

SECOND TIMOTHY CLASS NOTES

Introduction

Paul writes 2 Timothy in light of his imminent martyrdom. It is not surprising that the apostle would choose to write his final epistle to arguably his most trusted and closest disciple. In this final correspondence Paul writes to strengthen and encourage Timothy to keep the faith.

Authorship

Second Timothy belongs to a group of epistles, along with 1 Timothy and Titus, commonly designated the Pastoral Epistles.¹ Until the nineteenth century, all the Pastorals were commonly attributed to Paul the Apostle. However since that time, scholarly opinion has shifted considerably and many interpreters today reject Paul as the author of the Pastorals. Instead, it is held that the Pastorals are second century pseudonymous writings.² Such scholarly opinion notwithstanding, there is good and sufficient reason to affirm the claim of the epistle itself to be written by Paul (see the discussion in the section on 1 Timothy).

Date

The date of the Pastorals is dependent on the issue of authorship. If one rejects Pauline authorship then a late first century or early second century date is usually suggested. However, if one holds Pauline authorship then the date would be sometime in the sixties since Paul apparently is martyred in the mid-to-late sixties A.D.³ Most likely, Paul wrote 2 Timothy from Rome shortly before his death c. A.D. 68.

	DATE	PLACE	TEXTS	EVENTS
A.D. 62	March 62	Rome		Apparent release from house arrest
	Spring/Autumn 62	Colossae	Philemon 1:22	Paul hopes to come to visit Philemon in Colossae
	Spring/Autumn 62	Ephesus	1 Timothy 1:3	Paul leaves Timothy in Ephesus
	Late Summer 62 / Winter 62/63	Macedonia	1 Timothy 1:3	Paul in Macedonia
	Autumn 62	Macedonia	1 Timothy 1:1–3	Paul writes 1 Timothy
A	Spring 63–Spring 64	Asia Minor	1 Timothy 3:15	Paul anticipates a

¹ This designation has been used of 1–2 Timothy and Titus since the eighteenth century.

² Critical scholarship typically accepts only seven Pauline epistles as authentic (Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians 1 Thessalonians, Philemon).

³ Church tradition has Paul martyred under Nero who committed suicide in A.D. 68. Thus, Paul would have been put to death sometime prior to this.

				possible delay
	Spring 64–Spring 66	Spain	Romans 15:24, 28	See 1 Clement 5:7, Muratorian Fragment
A.D. 66	Summer 66	Crete	Titus 1:5	Paul leaves Titus in Crete
	Summer/Autumn 66	Asia Minor	Titus 1:5	
	Summer 66	Macedonia and Achaia	Titus 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:20	Paul writes Titus
	Winter 66/67	Nicopolis	Titus 3:12	Paul wants Titus to come to Nicopolis
A.D. 67	Spring/Autumn 67	Macedonia/Greece	2 Tim 4:13, 20	Wants Timothy to come with cloak and parchments
	Autumn 67	Rome	2 Tim 1:16–17	Paul arrested and brought to Rome
	Autumn 67	Rome		Paul writes 2 Timothy
A.D. 68	Spring 68	Rome	Eusebius, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> 2.25	Paul is put to death (beheaded) under Nero

Original Recipients

The Pastorals were written to Timothy and Titus, although the content in the epistles suggest that Paul expected the letters to be read to their respective churches. For 2 Timothy, the recipient is identified as Timothy (1 Tim 1:2). Timothy was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother, Eunice (2 Tim 1:5). He was probably led to the Lord by Paul himself (Acts 16:1). He was a faithful servant and traveling companion of Paul (Rom 16:21; 1 Cor 16:10; Phil 2:19–22; 1 Thess 3:2).

Historical Setting

Second Timothy was written by Paul shortly before his death. The best historical reconstruction suggests that Paul wrote to Timothy during his second imprisonment in Rome (1:16; 2:9; 4:6). Timothy apparently is still ministering in Ephesus.

Canonicity

Second Timothy (and the other Pastoral Epistles) appears to have been readily accepted as canonical. The Pastorals were considered Pauline and they were quoted as authoritative by the early church fathers. Indeed, there are only a few instances in which the Pastorals are questioned (e.g., Marcian, Tatian). The church historian Eusebius apparently includes the Pastorals among the “fourteen epistles” of Paul (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.3.4–7) and they are included in the Muratorian Canon.

Purpose

Paul's purpose for writing 2 Timothy appears to be closely bound up in his own dire personal situation. The impending sense of his own death motivates the apostle to write to his young protégé for at least three reasons. First, Paul seeks to give some final encouragement to Timothy to be faithful in the work of the ministry. Second, He wanted Timothy to complete his work in Ephesus so he could come and see him before he died (1:4; 4:9, 21). Third, Paul seeks to brief Timothy on various people in the Christian community.

Contribution

The contribution of 2 Timothy is at least threefold. First, it provides significant insight into Paul's final days. Second, since in many ways this is Paul's testament, it provides insight into that which the apostle considered significant. Third, 2 Timothy contains an important doctrinal passage concerning the inspiration of the Bible (3:16–17) and two important prophecies concerning future threats to the church (3:1–9; 4:3–4).

Literary Features and Structure

Second Timothy follows a fairly common epistolary form. This epistle contains a salutation (1:1–2), a body (1:3–4:18), and a conclusion (4:19–22). But 2 Timothy also appears to be a testament, or last words. For example Raymond Brown notes the following characteristics of testaments and where 2 Timothy contains such elements.

