



2 Timothy

Like 1 Timothy, this book is addressed to Timothy, whom Paul calls 'beloved child'. Whereas 1 Timothy feels as though there is a wider audience beyond just Timothy, 2 Timothy reads much more as a personal letter and is the most intimate of the three letters (1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus). There is a strong theme of suffering that runs all through the letter and of standing firm despite that suffering.



How long will it take?

Reading time: 11 mins
Short of time? Just read 1.1-18; 4.1-8



Genre

Epistle



Anything tricky?

The trickiest thing about the book is whether Paul wrote it or not (for more on this see below). This feels like such a personal book and if Paul did not write it, it raises the question of who did and why they felt able to claim it was by Paul.



Inspiring quotes

For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

(2 Timothy 1.7)

Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

(2 Timothy 1.14)

¹⁶ All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3.16-17)



About the Author

2 Timothy 1.1 gives its author as the apostle Paul.

1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are widely viewed by scholars not to be by Paul despite their introductions. The reason for this is a different style of writing (i.e. different words used and sentence structures) and a different focus.

2 Timothy is a very personal letter but still, many would argue, feels very different from the rest of Paul's letters; others maintain that 1 Timothy and Titus might be written by someone other than Paul but that 2 Timothy is by Paul himself; others still attribute all three to Paul.

You might like to think about authorship as you read and ask whether the 'voice' of the author sounds similar to what you know of Paul from elsewhere.

What do we know about him?

Paul is probably the best known of all the early Christians. Before encountering Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, he was a zealous Pharisee who sought to maintain the purity of Judaism. After his experience on the Damascus road, he turned his zeal to proclaiming Jesus Christ among the

Gentiles. This brought him into conflict with some other early Christians, not least Peter, who thought that followers of Jesus Christ should convert to Judaism. He travelled around the Roman Empire (though primarily in Asia Minor – modern-day Turkey – and Greece) proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and founding communities of Christians as he went. He also wrote a large number of letters, 13 of which are preserved in the New Testament. 2 Timothy has traditionally been thought to be one of these.

Timothy, here not the author but the recipient of the letter, was born in Lystra in Asia Minor of a Jewish mother and Greek father. Acts 16.1-3 recounts his meeting of Paul in Lystra and of Paul's desire to take him with him on his journeys. Paul often sent Timothy to communities that he had founded to take letters to them and so that he could report to Paul about what was going on, as indeed he did with the Thessalonians (see 1 Thessalonians 3.2 and 6). Two letters in the New Testament (1 and 2 Timothy) are reputed to be letters of encouragement from Paul to Timothy in Ephesus. Christian tradition identifies Timothy as the first Bishop of Ephesus.



About the times

Those who think it is by Paul would date it to between ad 61 and 64; those who think it is not by Paul would date it much later towards the end of the first century ad.

What were people feeling?

As the primary recipient of this letter appears to be one person – Timothy – the question is more what was he feeling. The answer, if we read between the lines of 2 Timothy, seems to be that he was anxious about any future suffering he might face and in need of reassurance.



How is it structured?

- 1.1-2 Opening greeting
- 1.3-7 Thanksgiving for Timothy's faith
- 1.8-18 Reflections on suffering based on Paul's suffering
- 2.1-26 Reflections on leadership
- 3.1-9 What false leaders look like
- 3.10-17 The need to remain faithful to the gospel
- 4.1-5 Keep preaching the gospel
- 4.6-22 Farewells and greetings



What kind of Book is it?

This is an epistle. There are various features that mark it out as a little different from other the Pauline letters, one of these is that it is addressed to one person (i.e. Timothy) not a whole community (like Galatians or Thessalonians) and is one of the most personal and intimate of the letters attributed to Paul (with the exception of Philemon).



Look out for...

2 Timothy 2 offers Timothy advice on leadership – look out for it as you read and ask whether there is anything to be learnt from it about leadership today.

Other intertwined themes are God's word and proclaiming the gospel, keep an eye open for them throughout the book.

There are lots of personal notes in the book (including the request to bring Paul's cloak that he left behind) – look out for them as you read.



What could this mean for me?

Notice the strand of faithfulness in suffering that runs through the book. What do you think about the advice Paul offers? Can you imagine offering this kind of advice today?



Discussion group questions

- Were there any parts of the book that you particularly liked or which inspired you?
- Were there any parts of the book that you disliked or which troubled you?
- What did *you* think the book was about?
- Discuss the emphasis on faithfulness in the face of suffering. What do you think about what Paul says here? Is it good or bad advice do you think?
- 2 Timothy 3.1-6 offers a fairly grim picture of what it will be like to be a Christian – have a look at the chapter and discuss whether any of this is relevant today.
- Discuss your reflections on faithfulness in suffering. If you were trying to give someone who was having a really hard time any advice, would you use any of 2 Timothy?
- Did you read anything in the book that touched you, expanded your faith or made you think more deeply about your life and how you live it?



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