

A LOOK AT A BOOK: 2 Timothy

September 16, 2012

Paul wrote his Second Letter to Timothy from the loneliness of a dungeon while awaiting a likely death (4:6-8). He attempted to fortify Timothy for accomplishment and steadfastness in ministry after his departure. The early parts of the letter contain encouragements for ministerial endurance (1:6-2:13). This is followed by an appeal for doctrinal soundness (2:14-4:8). A conclusion containing many personal requests begins at 4:9.

Salutation (1:1-2)

Paul's salutation in 2 Timothy is brief and similar to that of 1 Timothy. The apostle gave a lengthy salutation in Titus; but in this, his final letter, he used a standard form. The threefold wish in the greeting appears also in 1 Timothy but in none of his other writings.

The Gratitude of Paul (1:3-5)

In most of Paul's letters the apostle moved from a salutation to an expression of thanksgiving. This was the pattern Paul followed in 2 Timothy. The thanksgiving here reflects the more personal nature of 2 Timothy. Paul remembers his own spiritual attachment to Timothy, the emotional attachment Timothy had to Paul, and the genuine faith Timothy had shown.

1:4 None of Paul's disciples had shown greater loyalty to Paul than Timothy (Philippians 2:19-24). Paul remembered an emotional expression of that loyalty. We do not know the precise occasion that prompted Timothy's outburst of tears. Some have linked it with the departure mentioned by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:3.

1:5 This faith in the God of the Bible had first lived in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. The pair had a genuine expectant faith for the Messiah of the Old Testament. When they heard the gospel, they believed upon Jesus Christ as the Messiah for whom they had hoped. They passed their faith on to Timothy. Paul was tracing the faith of Timothy back to its roots.

Appeals for Ministerial Stamina (1:6-2:13)

(1) A Call for Courage (1:6-7)

Timothy had to function in an environment of fear, heresy, and challenges to his leadership. The reference to “laying on of...hands” is a reference to a time when Timothy’s gifts were officially recognized. The exact time and the participants in this event cannot be determined.

In verses 6-7 and throughout this Epistle, Paul pictured Timothy as a younger and more hesitant colleague. He reminded Timothy of his spiritual gift for ministry in order to encourage a revitalized commitment.

1:7 The Holy Spirit does not produce “timidity” or cowardice. A spirit of cowardice would falter under the load of responsibilities that Paul was placing on Timothy.

(2) A Readiness to Suffer (1:8-12)

Paul began with an appeal for Timothy to join with him in suffering for the gospel (v. 8). Paul also emphasized two facts about Christ in verse 9. First, he affirmed the preexistence of Christ, for the divine grace of Christ became available “before the beginning of time” (“from all eternity,” NASB). Second, he pictured Christ as the mediator through whom divine grace comes to human beings.

1:10 Though Christians are not released from physical death, their approach to it means its virtual abolition since it is no longer to be feared (Hebrews 2:14-15) and has lost its sting (1 Corinthians 15:55).

(3) An Imitation of Paul’s Example (1:13-14)

1:14 Paul had entrusted Timothy with the sound teaching of the gospel. He could not let heresy erode it. The “deposit” Paul had left with Timothy is a reference to the truth of the gospel Timothy had received. Paul’s words to Timothy suggest that the apostle was designating Timothy to carry on Paul’s work. The task of preserving the truth of the gospel is so demanding and difficult that human strength alone cannot assure it. Maintaining the purity of the gospel demands the might and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

(4) An Incentive for Faithfulness (1:15-18)

Paul grieved at the neglect he had suffered from friends in the province of Asia, but the encouragement Onesiphorus had given him greatly cheered him. He

wanted Timothy to imitate the latter example but to avoid the shame of the former response.

1:15 We know nothing more in canonical Scripture about either Phygelus or Hermogenes. Hermogenes appears in the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla* in the company of Demas, where both are described as “full of hypocrisy.” The mention of the pair Phygelus and Hermogenes suggests that they may have served as ringleaders of the trouble in Ephesus along with Hymenaeus and Philetus (see 2 Timothy 2:17-17).

