

End of Life, Was it Worth It?

An Introduction to 2 Timothy and Reading the Letter

2 Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus,

² To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

⁴ As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.

⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,

⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,

⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher,

¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

¹⁵ You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

¹⁶ May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains,

¹⁷ but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me--

¹⁸ may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!-- and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

(2 Tim 1:1-18)

End of Life

What kind of things do you think about when you near the end of your life? Do those things change when you know your life is about to end? Some people spend their last days regretting. *“I wish I have been more loving to my friends and family; I wish I had not spent so much time working,”* they think after failed marriages, lost friends, and rebellious children. *“I wish I had been happier and enjoyed life more,”* they say now old and angry. *“I wish I had taken more risks and lived my dream,”* they ponder having spent their years in work they hated and

in a place they never wanted to call home. Some people, dying young, wish they had taken better care of themselves. Some people who spent a lifetime on selfish pursuits see the vanity of it and wish they had done more for others.

If you are uber-wealthy, you might spend your last days, like Ted Williams and his family did, figuring out and making preparations for the [freezing of your body](#) so that one day someone might bring you back to life.¹ You might spend your billions on [transhumanist](#) pursuits, like many are doing now to the complete credulity of those who have no idea the lengths they will go to, frantically and desperately finding a way to plug your consciousness into some form technology that will continue on past your own aging body. Or, you might simply try as hard as you can to [ignore reality altogether](#) and just keep going, defying God and pretending that nothing can ever take you down, not even death itself.

In 2 Timothy, [Paul is very near the end of his life](#). And he knows it perfectly well. How does the great Apostle to the Gentiles spend his last days? What does he think about? In one sense, this is a letter showing you the answer to this

¹ Williams' body and head were separated at death, his head now stored in a steel can, his body stands upright in a 9-foot-tall cylindrical steel tank, both are filled with liquid nitrogen. The better-known cryogenic freezes of Walt Disney and Michael Jackson both appear to be urban legends.

question. In another, of course, it is a letter to his protégé, Timothy, and how one who is much younger should also think about life and be motivated to act in light of something those who regret their life or try to conquer death by themselves can never understand apart from God's grace.

Author

Like First Timothy, Second Timothy is written by the Apostle Paul. “*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus*” (2Tim 1:1). This opening has similarities and differences from the first letter which reads, “*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope*” (1Tim 1:1). Both identify Paul as an apostle of Christ Jesus. Both explain that this came about by God, and not his own choosing. But two different perspectives are given. The first says it was by God's “*command*.” The second says it was by God's “*will*.” The first describes God's effectual calling on the road to Damascus; the second describes God's predetermined plan before the foundation of the world. Both are critical parts of the means

of salvation (which includes justification, sanctification, and glorification).

Both also **distinguish** “God” from “Christ Jesus.” This is interesting and will come up again at the end in a remarkable way today. The first refers to God as the “Savior,” and Jesus our “our hope.” The second roots the calling in the promise of life that is found in Christ Jesus. These are related ideas. A hope comes from a promise. The hope of life comes from God saving. And so the **two perspectives** shine light on different parts of the Apostle’s own calling. They also hint that the two letters are going to be different.

Recipient and Date

That brings us to **the recipient**. 2 Timothy is written, “To Timothy, my beloved child,” and adds, “Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (2Tim 1:2). This is also both similar and distinct from the address in the first letter which said, “To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (1Tim 1:2). The **recipient**

is the same man: Timothy.² The blessing is identical in both. The difference is slight, but again, a matter of perspective. The first focuses on Timothy's conversion to Christ—his “true ... faith.” Paul uses the identical word “child” (*teknon*) in both, but second Timothy is more personal and focuses on Paul's relationship to Timothy rather than Timothy's relationship to God—“my beloved child.”