The speaker announcing with a tone of sorrow the imminence of his departure (4:6–8), utters words of reassurance that the dear one(s) left behind should not be afraid or insecure (2:1–2, 14–15; 4:1–2). Often the speaker recalls his own situation and past life (1:11–13, 15–18; 3:10–17), urges unity among those he is leaving behind (2:14, 23–25), foresees dangers from enemies (2:16–17; 3:1–9, 12–13; 4:3–4), and encourages fidelity, promising reward for it (2:11–13; 3:14; 4:8). He expresses love for those (children) he is leaving behind (1:4–5; 2:1 'my son').⁴

While 2 Timothy certainly is at home with the other Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy and Titus), 2 Timothy is a bit different from the other two. It is more emotional, more urgent, and the issue of church order and false teaching is less prominent.

As far as the content is concerned, it is generally acknowledged that, the Pastorals in general, and 2 Timothy in particular includes significant pre-existing material. Whether Paul wrote this material himself or not is debated. Nonetheless, E. E. Ellis has estimated that pre-existing material constitutes about sixteen percent of 2 Timothy.⁵ While this percentage is not as high as 1 Timothy or Titus, it is still a significant amount.

⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 676-77.

⁵ E. Earle Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Rolf Rendtorff, Biblical Interpretation Series 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 116.

Message

The message of 2 Timothy is, “Faithfulness is required of God’s servants when facing difficult circumstances and difficult people.” The faithfulness to which Paul calls Timothy is related to his willingness to follow his Master (God), his ministry, and his mentor (Paul).

Basic Outline

- I. Paul introduces his epistle and expresses a word of greeting to his “beloved son” (1:1–2).
- II. Paul reminds Timothy that faithfulness is required of God’s servants in facing difficult situations (1:3–2:13).
- III. Paul reminds Timothy that faithfulness is required of God’s servants facing difficult people (2:14–4:8).
- IV. Paul concludes his epistle with personal requests, a personal update, and a personal benediction (4:9–22).

Exposition

- I. Paul introduces his epistle and expresses a word of greeting to his “beloved son” (1:1–2).**
- II. Paul reminds Timothy that faithfulness is required of God’s servants in facing difficult situations (1:3–2:13).**
 - A. Paul offers thanks for Timothy’s faithful heritage (1:3–5).
 - B. Paul reminds Timothy that faithfulness is required in the midst of difficult situations (1:6–18).
 1. Timothy is reminded that faithfulness includes exercising the gift of the Holy Spirit (1:6–7).
 2. Timothy is reminded that faithfulness includes standing with the Lord and his people (1:8–12).
 3. Timothy is reminded that faithfulness guards the truth (1:13–14).
 4. Timothy is given examples of faithlessness and faithfulness (1:15–18).
 - a. All in Asia acted faithlessly (1:15).
 - b. Onesiphorus acted faithfully (1:16–18).
 - C. Paul reminds Timothy that faithfulness is manifested through spiritual strength (2:1–13).

1. Timothy needs to be strong in teach others to be faithful (2:1–2).
2. Timothy needs to be strong in order to suffer hardship as a soldier and athlete, and maintain the expectation of a farmer (2:3–7).
 - a. Timothy needs to have the attitude of a soldier in times of hardship (2:3–4).
 - b. Timothy needs to have the attitude of an athlete who properly competes in order to be victorious (2:3–5).
 - c. Timothy needs to have the attitude of a farmer who works in light of future reward (2:6–7).
3. Timothy to remember the faithful example of Jesus Christ (2:8–13).

III. Paul reminds Timothy that faithfulness is required of God’s servants facing difficult people (2:14–4:8).

Negative: Character/characteristics of false teachers/teachings (2:14).

Positive: Timothy is to remain faithful (2:15).

Negative: Character/characteristics of false teachers/teachings (2:16–18).

Positive: Timothy is to remain faithful (2:19–26).

Negative: Character/characteristics of false teachers/teachings (3:1–9).

Positive: Timothy is to remain faithful (3:10–12).

Negative: Character/characteristics of false teachers/teachings (3:13).

Positive: Timothy is to remain faithful (3:14–4:2).

Negative: Character/characteristics of false teachers/teachings (4:3–4).

Positive: Timothy is to remain faithful (4:5–8).

- A. Paul reminds Timothy that faithfulness requires challenging others and himself with the truth (2:14–19).
 1. Faithfulness requires challenging others with the truth (2:14).
 2. Faithfulness requires challenging Himself with the truth (2:15–19).
- B. Paul reminds Timothy that faithfulness is expressed through personal holiness and proper relationships (2:20–26).
 1. Faithfulness is expressed through personal holiness (2:20–21).
 2. Faithfulness is expressed through proper relationships (2:22–26).
- C. Paul reminds Timothy to remain faithful in spite of difficult people (3:1–9).

1. Paul reminds Timothy that difficult people will come (3:1).
 2. Paul describes the characteristics of the difficult people (3:2–7).
 3. Paul compares the difficult people to Jannes and Jambres (3:8–9).
- D. Paul reminds Timothy that faithfulness in dealing with difficult people includes following Paul’s teaching and his example (3:10–4:8).
1. Paul exhorts Timothy to faithfully follow what he has been taught (3:10–17).
 2. Timothy is charged to faithfully fulfill his ministry in the midst of difficult people (4:1–5).
 3. Timothy’s charge to faithfully fulfill his ministry includes following Paul’s faithful example (4:6–8).
- IV. Paul concludes his epistle with personal requests, a personal update, and a personal benediction (4:9–22).**
- A. Paul gives some personal requests (4:9–15).
 - B. Paul gives a personal update (4:16–18).
 - C. Paul gives a personal benediction (4:19–22).

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