1:17 Onesiphorus went to much trouble to track Paul down, and he found him after diligent effort. He shamelessly identified with the imprisoned Paul. Paul wanted Timothy to follow this example and put aside any shame (v. 8) in experiencing suffering for the gospel.

Images of Effectiveness in Ministry (2:1-7)

(1) The Teacher (2:1-2)

Timothy was not to be an innovator of religious novelties but was to show loyalty and commitment to the gospel message. Paul demanded Timothy’s active involvement in the training of a future generation of Christian servants.

2:2. The “things” Timothy was to send were the foundational truths of the gospel. The men who were to receive these truths had to be “reliable” (“faithful,” KJV) in that they were trustworthy believers. They also had to be “qualified to teach others” (“capable of teaching other,” Moffatt). They had to “be able and competent in turn to pass on to others this treasure by their ability and willingness to teach.” The specific people Paul had in mind probably were the elders of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 5:17-22.

This passage shows that Paul was concerned that the correct traditions about the gospel were transmitted from one generation of Christians to another. This concern about correct transmission of truth has already appears in 2 Timothy 1:13-14.

(2) The Soldier (2:3-4)

2:4 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-

mindful devotees of Christ who constantly choose the right priorities from a list of potential selections.

(3) *The Athlete (2:5)*

2:5 Paul used the picture of the athlete to illustrate the importance of complete devotion and stamina in Christian living. Performing as an athlete demands a commitment to a regimen of training and to the rules for the game.

(4) *The Farmer (2:6)*

2:6 It promises a spiritual reward from God for a job devotedly done. The time of this reward may be either in this life or at the last judgment. The reward may consist of honor and recognition from the church or a divine approval and blessing by God.

Paul frequently used the verb for “hardworking” to describe the work of ministry (Romans 16:1, 12; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians 4:11). He was underscoring the fact that the farmer who works hard will be the first to enjoy the fruits, and the diligent Christian servant can expect the same. He was deliberately contrasting the energetic farmer with the farmer who is afraid of work.

(5) *The Application (2:7)*

Paul emphasized traits that believers need to demonstrate in their service for the Lord. These include (1) the faithful skills of a competent teacher, (2) the willingness to suffer and the choice of priorities of a soldier, (3) the self-discipline of an athlete, and (4) the hard work of a farmer. Paul demanded the pursuit of excellence in the Christian life. He tolerated no images of mediocrity for the believer.

Truths That Promote Effectiveness in Ministry (2:8-13)

(1) *A Proper Understanding of Christ (2:8)*

Two features of Christ’s person and work attracted Paul’s attention. First, he stressed Christ’s resurrection. The perfect tense of the participle for “raised” suggests that Paul was stressing the result of Christ’s resurrection, the demonstration of his lordship (Romans 1:4), rather than the fact of the resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is the prime example of eschatological victory after death. It provides an encouragement for anyone facing suffering. The affirmation of the resurrection here also prepares us for the exposure in 2:14-18 of some who denied the future resurrection of believers by affirming that it had already occurred.

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. As the Messiah, he is now seated in glory on his heavenly throne and will come again to reign over this world (Hebrews 1:3; 10:12-13).

(2) The Goal of Paul’s Suffering (2:9-10)

2:9 Paul’s indomitable spirit broke out in the declaration “God’s word is not chained.” Men could silence Paul, but they could not silence the power of God’s word (see Philippians 1:12-18).

(3) *The Certainty of Reward* (2:11-13)

2:11 Paul introduced these verses with his “trustworthy saying” formula (cf. 1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:9). Paul presented Christian conversion as a dying and rising with Christ.

2:13 To be “faithless” is a present tense, implying that the readers were developing a pattern of failure to live up to their profession or were proving unstable and disobedient in trials. We would expect Paul to have concluded his statements with a promise that God would also be faithful to us, but Paul could not bring himself to state that about God.

God cannot deny or change himself. To be faithful through everything, in spite of the worst that men can do, is the essence of His nature.

