

# INTRODUCTION AND 2 TIMOTHY

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## Introduction

### I. Authorship

A. Paul is expressly identified in the opening verse as the author of the letter. His authorship of this and the other Pastoral letters went unchallenged until the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>1</sup> but today it is common to hear scholars claim they were written years after Paul's death by someone using Paul's name.

B. I addressed this in the class on 1 Timothy and, to a lesser extent, in the class on Titus. Just to repeat Donald Guthrie's conclusion, which was reached after a careful analysis of the competing claims:

In spite of the acknowledged differences between the pastorals and Paul's other epistles, the traditional view that they are authentic writings of the apostle cannot be said to be impossible, and since there are greater problems attached to the alternative theories it is most reasonable to suppose that the early church was right in accepting them as such.<sup>2</sup>

C. Of the Pastoral Epistles, 2 Timothy is probably the most difficult one to deny Pauline authorship. As D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo note, "The letter is throughout so personal that it is probably the hardest of the three Pastorals to claim as pseudonymous."<sup>3</sup>

### II. Timothy and his relationship to Paul

A. For a fuller discussion of this question see [Introduction and 1 Timothy](#). Here I will simply say that Timothy, a Christian convert from Lystra, joined Paul's team as a young man around A.D. 50 during Paul's second missionary journey.

B. Timothy was with Paul in Rome in the early 60s. His name appears in the salutation of Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, all of which were written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. Paul says about Timothy in Phil. 2:19-24:

<sup>19</sup> I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. <sup>20</sup> I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. <sup>21</sup> For everyone looks out for his own interests,

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<sup>1</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), 638.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 646. Citing many examples, Dillon Thornton states in "Hostility in the House of God: An 'Interested' Investigation of the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy" (Ph.D. diss., University of Otago 2014), 11 (fn, 4), "It seems appropriate to speak of a resurgence of arguments for authenticity in the twenty-first century."

<sup>3</sup> D. A. Carson and Douglass Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 579.

not those of Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup> But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.<sup>23</sup> I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me.<sup>24</sup> And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

C. Timothy was serving as Paul's representative in Ephesus when Paul wrote 1 Timothy. In that letter (1:2), he refers to Timothy as his "true child in the faith," The warmth of their relationship is unmistakable.

### III. Paul's circumstances

A. Acts ends with Paul in prison, but in keeping with Paul's expectation expressed in Phil. 1:25-26 and 2:23-24, it seems he was released from prison around A.D. 62. There is a strong church tradition regarding this release. It is reflected in 1 Clement (late 1<sup>st</sup> century), the Muratorian Canon (around A.D. 180), and in Eusebius (early 4<sup>th</sup> century).

B. At some point, perhaps shortly before his release, Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus. Upon his release, Paul may have gone west to Spain, as he intended to do when he wrote Romans (Rom. 15:23-28) and as church tradition indicates that he did. If so, he probably stayed in Spain only a short time and then made a missionary journey to Crete with Titus (Tit. 1:5).

C. At some point, Paul went to Macedonia, and Timothy probably left Ephesus to meet him on his way there. During that visit, Paul told Timothy to stay in Ephesus to combat the false teaching that was threatening the church there (1 Tim. 1:3). Sometime afterward he wrote 1 Timothy, around A.D. 64. He probably wrote Titus around that same time, it being unknown which was written first.

D. As Paul writes 2 Timothy, he is in prison in Rome (2 Tim. 1:8, 16-17), but unlike the Roman custody in which he was held when he wrote Philippians, he now is facing the prospect of soon being executed (2 Tim. 4:6) rather than anticipating release (Phil. 1:25-26, 2:23-24). During the prior imprisonment when he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, Timothy was with him, as shown by the greetings in the last three of those letters, but now he is not (2 Tim. 4:11).

E. "Paul appears to have been in Asia Minor not long before he wrote [2 Timothy], for he speaks of having left a cloak at Troas (4:13), of Erastus having stayed in Corinth, and of his having left Trophimus sick in Miletus (4:20)."<sup>4</sup> But according to Acts, Paul had not been in Asia Minor for years before his first imprisonment in Rome, having been in prison in Caesarea for two years before being sent to Rome (Acts 24:27).

F. This more recent travel in Asia Minor fits with the tradition that Paul did some additional mission work after being released from the Roman imprisonment reported in Acts. Carson and Moo write: "It seems much more likely that Paul was released from the imprisonment mentioned in Acts and engaged in missionary activities for a period before being

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<sup>4</sup> Carson and Moo, 578.

imprisoned again. The probabilities are that 2 Timothy was written during this second imprisonment in Rome."<sup>5</sup>

G. We do not know how Paul's second Roman imprisonment came about.

1. Bryan Litfin speculates that sometime after the fire in A.D. 64 that destroyed much of Rome Paul returned to the city out of concern for the saints there and possibly to deliver charitable contributions from other Christians.<sup>6</sup> When the rumor spread that Nero had deliberately set the fire to "clear urban space for his sumptuous new palace and remake the city for his own glory," he chose to deflect it by blaming the fire on Christians, who were easy targets because they generally were disliked by the populace.<sup>7</sup> In that political environment, it is easy to imagine Paul getting arrested and charged with treason, especially given his prior imprisonment.

2. Harry Tajra speculated in his book *The Martyrdom of St. Paul* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1994) that Paul had for some unknown reason returned to Rome just *before* the Great Fire and was executed for treason on the basis of charges instigated by Jewish leaders in Rome. "This event propelled Christianity into the consciousness of Nero and his magistrates, at which point the religion's entirely negative reputation prompted the emperor to target the Christians as his scapegoats when the fire broke out in the summer of 64."<sup>8</sup>

3. It is also possible Paul was arrested on the western coast of Asia Minor, perhaps at the instigation of an enemy (Jewish leaders? Alexander?), and then taken to Rome.<sup>9</sup> Arriving during Nero's persecution would have guaranteed a negative outcome.

H. As a Roman citizen, Paul, unlike Peter, would have been entitled to certain legal procedures that may have delayed his martyrdom. According to a strong tradition, he was convicted of treason around A.D. 66 and beheaded on the Ostian Road. It is quite possible that Paul's body lies in the sarcophagus in the church of St. Paul Outside the Walls on the Ostian Road in Rome.<sup>10</sup>

I. Nero's persecution of Christians in Rome is infamous.

1. As reported by the Roman historian Tacitus in his work *The Annals* (15.44), written in the early second century:

But neither human help, nor imperial munificence, nor all the modes of placating Heaven, could stifle scandal or dispel the belief that the fire had taken place by order. Therefore, to scotch the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their

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<sup>5</sup> Carson and Moo, 578.

<sup>6</sup> Bryan Litfin, *After Acts* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015), 174.

<sup>7</sup> Litfin, 150.