Timothy is still considered by Paul to be young, which brings us to think about the date and setting. It is likely that two or three years have passed between the letters, meaning that Timothy is still probably somewhere near or just past 30 years of age.³ In the first, there is little hint that Paul is in trouble. Though the reference to shipwrecking the faith could have in mind trouble like that, it is most likely that he was out and about, perhaps somewhere on another missionary journey.⁴

In 2 Timothy, however, the year is likely around 67 AD.⁵ Paul is in Rome (17). If so, the great antichrist of the

² Like the first letter, however, it should also be pointed out that the very last word is “you” (plural), meaning that more indirectly, it is a letter to his church and the church throughout the ages.

³ See the Introduction sermon to 1 Timothy and/or the sermon on 1 Timothy 6:11-16.

⁴ The book of Acts ends with Paul living in Rome under a kind of house arrest where he is able to preach the gospel without hindrances for two years (Acts 28:30-31). This is Paul's first imprisonment when he writes the prison epistles (Philemon, Colossians, Philippians, and perhaps Ephesians). He is released and writes 1 Timothy and Titus.

⁵ Many scholars date it to 64 AD. We went with a 65 AD date for 1 Timothy.

first century, Nero, is Emperor. The great fire, one of the earliest known false flags committed by a government against a portion of its own people is still a recent memory. Nero, who had been wanting a place to build his Domus Aurea (“Golden House”), needed land in the middle of the city. The senate refused, the fire began and nearly burned the entire eternal city. Speculations quickly spread that he set the fire. Because he could not squelch the rumors, he found a scapegoat—the Christians. Nero is angry. He has Paul and Peter both in his sites.

Thus, Paul has been arrested. He talks to Timothy about being “bound with chains as a criminal ... for which I am suffering” (2:9; cf. 1:16). He is contemplating his own death. “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing” (2Tim 4:6-8). This makes the tone and the purpose of the letter quite different from the first.

Of all Paul’s letters, this one is by far the most personal. It is so personal and so different, that skeptics say there is no

possible way he could have written both letters. But this is just going out of your way to deny the obvious. First of all, there are a ton of thematic overlaps—the need for right doctrine, false teachers who fall away, the need for Scripture, discussion about the last days, and so on. Second, why does a person have to limit what he says in his letters? Can't he talk to whomever he wants about whatever he wants?

Why is the letter **so intimate**? Because this is what Paul thinks about as he is dying. There is no regret here, no looking inward at past failures. There is only outward looking to his fellow Christians working so hard and upward looking to his heaven and being with his God. But as it regards Timothy, in the third verse he tells Timothy, “**I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day**” (3). Why? One reason is because they had gotten extremely close. The fourth verse tells us, “**As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy**” (4).

How were they so close? Recall from the Introduction to the first letter that Timothy appears in **Acts** (**Acts 16:1, 3; 17:14, 15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4**), **Romans** (**Rom 16:21**), **1, 2 Corinthians** (**1Co 4:17; 16:10; 2Co 1:1, 1:19**), **Philippians** (**Php 1:1; 2:19**), **Colossians** (**Col 1:1**), **1, 2 Thessalonians** (**1Th 1:1; 3:2, 2Th 1:1**), **Philemon** (**Phm 1:1**), and **Hebrews** (**Heb**

13:23). This proves that he was and incredibly well-known man to the churches of the New Testament. This means that he accompanied Paul everywhere. He was dispatched to Thessalonica (1Th 3:2); to Corinth (Acts 19:22); to Philippi when Paul was first arrested in Rome (Php 2:19), and to Ephesus where he still pastors the church. He was extremely trustworthy and deeply respected. Indeed, his name means, “Honored by God” or “Honoring God.”

It is obvious that at their last parting, Timothy was upset. Perhaps it was recent. Perhaps he thought something might happen to Paul. Now Paul, writing from prison, seeks to encourage his disciple ... no, that was for the last letter. *His very child*. That is the kind of relationship that can exist between a pastor and those he gives the gospel to. But even if their relationship was like family, this was itself grounded in their common faith.

First, Paul remembers his own faith. “I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience...” This is as he remembers to pray for Timothy. The Apostle is eternally grateful to now be standing alongside his ancestors who also served God. In the first letter we saw him remember his own conversion, how he was not in fact serving God at all (though he thought very

much that he was) but is moved almost to tears by God's grace in Christ to him though he was persecuting that same Lord Jesus. But now, he is in the faith, and he has not compromised his faith in his many years of service to the Gentiles. In the first letter he commanded Timothy to have a **good conscience** and a sincere faith and told him how to do it (**1 Tim 1:5, 18; 3:9**). Now **Paul's own example** comes to the surface. He commanded no more than he himself committed to.