Appeals for Doctrinal Soundness (2:14-4:8)

The Confrontation of False Teaching and Living (2:14-26)

In 2 Timothy, Paul still faced the problem of false teaching that was common in 1 Timothy, but the problem was much more in the background than it had been in 1 Timothy. Paul urged Timothy to take the lead in resisting falsehood by warning of the danger from heresy and exposing its error (2:14-19).

(1) *Resistance of the False Teachers* (2:14-19)

2:16 Paul urged Timothy to make a positive contribution to the fight against false teaching. He was continually to keep away from “godless chatter.” The use of the present imperative for “avoid” suggests that Timothy had to remain continually alert to the threat of heresy. The term “godless” shows that the debates of the heretics had nothing to do with real godliness. The term “Chatter” pictures the

discussions of the heretics as aimless and empty. Paul had used the same words in 1 Timothy 6:20.

2:18 Greeks often showed a contempt for the concept of physical resurrection. Because they viewed the body as evil, they eschewed the concept of a future bodily resurrection. For such people a spiritualized or sacramental view of resurrection was more congenial. Paul had taught the concept of spiritual resurrection (see Ephesians 2:6; Romans 6:3-4), but he had also asserted the reality of a future resurrection (1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3:21). The Ephesian teaching concerning the resurrection may have denied a future bodily resurrection. It probably asserted that the resurrection had already occurred in the spiritual renewal of the believer by regeneration.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul had shown that a denial of the possibility of resurrection jettisoned the gospel (15:3-11), brought the credibility of the apostles into question (15:14-15). And robbed believers of an incentive for sacrifice and service (15:29-34).

(2) Timothy's Response to Error (2:22-26)

2:23 Timothy needed to cultivate a sense of what to avoid. Some questions were "foolish and stupid" ("silly and ill informed," Phillips). The result of discussing them would be further quarrels and strife, and because of this result Paul directed Timothy to avoid even the discussion of the questions.

2:24-25a Paul outlined four positive traits needed by a servant who seeks to prevent quarrels. First, he must be "kind to everyone" ("gentle to everybody," Williams). Second, he must be "able to teach." Third, he must avoid resentfulness ("patient when wronged," NASB). Fourth, he is to "instruct" his opponents so as to correct their error of heresy.

The Stubborn Character of the False Teachers (3:1-9)

In this section Paul concluded his brief emphasis in 2 Timothy on the heresy Timothy was to oppose. Paul provided a vivid description of the false teachers (3:1-5a) along with a personal appeal to Timothy in v. 5b. Paul assumed that Timothy would not be surprised by the appearance of the false teachers, but he wanted Timothy to know the perniciousness of their character. In 3:1-5 he outlined the nature of the heretics, and in 3:6-9 he described the actions that came from this perverse nature. Paul's description made it clear that Timothy was facing religious pretenders representative of the quacks and mythomaniacs that populated

the ancient world. After making this statement about the heretics, Paul would not mention the false teachers again except in passing references in 3:13 and in 4:3.

(1) What They Do (3:6-9)

Their insidious methods were most effective among gullible women whose instability tilted them to seek new and exciting experiences. By comparing these hucksters with the Egyptian magicians of verse 8, Paul intimated that they were religious humbugs with an assured limitation to their successes (vv. 8-9).

3:8 The names Jannes and Jambres do not appear in the Old Testament, but there are references to them in Jewish, pagan, and Christian literature as two of Pharaoh's magicians who tried to demonstrate that they could work miracles as effectively as Moses (Exodus 7:11; 9:11).

The Example of Paul (3:10-13)

3:12 What did Paul's experiences teach about the expectations of the godly servant of Christ? Godly followers of Christ should expect to suffer. Paul's experiences were not isolated or exceptional. These words were an emphatic appeal for Timothy to join Paul in suffering.

Persecution may vary in degree and take different forms in different countries and in different ages, but the basic hostility of the world to the godly man remains unchanged. Christians will suffer because the world is hostile to the kingdom of God. Both Christ (Matthew 5:11-12; Mark 8:34) and Paul (2 Corinthians 12:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:4) had prepared their followers to anticipate such hardship.

The Enrichment of Scripture (3:14-17)

3:15 Paul reminded Timothy of his inspired source of instruction in the Scriptures. Paul knew that Timothy had received instruction in the Scriptures from the time of childhood. Jewish parents normally began instructing children in the Scriptures from their fifth year.