<sup>8</sup> Litfin, 192 (n. 12).

<sup>9</sup> E.g., William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), lxii; S. M. Baugh, "1 Timothy" in Clinton Arnold, ed., *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 3:447.

<sup>10</sup> Litfin, 174-182.

vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue. First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on their disclosures, vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts' skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night. Nero had offered his Gardens for the spectacle, and gave an exhibition in his Circus, mixing with the crowd in the habit of a charioteer, or mounted on his car. Hence, in spite of a guilt which had earned the most exemplary punishment, there arose a sentiment of pity, due to the impression that they were being sacrificed not for the welfare of the state but to the ferocity of a single man.

2. The danger of this persecution may explain why some had abandoned Paul (1:15, 4:10, 16). He says in 2 Tim. 4:11 that only Luke is with him.

#### IV. Timothy's location

A. Timothy clearly was in Ephesus when Paul wrote 1 Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3). Köstenberger et al state, "There is no indication in 2 Timothy of any difference of location with regard to Timothy's ministry, and there is every reason to assume that Timothy and the church in Ephesus are also the destination of Paul's second letter to Timothy."<sup>11</sup> The hints that he is still there include:

1. Onesiphorus, who visited Paul in Rome, had served notably in Ephesus (1:8), which indicates he may have been from there. In 4:19 Paul asks Timothy to greet the household of Onesiphorus.

2. Prisca and Aquila had relocated to Ephesus (Acts 18:18-26). In 4:19 Paul instructs Timothy to greet Priscilla and Aquila.

3. Timothy clearly is somewhere in Asia Minor, as Paul tells him in 4:12 to bring with him the cloak and scrolls he had left with Carpus at Troas. Troas would be on the way to Rome from Ephesus if traveling on foot.

4. The false teaching in 2 Timothy is like that in 1 Timothy. If Timothy had relocated to another city in Asia Minor and was facing similar problems, you might expect Paul to refer say something like, "As I said when you were in Ephesus . . ."

B. Some, like Christopher Hutson, think Timothy had relocated to another city in Asia Minor. If Timothy was in Ephesus, he finds it odd that Paul would say "all who were in Asia

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<sup>11</sup> Köstenberger et al., 642.

turned away from me" (1:15) and say "I sent Tychicus to Ephesus" (4:12).<sup>12</sup> But the first could refer to those from Asia who were *present in Rome* at the onset of his recent ordeal<sup>13</sup> or those in the Asian city (Miletus? Troas?) where Paul was arrested (if that is what occurred).<sup>14</sup> Regarding the second, Marshall states, "It is perhaps more probable that the aor. is not epistolary and that Tychicus has been dispatched on a journey that will take him longer than the bearer of the letter [2 Timothy] to reach Ephesus."<sup>15</sup> In that event, he is letting Timothy know that Tychicus will be following soon presumably to free him to come to Paul.

## V. Purpose

A. 2 Timothy is a kind of dying charge to Timothy, a letter designed to urge him on to faithful, courageous living for Christ. Paul also warns him about certain false teachers who were deceiving people in the church (2:14-16, 17-18, 23-26; 3:13).

B. On a more mundane level, Paul requests Timothy to come to him quickly (4:9), before winter can delay his travel (4:21), because the desertion by Demas and the travel of Crescens and Titus to other locations created a need for Timothy and Mark to assist in Paul's ministry (4:9-11). He also instructs Timothy to pick up various items he left with Carpus in Troas (4:13). I suspect the "quickly" is because Paul knows he does not have long, but however long he has he wants to use his time to the fullest in service of Christ.

## Text

### I. Greeting and Thanksgiving (1:1-5)

#### A. Greeting (1:1-2)

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup>to Timothy my beloved child: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1. Paul declares, as a loving reminder to Timothy and for the benefit of the church that will hear his words, that he is an apostle by the will of God. He is God's chosen messenger, which distinguishes him from all the competing voices of those who are not divine apostles.

2. Paul's apostleship was in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus. That is, God has promised eternal life to those who put their faith in Christ, and Paul's

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<sup>12</sup> Christopher R. Hutson, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 160.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Baugh, 483-484.

<sup>14</sup> E.g., I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 717. Moreover, if Timothy in another location in Asia Minor as Hutson proposes, he still must explain how Paul could say "all who were in Asia turned away from me."

<sup>15</sup> Marshall, 717.

apostleship is in accordance with that promise because it is a charge to spread the message of that promise. Paul's call to preach is an integral part of the outworking of God's redemptive plan.

3. The immediate addressee is Timothy, Paul's beloved child. In 1 Tim. 1:2 he referred to Timothy as his "true child in the faith." He is Paul's child in the sense Paul had a clear, albeit indirect, hand in Timothy's conversion. Paul brought the gospel to Lystra and then Timothy later became a Christian through the influence of his mother and the church elders in that city. Beyond that, Paul and Timothy developed such a close working relationship that Paul said in Phil. 2:22 that Timothy served with him as a son with his father (Phil. 2:22).

4. As in 1 Tim. 1:2, Paul's desire for Timothy is that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ bless him with grace, mercy, and peace. He wants Timothy to have the blessing of laboring in the power and protection of God.

#### B. Thanksgiving (1:3-5)

*<sup>3</sup>I am thankful to God, whom I serve with a clear conscience, as did my ancestors, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, <sup>4</sup>longing to see you (having recalled your tears) so that I may be filled with joy, <sup>5</sup>having been reminded of your sincere faith, which first dwelled in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I am convinced also dwells in you.*

1. Paul tells Timothy in v. 3 that he constantly remembers him in his regular praying – in the prayers he offers night and day – and that he does so with thankfulness to God. This persistent and thankful praying about Timothy is because he has been thinking about Timothy's sincere faith. How encouraging it must have been for Timothy to read those words.

2. He thanks *God* for that faith because he loves Timothy, knows that genuine faith in Christ is the basis of divine blessing, and knows that but for the gracious working of God Timothy's faith would not exist.

a. If God had not sent his Son to die on the cross as an atoning sacrifice, there would be no basis for Timothy or anyone else to trust in God's work in Christ for redemption. His work in Christ is the ground of faith.

b. If God in his grace had not counteracted the blindness and bondage produced by sin thus enabling us to choose to accept the gospel ("prevenient grace"), neither Timothy nor anyone else would have chosen Christ. God does not determine our response, make us accept or reject the gospel, but in his grace he frees our will from the devastating effects of sin that we are able to choose.

(1) We often underestimate how dire the situation was from which God rescued us. We tend to think that though we were rightly under condemnation for sins we committed sin had not corrupted our insight and judgment, our desire and will, or our moral disposition. We tend to think that though we were guilty of sin our faculties and spiritual perception we unaffected. We were fully capable in our own right of assessing and accepting

divine truth. All we needed was to have the message of pardon presented properly, and we would embrace the correct conclusion.