Paul's faith and conversion **reminds him** again of Timothy's. We saw at the end of 1 Timothy that Timothy was baptized sometime later than an infant, for he made the good confession of Christ before many witnesses. Now we learn more. **"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well"** (**2Tim 1:5**). This verse is among the reasons I surmise from the NT that infant baptism is not biblical. Timothy was raised in the faith, in a Christian household. That couldn't be any clearer from this verse. And yet, he was baptized much later than infancy or immediately upon the conversion of his family as part of the household (**1Tim 6:12**).

This faith must go back quite a while, though not prior to the proclamation of the gospel sometime in the book of Acts. **Acts 16:1** tells us that **Lois** (“**Agreeable; Desirable**”) **was a Jew**, but Timothy’s unnamed father was a Gentile-Greek. **Timothy was raised with the Scriptures** since infancy (**2Tim 3:15**), Scriptures which were able to make him wise to salvation. Yet, **he was not circumcised** as an infant, even though he may have been considered Jewish because some reckoned Jews through their mother.⁶ Lois converted to Christianity, either through Paul’s proclamation when he came to Lystra, or through someone who had heard the gospel in Jerusalem in earlier days who came home and told her, though it is quite possible that, like his own ancestors, she already served God before this. Obviously sometime later, **Eunice** (“**Conquering Well**”), his mother, followed suit in the faith of the risen Savior. Finally, also clearly separated by some amount of time, Timothy was converted. Paul is quite certain that Timothy’s faith is real, thus making it the bedrock of their father-son relationship.

⁶ Though much later, **Ambrosiaster** (4th cent) and **Nicolaus of Lyra** (13th cent) argued that Timothy was a Jew because of his mother’s Jewishness. A good discussion of this is **Matthew Thiessen**, *Genealogy, Circumcision and Conversion in Early Judaism and Christianity*, Dissertation to Duke University (2010), 5.2.4 (251-54), https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/2465/D_Thiessen_Matthew_a_201005.pdf.

Themes, Structure, and Occasion

At this point, it seems good to move to **the structure** of the letter, which I will then read, and give some final comments that come from the first chapter. The structure helps us understand the themes. 2 Timothy **may be chiastic**, though this is less certain than the first letter. Two attempts have seen the very same center, **focusing on salvation through faith in Christ**, which is quite similar to the first letter.

1a) 2 Tim 1:1-2, **Salutation** + **grace**, mercy, peace in **Jesus Christ our Lord**;

1b) 2 Tim 1:3-4, Paul greatly **desiring to see Timothy**;

1c) 2 Tim 1:5-2:26, Stir up/ hold fast what you received/ heard + exhortation to **faithful ministry**;

1d) 2 Tim 3:1-13, **Evil men and imposters** in the last days:

1e) 2 Tim 3:14-16, Continue in **Scriptures** known from childhood, profitable to **reprove, correct, instruct**;

central axis) 2 Tim 3:17, **That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work**;

2e) 2 Tim 4:1-2, Preach the **Scriptures** in + out of season, by them **convince, rebuke, exhort**;

2d) 2 Tim 4:3-4, **Ungodly and deceived hearers** in the last days;

2c) 2 Tim 4:5-8, Watch/ **fulfill your ministry** + Paul's ministry completed in faithfulness;

2b) 2 Tim 4:9-21, Paul's **longing to see Timothy**;

2a) 2 Tim 4:21b-22, **Benediction** + **Lord Jesus Christ/ grace** be with you. Amen.⁷

A. 1:1-12: Do Not Be Ashamed but Share in Suffering according to the Power of God

B. 1:13-2:3: Guard the Commendable Entrustment in Faith like a Good Soldier for That Day

C. 2:4-17: That They May Obtain Salvation in Christ Jesus Who Remains Faithful

D. **2:20-3:6: Reject Those Who Deny the Power of Godliness**

D'. **3:7-17: Remain in Salvation through Faith in Christ Jesus**

C'. 4:1-8: I Have Fought the Good Fight and Kept the Faith for That Day

B'. 4:9-21: The Lord Will Save Me from Every Evil Work

A'. 4:22: The Lord Be with Your Spirit and Grace Be with You⁸

⁷ **Christine Smith**, "Book of 2 Timothy Chiastic Structure," *A Little Perspective* (Nov 6, 2013), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/book-of-2-timothy-chiastic-structure/>.

