there were some good suggestions:

- 1) Be intentional about who you allow to even be in your life.
- 2) Be mindful of the 30/30/30 rule—1/3 of people will love you unconditionally; 1/3 of people will hate you unapologetically; 1/3 of people won't care about you either way.
- 3) Ask for help.
- 4) Don't burn bridges.
- 5) Share and give what you can.
- 6) Don't compare yourself to others.
- 7) Truly listen to others.

Now there is some wisdom to these things; but that was not what made Paul a life's winner. What made him a life's winner was his relationship with Jesus Christ and his total focus on studying, understanding and applying the Word of God. **There is one book of the Bible that really drives that point home and that book is II Timothy.**

In the next few weeks, we would like to take you on a journey through this remarkable book of the Bible.

Now to introduce this book, we do so in question answer fashion. Many years ago I came across the scholarship of an old Netherlands Dutch Bible teacher named William Hendriksen. He was one of the rare, solid Bible teachers to come out of Princeton Theological Seminary. He died back in 1982 at the age of 82. Well anyway, he would begin most of his studies by asking and answering introductory questions and that has stuck with me all these years. So when I begin a book, I introduce it by asking and answering introductory questions. I would like to ask and answer eight questions for you pertaining to II Timothy:

QUESTION #1 – Why study II Timothy?

We would like to begin by offering six reasons:

Reason #1 - Because II Timothy is one of only 66 inspired writings that God has given to man.

One of the most famous statements concerning inspiration and one of the most famous statements in all of the Bible is found in II Timothy: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable...” (II Tim. 3:16).

II Timothy was cited as a book of the Bible by Barnabas (A.D. 100); Hermas (A.D. 115); Irenaeus (A.D. 150); Tertullian (A.D. 170); Origen (A.D. 185); Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 320); Eusebius (A.D. 330); Jerome (A.D. 340); and Augustine (A.D. 400).

When Ignatius (A.D. 110-117) was in route to being martyred in Rome, he wrote some letters to different churches and in those letters he cited II Timothy 2:4. Polycarp, who was eventually burned at the stake in Smyrna, wrote a letter to the Philippians and in that letter he quoted II Timothy 2:12. Now when you are about to be executed for your faith in Jesus Christ, you are going to zero in on the inspired Word of God. By virtue of the fact that in part these men zeroed in on II Timothy, it is great proof that it is God-inspired.

II Timothy is listed in the major canon listings—Muratorian (A.D. 170); Apostolic (A.D. 300); Cheltenham (A.D. 360); and Athanasius (A.D. 367).

II Timothy showed up in the old Latin translation (A.D. 200) and the old Syriac translation (A.D. 400).

II Timothy was deemed an inspired book of the Bible at the major church council meetings: Nicea (A.D. 325); Hippo (A.D. 393); Carthage (AD. 397); Carthage (A.D. 419).

Clearly all of these evidences prove that II Timothy is an inspired book of God and it does belong in the Bible. **Now since we believe the evidence proves this, then what we also conclude is that you may expect this inspired book to speak to you.**

God will speak to His people today through His inspired Word. He does not speak in voices or feelings, or visions or miracles; He speaks through His inspired Word. Since II Timothy is part of the inspired Word, we know God will speak to you.

Reason #2 - Because II Timothy is a parting and final letter.

Paul wrote at least 13 inspired letters of the New Testament and if we attribute Hebrews to him, he wrote 14. Furthermore, Luke, who was his close friend, wrote Luke and Acts, which means Paul was in some ways connected to those two books. **II Timothy was the last book Paul wrote before he was executed and he knew he would be executed.**

When we study II Timothy, we are studying precisely what Paul wrote when he knew he was going to die. Richard Lenski, the old Lutheran scholar, said that II Timothy "...is Paul's last will and testament for Timothy, his great legacy for the rest of Timothy's life."

For some years I was under the ministry of Pastor George Gardiner. Pastor Gardiner got cancer and for quite a while he was in and out of his pulpit. Finally it got so bad that he could no longer preach, but he wanted to speak one more time. So when word spread that he would go into the pulpit one more time, we filled the church. We wanted to hear him preach and teach one more time because we knew and he knew this would be his last time.

That is the drama of II Timothy. Paul will speak for one more time and we don't want to miss one verse of what he has to say. **II Timothy is a book that shows us how to face death, including our own death.**

Reason #3 - Because II Timothy is a personal letter.

Titus, I Timothy and II Timothy have at least five things in common:

- 1) They were all inspired by God.
- 2) They were all written by Paul.
- 3) They were all written to one specific person.
- 4) They were the last letters Paul wrote.
- 5) They were written to one functioning as a pastor.