(2). I think the truth is more like the illustration by Jerry Walls and Joseph Dongell in their book, *Why I Am Not a Calvinist*.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to seeing the lost sinner merely as a convicted criminal who at the front gate of the prison is offered a pardon from inescapable eternal punishment, they "see the sinner as already imprisoned in the deepest corner of a terrorist camp." They write:

Bound, gagged, blindfolded, and drugged, the prisoner is weak and delusional. . . . The prisoner can't even begin to plead for help or plan an escape. In fact, the prisoner feels at home in the dank squalor of the cell; she has come to identify with her captors and will try to fight off any attempted rescue. Only a divine invasion will succeed. . . .

God steals into the prison and makes it to the bedside of the victim. God injects a serum that begins to clear the prisoner's mind of delusions and quell her hostile reactions. God removes the gag from the prisoner's mouth and shines a flashlight around the pitch-black room. The prisoner remains mute as the Rescuer's voice whispers, "Do you know where you are? Let me tell you! Do you know who you are? Let me show you!" And as the wooing begins, divine truth begins to dawn on the prisoner's heart and mind; the Savior holds up a small mirror to show the prisoner her sunken eyes and frail body. "Do you see what they've done to you, and do you see how you've given yourself to them?" Even in the dim light, the prisoner's weakened eyes are beginning to focus. The Rescuer continues, "Do you know who I am, and that I want you for myself?" Perhaps the prisoner makes no obvious advance but does not turn away. . . . [T]he Savior presses on: "I know that part of you suspects that I have come to harm you. But let me show you something -- my hands, they're a bit bloody. I crawled through an awful tangle of barbed wire to get to you." Now here in this newly created sacred space, in this moment of new possibility, the Savior whispers, "I want to carry you out of here right now! Give me your heart! Trust me!"

c. And if God had not commanded and inspired men to take the message of his saving grace in Christ to the world, neither Timothy nor anyone else would have heard the faith-inducing gospel. That work would have died out with those who witnessed it; it would never have reached Lois, Eunice, and any others in Lystra.

3. In telling Timothy of his persistent thanksgiving to God for his sincere faith in Christ, Paul notes that he serves God with a clear conscience. He has been faithful to God's call on his life. As he says in 4:7, he has fought the good fight, has finished the race, has kept the faith. Though he is in prison, he feels no guilt or shame for it because he is not there for some criminal conduct or wrongdoing; he is there ultimately because of his faith in Christ.

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<sup>16</sup> Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I Am Not a Calvinist* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 68-69.



4. He adds that his ancestors also served God with a clear conscience.<sup>17</sup> He is here identifying with the faithful Jewish servants of God in the OT; he is part of their line. As they suffered for righteousness without compromise, so is he.

5. Paul also notes that he is longing to see Timothy and says that doing so would fill him with joy. That longing was spurred or intensified by his having recalled Timothy's tears. This was probably when they had last parted, which may have been when Timothy met Paul when Paul was heading to Macedonia and Paul instructed him to remain in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3). This is a very personal and emotional letter.

6. Paul mentions that the sincere faith that he is so thankful resides in Timothy had first resided in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Timothy's mother is described in Acts 16:1 as "a Jewish woman who was a believer," meaning a Christian. Paul says in 3:15 that Timothy had known the holy scriptures, meaning the OT, from infancy, which implies he was taught by his Jewish mother and perhaps grandmother. His father, being a Greek (Acts 16:1), would have no interest in teaching him the Jewish scriptures. One can assume that the sincere faith of his mother and grandmother influenced Timothy's conversion and was a source of strength in his life.

## II. Appeal for Courageous Faithfulness (1:6-18)

### A. Call to faithfulness in suffering (1:6-14)

*<sup>6</sup>For this reason, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup>For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but of power and love and sound judgment. <sup>8</sup>Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me, his prisoner, but suffer hardship with me for the gospel in accordance with the power of God, <sup>9</sup>who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before times eternal <sup>10</sup>but has now been revealed through the appearance of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, <sup>11</sup>for which I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. <sup>12</sup>For this reason I also am suffering these things, but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard my deposit until that day. <sup>13</sup>Keep the standard of sound words which you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus; <sup>14</sup>guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.*

1. Because of Paul's confidence in Timothy's sincere faith, he reminds him to fire up or fan into flame the spiritual gift for ministry that was imparted to him in conjunction with the laying on of Paul's hands. This is presumably the same gift that in 1 Tim. 4:14 is related to

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<sup>17</sup> The phrase ἀπὸ προγόνων ("from forefathers") has the force "in the same way as [his] forefathers." See, e.g., Marshall, 690 (fn. 5); Philip H. Tower, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 449 (fn. 14).

the laying on the elders' hands, suggesting that Paul had joined with them. The context suggests that the gift in 1 Tim. 4:14 was a gift of teaching and/or preaching, and there Paul urges Timothy not to neglect it. Here he says essentially the same thing in different words.

2. The charge to fire up or fan the gift into flame fits with ("For") the truth that God did not give Christians a spirit of cowardice but rather a spirit of power and love and sound judgment. Firing up his teaching/preaching gift involves utilizing it, proclaiming the truth of God, which is an expression of power, love, and sound judgment rather than cowardice.

3. And because God has given Christians such a spirit, Timothy is not to be ashamed of or embarrassed about the gospel message, not to be intimidated by opponents of that message, or to be ashamed of Paul because of his imprisonment. Rather, in accordance with the power provided by God, he is to suffer hardship with Paul for the gospel, meaning he is to accept the rejection and hostility that comes from being a messenger of Christ in this world and from continuing to stand with Paul in the truth of the gospel.

4. Paul says of God that he saved them and called them with a holy calling, meaning he called them to the holy task of spreading the gospel in the world. They rightly understood that they were on a mission from God. God's saving or rescuing of them and anyone else was not according to their works, was not because they earned or achieved their salvation, but according to his purpose to save them and all mankind by grace through faith in his glorious, crucified, and resurrected Son. It is not an achieving but a receiving.

5. He says that God's saving grace was given to them in Christ before times eternal, meaning that the plan of salvation was in the mind of God from eternity. As Paul put it in Eph. 1:4, God "chose us in him before [the] foundation of [the] world that we might be holy and blameless before him." In Tit. 1:2 he speaks of "the hope of eternal life, which the truthful God promised before eternal times." And as Rev. 13:8 indicates, there is a book of life of the Lamb who was slain that contains names that were written before the foundation of the world.

6. This eternal plan of salvation has now been revealed through the appearance in history of our Savior Christ Jesus. In the womb of Mary, God the Son became the God-man Jesus of Nazareth and fully and perfectly accomplished the redemptive purposes of his Father. The mystery that was veiled for ages and generations has been made manifest in his appearing.