⁸ **Paul S. Jeon**, *2 Timothy: Fight the Good Fight, Finish the Race, Keep the Faith* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020), 16.

More popularly, the letter is diagrammed as **an outline** usually put into three or four parts:

I. Opening (1:1–2)

II. **Exhortation to Endurance for the Gospel** (1:3–2:13)

- A. Thanksgiving for Timothy's sincere faith (1:3–5)
- B. A call to bold endurance in ministry, part 1 (1:6–14)
- C. Examples, positive and negative (1:15–18)
- D. A call to bold endurance in ministry, part 2 (2:1–13)

III. **Dealing with False Teachers** (2:14–3:9)

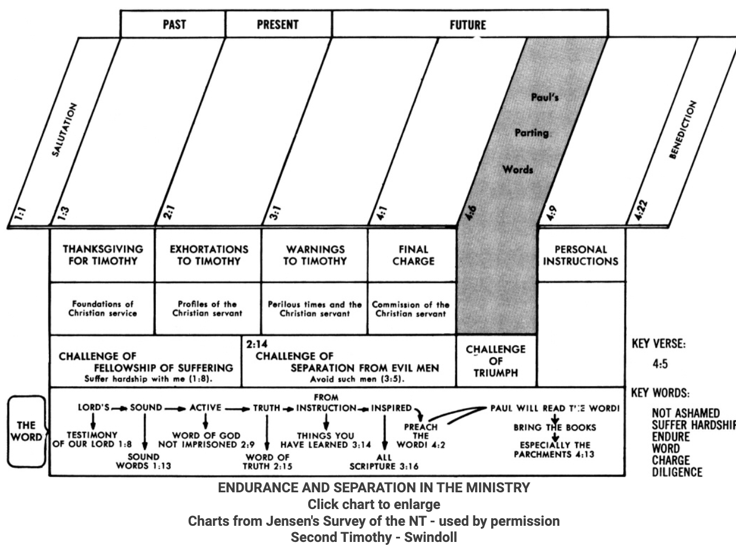
- A. Timothy in contrast to the false teachers (2:14–26)
- B. Description of the false teachers (3:1–9)

IV. **Exhortation to Timothy in Contrast to False Teachers** (3:10–4:8)

- A. Call to hold fast to Scripture and Paul's example (3:10–17)
- B. The ultimate charge (4:1–8)

V. Conclusion (4:9–22)⁹

Others have seen an interesting movement in the letter from **past** (ch. 1), **present** (2) and **future** (3-4):



2 TIMOTHY			
2 Timothy 1:1-18	2 Timothy 2:1-26	2 Timothy 3:1-17	2 Timothy 4:1-22
Retain the Standard	Rightly Divide the Word	Difficult Times Will Come	Preach the Word
PAST		FUTURE	
Foundation of Christian Service	Pictures of Christian Servant	Dangerous Times for Christian Servant	Commission of Christian Servant
Unashamed as a Witness: Guard the Gospel	Unashamed as a Workman: Suffer for the Gospel	Adequate as a Workman: Continue in the Gospel	Awarded as a Workman: Preach the Gospel
Power of the Gospel	Perseverance of the Gospel Message	Protection of the Gospel	Proclamation of the Gospel
Reminder	Requirements	Resistance	Requests
Encouragement in Ministry	Examples in Ministry	Exhortations in Ministry	Exhortations to Fulfill Ministry
Commendation & Charge	Commission to Fulfill	Conflict to Face	Course to Finish
Compiled from Jensen's Survey of the NT and Wilkinson's Talk Thru the Bible			

⁹ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2336.