3:16 Paul described four uses to which Scripture can be put.

First, it is useful for teaching. This suggests that Scripture is a positive source of Christian doctrine. Paul used the term "teaching" fifteen times in the Pastorals, and in the remainder of the New Testament it occurs only ix times. Because of the prominence of heresy among his readers, Paul emphasized the importance of sound teaching.

A second use for Scripture is for “rebuking.” The term (*elegmos*) may refer to a rebuke that exposes the errors of false teachers.

The third use of Scripture is to provide correction. The term “correcting,” used only here in the New Testament, suggests that Scripture helps individuals to restore their doctrine or personal practice to a right state before God.

A final use of Scripture is to provide moral training that leads to righteous living.

A Charge for Consistent Behavior (4:1-5)

In this section, Paul continued an appeal for doctrinal soundness that began in 2:14. He underscored Timothy’s special role in thwarting the advance of heresy in Ephesus. Paul outlined the basis of the charge in verse 1 and delivered a ministry-related charge to Timothy in verse 2.

Timothy’s Charge to Ministry (4:2)

The command urged Timothy to declare the gospel (“press it home on all occasions, convenient or inconvenient,” NEB). Paul was saying that Timothy should stay with the task whether or not he felt like it (see 2 Timothy 1:6-7).

Reason for the Charge (4:3-4)

Paul gave a stern charge to Timothy in declaring the truth because even professing Christendom would increase its appetite for error rather than for truth.

4:3 First, listeners would no longer “put up with sound doctrine” (“listen to wholesome teaching,” Williams). Second, they would amass teachers “to suite their own desires.” They would pack the pulpits of their churches with preachers who would tell them only what they desired to hear. Third, they would do this because they wanted only to satisfy the “itching” in their ears. This description refers to people who crave spicy bits of information due to mere curiosity. This statement explains the reason for which people have gathered around them teachers who suit their desires. They have a desire to dabble with novelty. They covet new, fashionable ideas and long for the excitement of having their ears teased by the satisfying but harmless mumbling of pseudoscholarship.

The Sacrifice of Life (4:6)

First, he compared the pouring out of his energy in ministry to the pouring out of the wine of an Old Testament drink offering. Second, he described his “departure”

or death with a verb that pictures the departure of a ship by lifting its anchor or the breaking up of camp by a group of soldiers. Both the ship and the soldiers were going home, and the idea of going home was an accepted euphemism for death.

The Service of Ministry (4:7)

Personal Appeals from Paul to Timothy (4:9-18)

This section reads like a personal letter from Paul to Timothy. Paul gave Timothy some requests and warnings (vv. 9-15), and he reminded him of God's delivering power (vv. 16-18).

1. A Few requests and Warnings (4:9-15)

4:9 Paul had a foreboding of his fate, but he was not expecting immediate execution. Paul's previous experience with the Roman judicial system had led to a lengthy confinement (Acts 24:27; 28:30-31), and he anticipated normal delays. Timothy, if he left soon, could arrive at Rome in three or four months. Paul expected to be alive still at this time. He also wanted Timothy to come soon to avoid the dangerous conditions of winter on the Mediterranean (v. 21).

4:10 Paul's reason for the urgent request to Timothy was that all his coworkers except Luke had left him. Demas had left for dishonorable reasons, but Crescens and Titus may have been sent by Paul to new positions of ministry.

4:11 Paul had earlier refused to carry Mark on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-41) because Mark had deserted Paul in the field (Acts 13:13). Paul's magnanimity showed itself in his regarding Mark as a fellow worker (Colossians 4:10-11; Philemon 24) during his first imprisonment. Now he indicated his desire to have Mark with him again because of his great helpfulness in service.

(2) A Reminder of God's Delivering Power (4:16-18)

Paul gave Timothy fresh information about his lack of support from Christian friends (v. 16) and the magnificent strength the Lord had supplied (v. 17). The memory of the divine protection led Paul to an outburst of praise (v. 18).

Conclusion (4:19-22)

(1) Greetings to Friends (4:19)