7. Christ abolished (*katargeō*) death in the sense he broke its power (see BDAG, 525) in his atoning sacrifice by taking on himself the just penalty for sin.

a. That rendered death impotent for all who are in him because, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:56, the sting of death is sin, meaning death is a painful experience only for those who are under condemnation for sin. For them, death is entrance into an eternal judgment, first in a punitive realm of the intermediate state and then in eternal hell. For the righteous, the forgiven, the victorious in Christ, death is stingless. It is a passage to a blessed intermediate state and then eternal resurrection glory.

b. It is in the resurrection at Christ's return that the victory over death achieved in the cross comes to complete fruition. The same word Paul uses here for Jesus' abolishing or breaking the power of death (*katargeō*) he uses in 1 Cor. 15:22-26 when speaking of the bodily resurrection at Christ's return. <sup>22</sup>*For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.* <sup>23</sup>*But each in his own order: the firstfruits, Christ; then those who are of Christ, at his coming;* <sup>24</sup>*then the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God, the Father, when he **brings to an end** every ruler and every authority and power.* <sup>25</sup>*For he must reign until he has put all the enemies under his feet.* <sup>26</sup>*The last enemy is **brought to an end**, namely death.*

8. Having defeated death through his saving work, Christ revealed that victory, the procurement and availability of immortal life,<sup>18</sup> through the gospel, the proclamation of his saving work. Those who hear that message have its content revealed to them, brought to light, and those who respond in faith receive immortal life.

9. Paul declares that he was appointed a herald, an apostle, and a teacher of the gospel. As the Lord said to Ananias about Paul in Acts 9:15, "he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."

10. He says it is for that reason, because of his role in disseminating the gospel, that he is enduring his current suffering. That is the true reason that he is again in Roman custody, now facing death.

11. But despite being a prisoner, which carried a great social stigma in the Greco-Roman world, he is not ashamed because he knows who Jesus is and therefore that faithful service to him is the noblest of things despite how the world may see it. And he is not ashamed because he fully anticipates that his trust in Christ, his life of labor with its consequent suffering, ultimately will be vindicated.<sup>19</sup> On the day of judgment, the wisdom and correctness of his choice to serve Christ wholeheartedly will be evident to all.

12. He commands Timothy to keep as the pattern or standard of sound teaching the things he had heard from him. In other words, Timothy is not to be swayed from apostolic doctrine but to stay grounded in it. And he is to do so "in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." He is to fulfill his mission of being a faithful purveyor of apostolic doctrine in a Christian manner. Towner remarks, "'Faith and love' serve as an abbreviation for the authentic life of faith, combining into a unity the dimensions of one's relationship to God and the lifestyle of service produced by that faith-relationship. In short, for Timothy to 'keep' the apostolic message and proclaim it he must at the same time pay careful attention to his own faith in Christ."<sup>20</sup>

13. Timothy is to guard the good deposit, the sound teaching that Paul has entrusted to him, meaning he is to prevent its corruption through the influence of false teachers.

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<sup>18</sup> Marshall states (708), "The two terms form a hendiadys, 'immortal life', contrasting with *ὄλεθρος* and *ἀπώλεια* (1 Tim 6:9)." See also, Mounce, 485; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, BTCP (Nashville: Holman, 2017), 219 (fn. 45).

<sup>19</sup> I take "my deposit" to be the life Paul entrusted to God rather than something God entrusted to Paul. See, e.g., Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 232; George W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 379-380; Mounce, 488.

<sup>20</sup> Philip H. Tower, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 478.

He is to do so through the Holy Spirit who dwells in Christians. Though we have a responsibility to labor for Christ, to be active in his service, we do not labor alone. Knight comments, "Paul can exhort Timothy to guard the good deposit because he knows that the Holy Spirit is indwelling Timothy and therefore will be the one through whom Timothy will be able to carry out the exhortation (cf. Phil. 2:12-13)."

#### B. Models of shame and courage (1:15-18)

*<sup>15</sup>You know that all those in Asia turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. <sup>16</sup>May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain. <sup>17</sup>On the contrary, when he was in Rome he diligently sought and found me; <sup>18</sup>may the Lord allow him to find mercy from the Lord in that day. And you know very well the ways he served in Ephesus.*

1. Paul refers to a time when "all those" in the Roman province of Asia, the province of which Ephesus was the capital, turned away from him. We do not know the time or event to which he is referring. By "all those" he is referring "to all to whom he might have appealed for help at the time."<sup>21</sup> He is not referring literally to all the Christians in Asia, as the following praise of Onesiphorus makes clear. It is possible he is referring to those from Asia who were *present in Rome* at the onset of his recent ordeal<sup>22</sup> or to those in the Asian city (Miletus? Troas?) where he was arrested before being taken to Rome (if that is what occurred).<sup>23</sup>

2. He singles out Phygelus and Hermogenes presumably because their abandonment of him was especially disappointing. This is the only time these men are mentioned in Scripture, and we know nothing else about them. The Asians who deserted Paul, and Phygelus and Hermogenes specifically, function as negative examples of Christians who shrink back in the face of pressure.

3. On the other hand, there is Onesiphorus, who was from Ephesus (1:18; 4:19). He did not allow the shame associated with imprisonment to deter him from hunting Paul up in Rome and ministering to him. Paul's gratitude is palpable. He expresses his desire that the Lord will grant mercy to Onesiphorus's family, who are in Ephesus (4:19), and to Onesiphorus himself, whom Paul knows to be elsewhere, on the day of judgment. He adds that Timothy is well aware of how Onesiphorus had served faithfully in Ephesus.

### III. Appeal for Courageous Faithfulness Renewed (2:1-13)

#### A. Charge to pass on the gospel and to suffer as a good soldier (2:1-7)

*You, therefore, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup>and what you heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these things entrust to*

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<sup>21</sup> Marshall, 717.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., Baugh, 483-484.

<sup>23</sup> E.g., Marshall, 717; Mounce, lxii.

*faithful men who will be qualified to teach others also. <sup>3</sup>Suffer hardship with [me] as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup>No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. <sup>5</sup>Likewise, if anyone competes in an athletic contest, he is not crowned unless he competes in accordance with the rules. <sup>6</sup>The farmer who works hard ought to be the first to receive a share of the crops. <sup>7</sup>Contemplate what I am saying, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.*

1. In light of Paul calling him to be a teacher and guardian of the apostolic doctrine (vv. 13-14), and in light of the contrasting examples of shame and courage given in vv. 15-18, he tells Timothy to be strengthened by the grace that is available in Christ. Proclaiming Christ in an environment where opposition has become intense enough to produce defections from Paul requires Timothy to draw on divine strength. As Paul's "point man" in Ephesus, he will be the focus of opposition. He is through prayer, meditation, introspection, and fellowship to open himself increasingly to the Spirit's power in his life.