Finally, a few of **the themes** should be mentioned explicitly:

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

With that, let’s read the letter to become familiar with it.

2 Timothy *ESV*

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus,

To Timothy, my beloved child:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my

¹⁰ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2337.

prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me— may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. The saying is trustworthy, for:

*If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he also will deny us;*

*if we are faithless, he remains faithful—
for he cannot deny himself.*

Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind

to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord

rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of

righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus. Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers.

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

The End of Your Life?

Because the letter is so short, let's use the rest of our time to see a bit more what is on Paul's mind **as he nears his death**. We'll use the first chapter to do this. Of course, we've seen him **reminiscing** about the past, which is quite natural with such knowledge. He has reminisced about **his own conversion** and about his dear friends. This has led him to talk about **faith** in Christ, because that's what he is thinking about the most.

That leads to **an obvious point**. Every single one of us is going to come to the end of our own life. If you do not know Christ and have not confessed him as Lord, then there is no possible way you can understand what it means to think about the best of all things as you near your death. Your only possible thoughts can be of things that are fading away into nothingness. But that also means you will have had no way of knowing what it means to live the best of all things during your life. And what a wasted life that would be. However, even if you come to Christ at the very end of your life, will know what the Apostle and all Christians know, even if in life it is only for the briefest of moments. And that in turn will consume your thoughts as you near

your death. How much more does it make sense to turn to Christ while you are young in light of these things?

Paul now turns to **remind** Timothy, and therefore also us, of **three things** that sandwich his central thought of **vv. 6-14**—the Gospel that has brought about both of their complete changes in life (see chiasm next page). The **first** is found in **vv. 6-7** and again in **13-14**. Timothy has been **given a gift** from God. This came up in the previous letter and had something to do, for him, with the exercise of his ministry in the church. Paul does not want this Christian leader to rest and his laurels or to become complacent, which is easy to do in life. **“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (6).**

Chiasm of 2Tim 1:6-14

A Draw on the God-given Enabling of the Spirit, vv. 6–7

B Not Ashamed, v. 8a

C Suffer for the Gospel, v. 8b

D The Gospel, vv. 9–10b

C' Suffer for the Gospel, vv. 11–12a

B' Not Ashamed, v. 12

A' Draw on the God-given Enabling of the Spirit, vv. 13–14¹¹

¹¹ **Greg A. Couser**, “The Believer’s Judgment in 2 Timothy, Part 1,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 176, no. 703 (2019): 316. Couser has “10c-11” for C’. This seems like a typo to me, so I’ve changed it accordingly.

Whatever gift a person has from God—and all Christians are given at least one, their purpose is to help people in this life. “For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (7). Power is given so that we might conquer and endure to the end. Love is given that we might use our gift to help others in their journey to or with Christ. Self-control is given that we might be able, ourselves, not to fall into such terrible temptation that is ruins us.

Vv. 13-14 pick up a similar idea, with the key concept in both being the “spirit.” Now, the “spirit” in vs. 7 is not capitalized in the ESV or many other English translations (but see the CJB, NET). Thus, the interpretation is that God has not made us timid. But for a number of reasons, including the parallel with vs. 13 which is clearly the Holy Spirit and because in fact sometimes we are Christians are timid and even cowards, I think it is better to understand both “spirits” as the Holy Spirit.¹² The Holy Spirit gives us

¹² The UBS Handbook explains it this way, “The interpretation of the phrase *a spirit of timidity* depends on how *spirit* is understood. This is so because “spirit” is used in a variety of ways in the Bible. If *spirit* here refers to the human spirit, that is, to the inner being of a person or the state in which a person finds himself or herself, then *a spirit of timidity* is another way of saying “a timid spirit.” The whole clause can then be restructured as: “God did not make us timid” (compare TNT “God did not make us cowards”) or “God did not give us a timid spirit.” It is possible, however, to take *spirit* here as referring to the Holy Spirit, so that the clause is stating that the Holy Spirit does not make one timid. Many commentaries in fact offer this opinion, but only a few translations make this information explicit (for example, TEV, French Common

power and love and self-control. Likewise, in vv. 13-14, “Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.” The idea in both is similar. Fan into flame and guard the good deposit entrusted. Both have drawing on the Spirit to do this as their focus. In this case, now the Holy Spirit, through Christ, gives us faith and love and because he dwells within us, we are able to guard that deposit. And why? So that you can make it to the end, like Paul, having the same thoughts as you near death.