Now of these personal, private letters, II Timothy is the last of them all. So the last person Paul had in his mind was Timothy and this letter contains his last thoughts.

These letters were originally considered to be private letters rather than public letters. But when leaders examined the contents of the letters, they concluded that even though they were very personal, they were also very important to church life.

Paul was about to die and he needed to pass the torch of his ministry to someone and he knew Timothy was his man. Paul was Timothy's hand-picked choice so he writes him this amazing, personal letter.

Reason #4 - Because II Timothy is a pastoral letter.

As we just mentioned, Titus, I Timothy and II Timothy are classified as pastoral epistles or letters. However, these books are for every believer, not just pastors.

The first person to classify these books as "pastoral epistles" was D. N. Berdot in 1703 and it was not until a German commentary, written by Dr. Anton surfaced in 1726, that this classification was generally accepted. So for 1700 years, II Timothy was simply viewed as another inspired book of the Bible. **The term "pastoral epistles" was not inspired by God; it was invented by men.**

Certainly we will admit there is a personal and pastoral ring to the book, but we must not forget that one of the key statements of this book is that “All Scriptures” is profitable. II Timothy is a book for all of God’s people.

Reason #5 - Because II Timothy is a practical letter.

There are many practical lessons we will learn from this book. William Hendriksen said that the greatest lesson we learn is that no matter what we are facing in this world, we need to focus our attention on God’s Word. He said that is what II Timothy really teaches.

In Chapter 1 we are to hold on to the Word (1:13). In Chapter 2 we are to teach the Word (2:2). In Chapter 3 we are to abide in the Word (3:14). In chapter 4 we are to preach the Word (4:2). There is no question that this is a great practical lesson to learn from II Timothy.

While the rest of the world is given to mysticism, eroticism, materialism, atheism, agnosticism, demonism, Satanism and all other isms, God’s people will give themselves to carefully understanding the Word of God.

One of the very practical claims that comes from this book is that the inspired Bible is a book that can actually make you wise (II Timothy 3:15). II Timothy is a book worth studying because it is an inspired book that will practically affect us.

Reason #6 - Because II Timothy is a profitable letter.

This book clearly states that it is profitable and that it will profit and be of benefit and do good to those who study it (II Tim. 3:16). II Timothy says it is one of the books that can help make a believer complete, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. This book is worth studying.

QUESTION #2 – Who wrote II Timothy?

Although the author of this epistle was not even questioned until the 19th century by liberal theologians, and even though we cannot determine every historical move made by Paul, we do find some new Greek words in the letter and even though there is no structured discussion about church polity, **there is absolutely no doubt that II Timothy was most definitely written by Paul.** We may easily prove this by offering six evidences:

Evidence #1 - The letter says it was written by Paul. 1:1

A key principle of Bible interpretation is to take God’s Word literally unless something in the context suggests otherwise. When the Bible says God created the world or that Jesus Christ is God or that Jesus Christ is coming back or that God will always care for His people, take it literally. When II Timothy says it was written by Paul, we take that literally.

Evidence #2 - The letter contains personal information about Paul. 1:11-12, 15-18; 3:10-11; 4:6-7, 9-18.

There are things here that only Paul would have known.

Evidence #3 - The letter was written by one who was very close to Timothy. 1:2-3, 5, 13, 18; 2:1; 3:10-11, 14; 4:9

This letter was written to Timothy (1:2), something which even liberals have never denied. The one man who had the special relationship with Timothy was Paul (Acts 16:1-3).

Evidence #4 - The letter contains doctrine that is Pauline. 1:1, 9, 11, 14; 2:8, 10; 3:12, 15; 4:1-2, 7

This is the big argument liberals use. They claim II Timothy does not have Pauline doctrine in it. But in this church we have gone through Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, I Timothy, Philemon; and having done this, **we are in a good position to say II Timothy could not have been written by anyone else other than Paul. This book breathes his doctrine.**

Evidence #5 - The letter contains rebukes that are very Pauline. 1:15; 2:17-18; 3:8-9; 4:10, 14

Paul was not a man to mince words. He had no problem publicly rebuking someone if they needed it. He rebuked Peter to his face (Gal. 2:11). II Timothy contains several very sharp and cutting rebukes. These are not subtle.

Evidence #6 - The letter contains many references to Pauline churches and people.

There is a reference to Rome (1:17); to Ephesus (1:18; 4:12); to Thessalonica (4:10); to Galatia (4:10) and to Corinth (4:20). There are references to Timothy (1:2); to Titus (4:10); to Luke (4:11) and to Mark (4:11). These are all Pauline places and people who were closely connected to Paul. One would have to be very Biblically illiterate to deny that it was Paul who wrote II Timothy.