2. In that divine strength, he is to entrust to faithful or reliable men the apostolic message, the truths he had heard Paul teach in the presence of many people who could verify it as Paul's teaching, that those men will then be qualified to teach those things to others. He is urging Timothy to come to him quickly (4:9, 21), and he wants to be sure that Timothy has made a concerted effort to entrust the truth to reliable transmitters before he does so.

3. Paul tells Timothy to suffer hardship with him in the manner of a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Timothy's suffering is assumed; the instruction relates to how he is to handle it. Knight explains the point of v. 4: "The soldier does not become entangled in things that would be a hindrance to his single-minded dedication to follow gladly the commands of his leader. The implication is that Timothy should not let anything in his life distract him, Christ's soldier, from pleasing and following Christ, his commander, even though such a course involves suffering hardship."<sup>24</sup>

4. Repeating the point with a different analogy, Paul says that an athlete who competes in an athletic contest is not given the victor's wreath unless he competes according to the rules, the requirements of the contest. In the same way, there is no crown for the Christian who breaks the rules of unreserved devotion to avoid suffering for the faith. The athlete endures whatever the rules of the contest demand that he endure.

5. The final analogy is the farmer who works hard. It is he, the one who does not refuse the suffering of toilsome labor, who is entitled to be the first to receive a share of the crops. Marshall states, "Whereas lack of effort leads to the ruin of the land and lack of crops (Prov 20.4), the hard worker can normally expect a crop (Deut. 20.6; Prov 27.18). In fact, his work entitles him to have the first call on the produce (cf. 1 Cor 9.7)."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Knight, 393.

<sup>25</sup> Marshall, 730.

6. Paul urges Timothy to contemplate or reflect on what he is telling him in vv. 3-6. In that effort, the Lord will give him understanding not simply of the meaning, which is fairly obvious, but also of the implications of that meaning for his life.

#### B. Reasons for enduring suffering (2:8-13)

<sup>8</sup>*Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David, according to my gospel, <sup>9</sup>for which I am suffering hardship even to the point of bondage as a criminal, but the word of God has not been bound. <sup>10</sup>Because of this I endure all things, because of the elect, so that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. <sup>11</sup>The saying is sure: for if we died with [him], we also will live with [him]; <sup>12</sup>if we endure, we also will reign with [him]; if we deny [him], he also will deny us; <sup>13</sup>if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.*

1. Paul urges Timothy to keep in mind the identity and significance of Jesus as revealed in Paul's gospel. Specifically, "Timothy is to focus on two realities: that [Jesus] was raised from the dead and that he was descended from David."<sup>26</sup>

a. Jesus' resurrection was the *firstfruits* of the end-time resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20, 23). It serves as a pledge on God's part of the final end-time harvest. Our resurrection is tied to his, so much so that in 2 Cor. 4:14 Paul says, "we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also *with Jesus*." We are all the same harvest. He is the "*firstborn* from the dead" (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5), and we will rise in his wake at his return. Holding this truth front and center is crucial to enduring suffering in this overlap of ages.

b. God, of course, had promised David that his seed would have eternal reign (2 Sam. 7:12-16; see also Ps. 89:3-4, 30-37), which became the prime focus of messianic expectation in the OT (e.g., Isa. 11:1, 10; Jer. 23:5-6, 30:9, 33:14-18; Ezek. 34:23-24, 37:24-25) and in Judaism (e.g., Jn. 7:42; Mat. 9:27). The fact Jesus descended from David thus points to "his being the fulfillment of God's promises and his people's expectations."<sup>27</sup> He is the descendant of David who was placed by God on David's throne (e.g., Mk. 11:10; Lk. 1:26-33, 67-69; Acts 2:29-32, 13:32-34; Rev. 22:16). As such, he deserves loyalty whatever the cost, and he is great enough to guarantee it is rewarded.

2. Paul notes that he currently is suffering for the gospel to the point of being bound as a criminal. But despite his confinement, the word of God, the gospel message, has not been confined. It continues to spread, and you can sense Paul's joy over that fact.

3. He says he endures this and all suffering for the sake of the elect, those who have accepted the gospel and those God foreknows will do so. The purpose is that they also, in addition to Paul and Timothy, may obtain the salvation that is available only in Christ, a salvation that involves eternal glory. Paul's suffering relates to that salvation because it comes with his effort to strengthens those already in the faith and to bring others to the faith.

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<sup>26</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 246.

<sup>27</sup> Fee, 246.

4. Paul then gives part of a saying that circulated in the early church, which he declares is sure or trustworthy.<sup>28</sup> It consists of four conditional statements ("if – then").

a. If we died with him, we also will live with him. Those who have become Christians, who have died with Christ in baptism as Paul explains in Rom. 6:1-11, will live with Christ, the focus being on living with Christ eternally as resurrected persons. Again, holding that truth securely is key to enduring suffering in this overlap of ages. As Towner states:

With the thought of Christ's vindication/resurrection in mind as a model for Timothy (v. 8), the eschatological aspect of this promise is probably uppermost in mind, though this accent need not exclude the implicit understanding that present Christian living is "union with Christ" in his death and resurrection. Nevertheless, the requirements of the parenthesis determine the emphasis on the certainty of resurrection as a solid foundation for Timothy's present endurance; moreover, the "futura" of this promise's full realization may have served as an antidote to the misconceptions surrounding resurrection being spread by false teachers (2:18).<sup>29</sup>

b. If we endure, we also will reign with [him]. Christians who endure, who hold fast to the faith in the face of suffering in this life, will reign with Christ in glory. We will in some sense share in his reign both in the intermediate heavenly state (Rev. 3:21[?], 20:4, 6) and in the final eternal state (1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 3:21, 5:10, 22:5). The point is that enduring, remaining faithful in suffering, ends in great blessing.

c. If we deny [him], he also will deny us. If instead of enduring in the faith in the midst of suffering one disowns Christ, in word or actions, then barring repentance, one will be denied or disowned by Christ on the day of judgment. As Jesus said in Mat. 10:33, "But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (see also, Mk. 8:38 and Lk. 9:26). It is a grave warning about the danger of rejecting the Lord.

d. If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself. The faithlessness of Christians, in whatever form or extent, does not result in God being faithless, in his breaking any of his promises and commitments. Whatever we do, he remains faithful to all he has revealed because doing otherwise would be a denial of himself, a denial of the faithfulness aspect of his nature. So the one who does not deny him and the one who like Peter denies him and repents can rest in God's faithfulness to his word regardless of what any others may have done.

#### IV. Addressing the False Teaching (2:14-26)

##### A. Instructions for dealing with the false teachers (2:14-19)

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<sup>28</sup> With most commentators, I understand "for" "as referring to what preceded the saying in the original hymn, of which only part is cited here" (Knight, 401).