This idea of being like your mentor leads to **the second thing** which is found in vv. 8 and 12. It is not being **ashamed**. He tells Timothy, “**Therefore do not be ashamed...**” (8). Just as, “**I am not ashamed**” (12). Ashamed of what? “**... of the testimony about our Lord**” (8). Why would anyone be ashamed about Jesus? Perhaps it is because others do not know him and think his claims not real and these people intimidate you. It is clear this is in Paul’s mind because he says, “**for I know whom I have believed.**” Perhaps it is because some think him weak, a mere human. Thus Paul

Language Version [FRCL]).” Daniel C. Arichea and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letters to Timothy and to Titus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 173–174.

continues, “And I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.”

Perhaps it is because he is not the Prosperity God of celebrities and super-apostles, but rather the God who gives life through suffering rather than “**your best life now.**” That just doesn’t sell well in a culture like ours. But that leads to the **third** thing Paul brings up. Living the best thing in life as I said a moment ago is not what so many people suppose it is in a nation full of wealth and food and prosperity and peace. **8, 10-11.**

That third thing is **suffering.** “Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel...” (8). That takes us to Paul’s immediate circumstance in **prison.** In vv. **11-12** he continues, “for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do.” It’s interesting to think of **Nero** in this regard. Perhaps some would say that he picked on the Christians simply for political reasons. And yet, going back to the first letter, when Paul talks about Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords, this was surely a threat to such a megalomaniacal, egotistical, narcissist with a god complex like him. That means the reality is, it was not merely political expedience. Christians were targeted

deliberately, and have been ever since, because they pose a clear and present danger to all rulers who will not bow their knee to Christ.

In the middle of all this is the gospel. Paul suffers, “For the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel” (2Tim 1:8-10). This is such an important passage; I’m going to come back to it again next week. But I will say a few words about it now. The focus of this gospel is on the salvation that God has given to his people. Hence, the main thing on the Apostle’s mind as he nears death.

But now, it is the God who has saved him who captivates him, a far cry from those in their last days running from the God they are soon about to meet. This God has saved him *in power*. It is not we who save ourselves, but the power of God that does it. This salvation is to *a holy calling*. It is not merely being saved so that you can go to heaven, it is being saved so that you will have a purpose in this life,

another regret so many have at death. They wasted their life with no lasting purpose at all.

His thoughts turn to **eternity and the predestining love** of God (though he does not use that word here). As opposed to those who want to say that we are predestined to “good works” and not to salvation, notice that it is **both salvation and the holy calling** that come, first, “**not because of our works.**” We do not earn either. Rather, they are in spite of our works—our works of sin and death. Second, they are “**because of his own purpose and grace.**” Salvation and the holy calling are **what God purposed** to do. They are his idea. They are his work. Why? Because he wanted to show his grace to the world, especially to those whom he is saving. God does all things for his own glory, and it glorifies him to be gracious to people who do not deserve it.

This purpose was **not, however, an afterthought.** Rather, it was given us in Christ Jesus “**before the ages began.**” This is not talking about us being saved before we were even born. It is talking about God’s *electing love and purpose to save* you before you were ever born. Indeed, before Adam fell and there was any sin or death at all.

These purposes of God are ***in Christ.*** They always have been. This is the mystery. The Second Person of the Holy

Trinity, before time began, chose to be the one through whom salvation would come. This deals with that covenantal transaction in eternity that we call the covenant of redemption. Paul sees these timeless plans of God being put into space and time in the coming of Jesus Christ in human flesh. Thus, it has “**now been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus.**” And what has Jesus done? He has **abolished death and brought life** and immortality to light, as we will look much more at next time.