QUESTION #3 – What were Paul’s circumstances when he wrote II Timothy?

From the letter itself we learn three very important circumstances from Paul’s life:

Circumstance #1 - Paul was in Rome. 1:17

Circumstance #2 - Paul was in prison. 1:8, 16; 2:9

Paul was actually bound in chains and was in a dungeon. H. A. Ironside actually visited the place and he described it:

“If you visit the city of Rome today you can see that dungeon. You can go down into it and as you look around at those bare walls and gaze up at the ceiling, where there is just a little hole in the center from which food was dropped down to Paul and water passed through in some kind of vessel, you get an idea of the suffering which he must have endured. There is no window whatsoever through which to look to the outside world. A river passes underneath, and there is a cleft in the floor where you can look down and see the water running. It must have been cold and damp in there at all times of the year, particularly in the winter. As I stood there I had some little realization of what it must have meant for God’s servants in early days to devote themselves to the ministry of the Word of God. Surely in comparison the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places” (*II Timothy*, p. 159).

Circumstance #3 - Paul was about to die. 4:6

Paul was not going to get out of jail this time. This was it. Yet as we read this book, he is not depressed. In fact, he looks death straight in the face with a triumphant message of hope. What we will discover is that all Paul needed to face death was the Word of God.

QUESTION #4 – When did Paul write II Timothy?

There are six key facts we may use to determine the date:

Fact #1 - Paul was in jail. 1:8

Fact #2 - Paul was in jail for preaching and teaching. 1:11-12

This was at a time when preaching was considered a criminal act and people were turning away from this.

Fact #3 - Paul was in Rome. 1:17

Fact #4 - Paul was soon to be executed. 4:6

Fact #5 - Paul was in jail before winter. 4:21

Fact #6 - Paul was executed by Nero.

Now working backwards with these facts:

- 1) Nero killed himself June 9, A.D. 68. So the letter is written before that.
- 2) Rome specifically started tracking down Christians after it burned in A.D. 64. So we know it was written after A.D. 64 before Nero died in A.D. 68.
- 3) When Paul says come before winter (4:21), it is probably not in the spring of A.D. 68 or he would have said come before summer or fall. Also Nero died in the summer of 68, which means the letter was written before that.

We may assume from this that Paul wrote II Timothy sometime before the winter in A.D. 67, just prior to his execution.

QUESTION #5 – Where was Timothy when Paul wrote the letter?

Although it is not specifically stated in this book, it is not too difficult to determine:

- 1) When Paul wrote I Timothy to Timothy, he was in Ephesus. I Tim. 1:3
- 2) Onesiphorus was from Ephesus and Paul wanted his family greeted. II Tim. 1:16, 18; 4:19
- 3) Priscilla and Aquilla lived in Ephesus and Paul wanted them greeted. II Tim. 4:19;
Acts 18:18-19; I Cor. 16:8, 19

From these facts we may conclude that Timothy was in Ephesus when Paul wrote him this letter from his dungeon prison cell in Rome.

QUESTION #6 – How did Timothy actually get the letter?

Two trusted men that Paul named who would apparently carry letters were Artemas and Tychicus (Titus 3:12). As we examine II Timothy it seems that Tychicus was assigned to carry this letter to Timothy (II Tim. 4:12). It was his job to take the letter from Paul in Rome to Timothy in Ephesus.

QUESTION #7 – Why did Paul write to Timothy a final time?

There are three reasons:

Reason #1 - Paul wanted to see Timothy. 1:3; 4:9

Timothy was Paul's hand-picked man in the faith and he wanted to see him one more time.

Reason #2 - Paul wanted to motivate Timothy. 1:6

This was a very difficult time to be a preacher of God's Word. Paul needed to motivate Timothy to keep preaching and stay faithful in utilizing his gift. Many people were bailing out of their responsibilities because of persecution and pressure. Paul wanted Timothy focused.

Reason #3 - Paul wanted to instruct Timothy. 2:2; 4:2

Paul really wanted to leave a final challenge with Timothy on the importance of studying, preaching and teaching the Word of God.

QUESTION #8 – What is the theme of II Timothy?

Paul wrote II Timothy to drive home a key point and that is **the faithful man of God will stay focused on studying and communicating the Word of God until the end, regardless of popularity, hardship or opposition and in spite of a deterioration of true spirituality and true Biblical knowledge.**

We are living in a time of unsound doctrine and non-systematic teaching of the Word of God. We need to get hold of this book.

II Timothy is one of God's inspired books. It will reprove, it will rebuke, it will exhort. But if we will study it and heed it, it can and will give us the same type of stability and focus it gave Timothy.

Paul was so dedicated to understanding the Scriptures that he wanted to study them until the day he died (II Tim. 4:13).