<sup>29</sup> Towner, 509-510.

*<sup>14</sup>Remind [them] of these things, charging [them] before God not to quarrel about words, which is useful for nothing, [only] for the ruin of the hearers. <sup>15</sup>Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, an unashamed workman who correctly handles the word of truth. <sup>16</sup>Avoid godless chatter, for those who engage in it will progress further in ungodliness <sup>17</sup>and their word will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, <sup>18</sup>who deviated from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already occurred, and so are overthrowing the faith of some. <sup>19</sup>Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, bearing this impression made by a seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and "Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness."*

1. Paul tells Timothy to remind the faithful men to whom he entrusts the apostolic teaching (2:2) of the need for and reward of endurance and to command them before God not to quarrel about words, which is useful for nothing, only for the ruin of the hearers.

a. This is not a wholesale condemnation of technical linguistic arguments from Scripture. He is not scuttling careful exegesis and saying to ignore the precise meaning of God's inspired words. That leads to reading one's own thoughts and desires into Scripture rather than hearing what God is saying in Scripture. It is a way of baptizing one's own ideas so that they masquerade as the word of God. Indeed, Paul himself made such an argument in Gal. 3:16 based on the singular form of the noun "seed." Jesus does something similar in Mat. 22:31-32.

b. Rather, Paul has in mind the quarreling about words that marked the false teachers in Ephesus (1 Tim. 2:8, 6:4-5). They were not to engage in those futile arguments, as doing so was not useful and served only to ruin its hearers. The false teachers were not open to the truth and presumably were adept at using arguments held on their terms to sow confusion. Fee comments, "Thus the people are warned not to engage in the empty, purposeless, speculative (cf. v. 16) disputes about words carried on by the false teachers, because it does no good of any kind (cf. Titus 3:8); indeed, quite the opposite, it only ruins those who listen."<sup>30</sup>

2. He commands Timothy to do his best to present himself to God as one approved, meaning as a workman who has no cause for shame because he correctly handles the word of truth, the inspired and true apostolic message. He is to deliver it straight, tell it like it is, teach it faithfully, being the antithesis of the false teachers.

3. He tells him to avoid godless chatter, the heretical nonsense of the false teachers, because failing to silence them, granting them a forum to promote their error, will only encourage them to go further in the direction of ungodliness. And in the process of doctrinal debate, *their* harmful word, in contrast to the word of truth, will spread to the spiritual detriment of others.

4. Paul names two of the false teachers, Hymenaeus and Philetus. This is the only time Philetus is mentioned in the NT, but a Hymenaeus was mentioned, along with a man named Alexander, in 1 Tim. 1:20. Paul says there that both of those men had suffered shipwreck concerning the faith and had been disfellowshipped (handed over to Satan). If this Hymenaeus is

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<sup>30</sup> Fee, 254.



the same person, which seems likely, then despite the disfellowshipping he received on Paul's authority, he "continued to operate in opposition to the Pauline mission in the later setting reflected in 2 Timothy."<sup>31</sup>

5. The error of these false teachers is specified in v. 18. They deviated from the truth, saying that the resurrection had already occurred, and as a result they were overthrowing the faith of some.

a. "Within the broader passage Paul affirms as central to his gospel the resurrection of Jesus Christ (vv. 8, 11) and the promise (as yet unfulfilled) of the believer's resurrection (v. 11)."<sup>32</sup> As most commentators rightly recognize:

[The opponents] held that the only resurrection to be experienced by believers was the mystical resurrection to new life which took place at baptism (cf. Rom 6.1-11; Eph 2.6; 5.14; Col 2.12; 3.1), and that therefore there was no future resurrection of the body (Lock, 99; Brown, 71; Spicq, 757; cf. Scott, 111). It was to deal with this heresy that later creeds insisted on the future resurrection of the flesh.<sup>33</sup>

b. For example, Dillon Thornton writes, "In what sense, then, did the opponents in Ephesus claim the resurrection of believers had already taken place? The most likely solution is that they *immaterialized the resurrection*. For the opponents, ἀνάστασις seems to be a past, purely spiritual event."<sup>34</sup> As for how this understanding of the resurrection arose, he states:

[T]he most likely scenario is that the opponents misconstrued Paul's teaching of *the present new life in Christ*, claiming that the *only* resurrection was the mystical resurrection, which took place at conversion/baptism. . . . The life of the believer is *already*, metaphorically, one of "resurrection," referring in Paul to the forgiveness of sins and to a new pattern of behavior. I suggest it is this notion of the present new life in Christ that the opponents misconstrued.<sup>35</sup>

He summarizes the opponents' misconception this way:

[I]t seems that 2 Tim 2:18 reflects a distortion of the doctrine of present participation in Christ's death and resurrection; the opponents perverted Paul's teaching, immaterializing ἀνάστασις and asserting that it had been fully realized, which meant they thought themselves to be current citizens of the age to come.

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<sup>31</sup> Towner, 160.

<sup>32</sup> Towner, 526.

<sup>33</sup> Marshall, 753. For example, the Apostles' Creed ends with "I believe . . . in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting." The contents of that creed "are essentially an expansion of the positive form (the Old Roman Symbol) of the questions asked candidates for baptism at Rome at the end of the second century." Everett Ferguson, "Apostles' Creed" in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 90.

<sup>34</sup> Dillon T. Thornton, "Hostility in the House of God: An 'Interested' Investigation of the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy" (Ph.D. diss., University of Otago 2014), 222-223.

<sup>35</sup> Thornton, 223-224.

This would have been tantamount to denying the future, bodily resurrection, which for Paul is the equivalent of denying the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:12-19). In Pauline theology, Christ's resurrection is no isolated phenomenon; the risen Christ is "the first fruits of those who have died" (1 Cor 15:20). Christ's bodily resurrection is the beginning of a much greater harvest. Indeed, the resurrection of the dead is no trivial detail; it is an integral part of the gospel message (1 Cor 15:13). As Hays explains, "There is no authentic Christian faith without fervent eschatological hope, and there is no authentic eschatological hope without the resurrection of the dead."<sup>36</sup>

c. Belief in bodily resurrection has always been a hallmark of the Christian faith. Roger Olson states in *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity*:

In spite of a pronounced tendency among untutored lay Christians to focus attention on immortality of souls and neglect bodily resurrection, the fathers of the church, medieval Christian thinkers, all the Protestant Reformers and faithful modern biblical scholars and theologians have emphasized the bodily resurrection as the blessed hope of believers in Christ. . . .