All this happens **through the gospel**, that announcement of the good news of Jesus Christ which is so gloriously summarized here. It is this **announcement** that Paul has been proclaiming since the moment his eyes were blinded on the Damascus Road. He has not been timid, he has not wavered, he has fanned the flame to proclaim it everywhere he went as part of his own holy calling. This is why he is in prison. This is why some are ashamed. This is why there is a need to vigilantly guard what God has entrusted to you.

The chapter ends with **a series of names**. There are names at the beginning of the chapter (**Paul, Timothy, Lois, and Eunice**). There are names at the end of the letter (**Demas, Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, Tychius, Alexander the**

coppersmith). There are names in the middle (Hymenaeus and Philetus), and there are names here (Phygelus, Hermogenes, and Onesiphorus). Some of them are faithful to Paul and to God. Some, however, are not. As such, both serve as models for what to emulate and what to beware of in your own life.

The first two names now are people whom Timothy knows (the names are part of the intimacy of the letter). “You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes” (2Tim 1:16). Phygelus is an ironic name, or maybe not so ironic as names often carry meaning in the Scripture. It means, “Little Fugitive.” Hermogenes is literally “Begotten of Mercury/Hermes” or “Generation of Lucre” and thus means “Born Lucky.” These two men *were* ashamed of the Gospel and of the Apostle. They did not fan the flame. They were part of the ministry for who knows how long. But when trouble came, they fled and wanted nothing more to do with Paul or Christ or Christianity.

On the other hand, there is Onesiphorus. His name means “Brining Advantage/Profit.” There is a blessing and

a short story that tells us something about him.¹³ “May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me—may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus” (16-18). Not everyone is called to be Frodo or Aragon, Luke Skywalker or Han Solo, Kirk or Picard. Many would never want such positions! All of those need their Sams and Pippens, R2D2s and Chewbaccas, Scottys and Troys, some of which had important duties, others of which seemed menial and pointless, until you realize that in some ways, they are the true heroes of the stories.

It appears that Onesiphorus either traveled through that glorious city for days **trying to find Paul who was not in a public prison**,¹⁴ or perhaps went to **the outskirts of Rome where the military prisoners were taken**, in which

¹³ The blessing or prayer forms an interesting structure for the four verses when combined with the places:

A. In **Asia**: Phygelus and Hermogenes fled

B. **May the Lord grant** mercy

A. When he arrived in **Rome** ... and found me

B. **May the Lord grant** him mercy

A. You knew well all his service in **Ephesus**

¹⁴ **Gordon D. Fee**, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 237.

case, visiting a criminal constituted a high risk. Some think, “it appears that Onesiphorus paid for it with his life.”¹⁵ That seems to be the implications of Paul asking God to grant him mercy on the Great Day. However, that might mean Paul is praying for the man after he has died, a practice common in the ancient world, found in Judaism, but nowhere else in the NT. While many conclude he could not have died because Paul would not pray for the dead, I see no reason why Paul couldn’t be giving a kind of hopeful wish to God for a friend who did so much for him whom he is no longer able to see. It wouldn’t be, therefore, that Paul somehow thinks that his prayer will change God’s mind and let the man into heaven. No, *he already believed he was quite saved*. I believe, rather, that he is thinking of his own soon-to-come death and hoping he will see him soon, offering up to God his heartfelt desire that it be so.

A brief comment on the phrasing of this last prayer is illuminating. Paul doesn’t use “God” here, but rather speaks of “the Lord” granting mercy “from the Lord.” What could this possibly mean? Some, clearly not understanding the way

¹⁵ Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 325.

the OT used the same kind of language, think this is a conflation of two formulae, thus creating doubt in the minds of Christians as to the original authentication of this saying.¹⁶ Some say both uses refer to the Father. Others that both refer to Jesus.¹⁷ But that's precisely the kind of muddled thinking that leads to the skepticism that this is a mistake.