It would be impossible to discover any single point of greater agreement in the history of Christian thought than this one: *the future bodily resurrection of the dead is the blessed hope of all who are in Christ Jesus by faith*. Over two millennia the church's leaders and faithful theologians have unanimously taught this above the immortality of souls and as more important than some ethereal intermediate state between bodily death and bodily resurrection when Christ returns. And yet, as we lamented earlier, it seems that the vast majority of Christians do not know this and neglect belief in bodily resurrection in favor of belief in immediate post-mortem heavenly, spiritual existence as ghost-like beings (or even angels!) "forever with the Lord in heaven."<sup>37</sup>

d. The opponents' perversion of Paul's teaching was perhaps fueled by a Greek dualism that elevated spiritual existence over physical existence to such an extent that bodily resurrection was considered absurd. You see that in the intellectual disdain with which the Athenians greeted Paul's claim of resurrection in Acts 17:18, 32. This philosophical outlook became formalized in Christian circles in the second century in the great heresy of Gnosticism, some proponents of which spiritualized the resurrection the same as these heretics did.

e. The effect of this heresy was to overthrow "the faith" of those who swallowed it ("some"), meaning the substance or content of their Christian faith was perverted.<sup>38</sup> The false teaching was causing some to reject a fundamental aspect of apostolic teaching that

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<sup>36</sup> Thornton, 225-226.

<sup>37</sup> *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002) 311, 314.

<sup>38</sup> Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 234. See also, Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 386 ("It is probable that in this verse, *pistis* refers to people's entire understanding of the Christian *alētheia*.").

they had previously accepted. Raymond Collins remarks, "It is the content of the faith that is being upset by such characters as Hymenaeus and Philetus; the focus of Christian belief has been confused and distorted by the likes of Hymenaeus and Philetus. By their false teaching with regard to the resurrection, they have skewed the basic message of the Christian faith."<sup>39</sup>

6. Though false teachers prey on the church and had made inroads in Ephesus ("Nevertheless"), the fact is that God's church, which is how most scholars understand the phrase "God's solid foundation,"<sup>40</sup> stands like a rock. It will not be destroyed. Thornton writes:

[T]he part, "foundation," is put for the whole, "building," and the building refers to the church, which was in 1 Tim 3:15 called "the house of God" (οἶκος θεοῦ... ἣτις ἐστὶν ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζῶντος), and which will be compared to a "great house" (μεγάλη οἰκία) in 2 Tim 2:20-21. The adjective στερεός (Heb 5:12, 14; 1 Pet 5:9) emphasizes the stability of the church in the face of opposition, even the sort of opposition that upsets the faith of some.<sup>41</sup>

7. This solid structure that emphasizes the stability of the church has two sayings that were impressed on it by a seal. Inscriptions on buildings were not made by seals, but here the inscription is described metaphorically as from a seal because seals on documents implied ownership and authenticity.

a. The first saying on this structure representing the church is "The Lord knows those who are his." It is from Num. 16:5 (LXX) where Moses says in response to Korah's rebellion that God is able to discriminate between true and false followers. Here it functions to reassure Timothy and the church that the posers, the false teachers, who have fooled some into thinking they were of God have not fooled God. And his judgment will be based on reality not on human claims and false appearances. There may also be an implication that God will protect his people from such rebels and not allow them to decimate the community.

b. The second saying is "Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness." It may be derived from the LXX of Isa. 26:13 and Num. 16:26-27. It is a reminder that a hallmark of God's people is that they show their allegiance to him by separating themselves from evil, which most immediately includes separating themselves from the false teachers. Thornton states, "As the congregation was to disassociate itself from the dwellings of the wicked party of Korah, so the faithful Christian community in Ephesus is to avoid the profanity of Hymenaeus, Philetus, and the other false teachers in the church who are progressing in ungodliness (2 Tim 2:16)."<sup>42</sup>

B. Illustration about false teachers and call to reject their teaching (2:20-21)

*<sup>20</sup>Now in a large house there are not only golden and silver vessels but also wooden and clay [ones], some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.*

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<sup>39</sup> Collins, 234.

<sup>40</sup> Marshall, 755; see also, Towner, 530; Knight, 415.

<sup>41</sup> Thornton, 227.

<sup>42</sup> Thornton, 230.

*<sup>21</sup>Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honorable use; sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.*

1. The access of false teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus to the Christian community, their presence in "the house" in that sense, leads Paul to compare the situation to a large house which contains two categories of vessels or articles. There are those made of precious materials that are used for noble or exalted purposes, like fine china that is brought out for grand occasions, and there are those made of cheap, everyday materials that are used for ignoble purposes, like a garbage container or bathroom pot.

2. The point is drawn in v. 21. Given that vessels differ in their suitability for use for noble purposes, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, meaning if any Christian rejects or puts off the gangrenous false teaching and its associated ungodliness (2:16),<sup>43</sup> he will be a suitable instrument for use by the Lord in the most noble and exalted of projects. It is a call for vigilance against the threat of the false teaching and repentance by any who have swallowed it.

#### C. Further instructions and goal (2:22-26)

*<sup>22</sup>Flee from youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, [and] peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. <sup>23</sup>But have nothing to do with foolish and ill-informed controversies, knowing that they produce quarrels, <sup>24</sup>and a slave of the Lord must not quarrel but be kind to everyone, skillful at teaching, not resentful, <sup>25</sup>correcting with gentleness those who are adversely affected. Perhaps God will grant them repentance into knowledge of [the] truth, <sup>26</sup>and they may come to their senses from the trap of the devil, having been held captive by him for his will.*

1. Having spoken of the need to steer clear of the false teaching and its associated ungodliness, Paul urges Timothy specifically to flee from youthful passions and to pursue godly living. Some think "youthful passions" refers to "the headstrong enthusiasm of youth which leads into impatience, immature conduct and eagerness for dispute,"<sup>44</sup> but I think Hutson's assessment is more on target: "[T]he reference is clear if we keep in mind that this letter is addressed to a 'young' minister. 'Youthful lusts' reflects the Greco-Roman stereotype of youth as seeking pleasures, not least of which were women and wine [references omitted]. Likewise in Jewish moral instruction, 'youthful inclinations' are sexual (T. Jud. 11.1; cf. T. Reu. 5.5)."<sup>45</sup> Recall that in 1 Tim. 5:2 Paul warned Timothy to maintain his sexual purity when dealing with the younger women.

2. On the positive side, he is to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

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<sup>43</sup> Those understanding "from these" (ἀπὸ τούτων) to refer to the false teaching and associated ungodliness include Fee, 262; Marshall, 762; Johnson, 397-398; Towner, 541-542.

<sup>44</sup> Marshall, 764.