The only good option is that **one Lord** (most likely the first) **is Jesus**, and the **other Lord is the Father**, just like we saw earlier. Amazingly, we find this kind of thing in the OT, for example when “**The LORD rained down fire and sulphur from the LORD out of heaven**” (**Gen 19:24**; cf. **Amos 4:11**; **Ps 110:1**; **John 1:18**).¹⁸ Chrysostom saw this long ago and said,

Are there two Lords then? By no means. But to us there is one Lord Christ Jesus, and one God (1Cor 8:6). Here those who are infected with the heresy of Marcion assail this

¹⁶ **Joachim Jeremias**, “Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus,” in *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus; Der Brief an die Hebräer*, Joachim Jeremias and Hermann Strathmann (Das Neue Testament Deutsch 9. Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), 42. Cited in **Jan H. Nylund**, “Onesiphorus,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), <https://www.academia.edu/38268562/Onesiphorus>. There are no textual variants in this verse that would even lead to such a conclusion from a scribe messing it up; and it is even worse to think that Paul was so dumb that he confused his own blessing!

¹⁷ Nylund, *ibid.*

¹⁸ See our discussion on this in **Douglas Van Dorn** and Matt Foreman, *The Angel of the LORD: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study* (Dacono, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2020), 170 and 335-43.

expression; but let them learn that this mode of speech is not uncommon in Scripture; as when it is said, *The Lord said to my Lord* (Ps 110:1); and again, *I said to the Lord, You are my Lord* (Ps 16:2); and, *The Lord rained fire from the Lord* (Gen 19:24). This indicates that the Persons are of the same substance, not that there is a distinction of nature. For we are not to understand that there are two substances differing from each other, but two Persons, each being of the same substance.

(Chrysostom, *Homily 3 on 2 Timothy*)¹⁹

Onesiphorus' death certainly fits with suffering for the Gospel. It fits with Paul nearing the end of his own life, and now looking back on it, writing to his son Timothy. It fits the whole idea of not being ashamed, as John Owen said, "To be ashamed of the poor professors of the gospel—so in

¹⁹ Ambrose (*On the Duties of Clergy* 3.15.107) also says, "Moses called Him One, and yet also relates that the Lord rained down fire from the Lord (Gen 19:24). The Apostle, too, says: "The Lord grant unto him to find mercy of the Lord" (2Tim 1:18). The Lord rains down from the Lord; the Lord grants mercy from the Lord. The Lord is neither divided when He rains from the Lord, nor is there a separation when He grants mercy from the Lord, but in each case the oneness of the Lordship is expressed." <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf210.iv.ii.iv.xv.html?scrBook=2Tim&scrCh=1&scrV=18#iv.ii.iv.xv-p9.1>. Found through this amazing page: "Patristic Citations on 2 Timothy," *Patristic Bible Commentary*, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/2-timothy/patristic-citations-of-2-timothy>.

Nylund cites a grammatic point. "Several scholars cite the anarthrous (without an article) second κύριος (*kyrios*) as evidence for [this] option four, since the Septuagint consistently renders the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) with an anarthrous κύριος (*kyrios*) (e.g., Hanson, *Pastoral Epistles*, 127; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 496; Spicq, *Épîtres Pastorales*, 735)."

themselves, or made so by the power of oppressors—is to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, his truths, his worship, and his people.”²⁰ This man was not ashamed!

Most of all, it fits with **proper reflections** that you want to have as you near your own end in this world of flesh and blood. Do not look back on your life and live to regret it. For some of you, it seems the end of your life is a million years away. It isn't. Do not waste your years and your youth only on pleasures that God gives you to enjoy. For those do not last. Only one thing lasts forever. Only one thing does not lead to at least some regret. That is **having a relationship of mercy and grace with the living God through Christ**, who forgives you of your own turning away and gives you life everlasting through his own death and resurrection. This alone makes life meaningful. This alone brings hope for a future beyond this world. And this alone gives you the power to stand up today and make sure your holy calling makes a difference in God's church and in this world, which still belongs to your Father in heaven, and so his Son Jesus who inherits all things.

²⁰ **John Owen**, Sermon on Romans 1:16. Cited in **Lee Gatiss**, Bradley G. Green, and Timothy George, eds., *1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: New Testament*, vol. XII, Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 225.

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