<sup>45</sup> Hutson, 186.

a. In 1 Tim. 6:11 Paul commanded Timothy to pursue, among other things, righteousness, faith, and love. As Köstenberger said regarding that text, "Followers of Christ are to love and do what is right (or, as Jesus put it, 'hunger and thirst for righteousness'; Matt 5:6). They are to cultivate godly character, trust God in all things, love friends and foes alike, and display endurance and gentleness, particularly in dealing with opponents inside and outside the church."<sup>46</sup>

b. Paul here includes "peace" among the things Timothy is to pursue. Towner suggests his doing so is conditioned by two factors in the immediate context. "First, it is an attitude of quiet composure that would have a neutralizing effect on the combative quarreling of the false teachers (vv. 14, 23-24). Second, it corresponds to the disposition of patience and kind concern that is intended to lead the opponent to repentance."<sup>47</sup>

c. Timothy's pursuit of these qualities is not to be done in isolation but as part of a community of Christians who are likewise engaging in the pursuit. Here they are described as those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

3. Timothy is to have nothing to do with the foolish and ill-informed controversies of the false teachers because he knows that engaging with them results in quarreling, in unproductive bickering. The false teachers are hellbent on their error and in their pride will not accept correction even from an apostolic representative. They are immune to persuasion because they have convinced themselves they have greater insight than the apostles and place an impossible burden of proof on anyone who would challenge their claims. They just want to argue and use the platform to fish for recruits.

4. The quarreling that results from engaging in those controversies must be avoided because a slave of the Lord must not quarrel; that is contrary to the will of his Master. Instead, the Christian is to be kind to everyone, skillful at teaching, not resentful, and one who corrects with gentleness "those who are adversely affected," meaning "those who have been 'taken in' by the false teachers."<sup>48</sup> That is to be his *modus operandi*, which is needlessly jeopardized by engaging with the incorrigible false teachers.

a. I think Paul here draws a distinction between the false teachers, who are to be avoided (1 Tim. 4:7, 6:20-21), silenced (1 Tim. 1:3-4), and turned from (1 Tim. 1:20; Tit. 3:9-11; 2 Tim. 3:5), and those who have been 'taken in' by the false teachers so that they now are at odds with the truth but who are not hardened in their rejection of it. The former is to be appealed to through disfellowshipping (1 Tim. 1:20; Tit. 3:9-11; 2 Tim. 3:5), whereas the latter is to be engaged with patient and gentle instruction (presumably until such time as they show themselves to be uncorrectable).

b. The majority of scholars and all standard English translations understand the phrase I have rendered "those who are adversely affected" (*tous antidiatithemenous*) as a middle rather than a passive form and thus translate it as "opponents" or "those who are in opposition,"

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<sup>46</sup> Köstenberger, 192-193.

<sup>47</sup> Towner, 544.

<sup>48</sup> Fee, 265.

which includes the false teachers. I follow Fee (and others) on this point, who says: "Most scholars consider [*antidiatithemenous*] to be a Gk. middle here (thus, 'oppose oneself to' or 'be opposed'). However, if it is passive here, as Bernard argues, it would imply that some had been affected by the opposition of others. On the whole, this latter seems more likely, since Paul uses other words to speak specifically of his opponents (1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 1:9)."<sup>49</sup>

5. As a person serves the Lord faithfully in his manner of teaching, God is at work in and through him. In Paul's words in Phil. 2:13, "it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (see also Heb. 13:21). The one serving faithfully, acting pursuant to and in accordance with the will of God, is functioning as an instrument of God.

a. There is a possibility ("Perhaps") those who have been taken in, adversely influenced, will repent into knowledge of the truth, meaning turn from their error to the truth, at the leading of God through the faithful teaching (manner and content) of his servants. Romans 2:4 speaks of God leading people to repentance. Because of God's active and essential role in bringing about any turn, Paul describes any repentance that may occur as God granting them repentance. It would not have occurred but for God making it possible by presenting the truth winsomely through his faithful servants.

b. The statement in Acts 5:31 about God exalting Christ to "grant repentance" to Israel and in Acts 11:18 about God having "granted repentance" to the Gentiles refer to the *opportunity* for repentance that is presented in the preaching of the gospel, whereas in 2 Tim. 2:25 his granting repentance refers to the person's actual turning. But neither of the uses means that God determined or mandated an individual's response. Indeed, in *Wisdom of Solomon*, a Jewish writing that "was originally written in Greek and probably derives from Alexandria of the first century B.C.E,"<sup>50</sup> it says (12:10) that God granted to Canaan a place of repentance knowing that the Canaanites would never avail themselves of it.

c. It is only a *possibility* these opponents will change their minds precisely because people remain free to resist God's work in leading them to repentance. His "granting them repentance" is not *determining* that they repent, otherwise they all would repent because God desires all people to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

6. Those to whom God grants repentance in this sense, those who respond to his leading through the teaching of his faithful servants, come to their senses regarding the error they had embraced. In so doing, they escape from the trap of the devil who had ensnared them in the error to serve his purposes. God will have delivered them.

#### V. Character of Mankind in the Last Days (3:1-9)

*But know this, that in the last days difficult times will be present. <sup>2</sup>For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive speakers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers,*

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<sup>49</sup> Fee, 267.

<sup>50</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 14.

*without self-control, brutal, not loving the good, <sup>4</sup>betrayers, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup>having a form of godliness but having denied its power. Turn away from these people. <sup>6</sup>For among them are those who worm their way into homes and capture weak women, weighed down with sins and led by various passions, <sup>7</sup>who are always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>8</sup>And just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth, men who have been corrupted in mind and are rejected with respect to the faith. <sup>9</sup>But they will not progress further, for their folly will be plain to everyone, as also the folly of those men became.*

A. Paul emphasizes to Timothy that "the last days" will be marked by hardship and difficulty. It was common Jewish understanding that there would be heightened distress in the days before the End, "birth pains" that would intensify and ultimately give way to the coming of the Messiah and the eternal state.<sup>51</sup> The early church shared that understanding but recognized that the Messiah had already come in the person of Jesus, at which time he inaugurated or initiated the kingdom but did not finalize or consummate it. That would not occur until his return. They understood the time between Christ's first coming and his return to be "the last days" (Acts 2:16-17; Heb. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 Jn. 2:18; Jude 18) and therefore understood that it would be marked by difficulty that would intensify prior to Christ's return. Towner states:

As Luke reported it, Peter identified the beginning of the period "the last days" with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:17). For the writer of Hebrews, "the last days" were aptly characterized by God's sending of the Son (1:2). And in various other ways it becomes clear that the present age of the Spirit (launched by Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection) is in fact "the last days" (1 Cor 10:11; 1 Pet 1:20; 1 John 2:18). Used in this way, the phrase was understood to imply that with Jesus' appearance, the End, marked by divine intervention, had been inaugurated and would culminate in God's final intervention (in the parousia of Christ) to complete salvation and execute judgment.<sup>52</sup>

B. More specifically, "the last days" will be marked by moral breakdown, the presence of all sorts of ungodly people, whom Paul depicts with a lengthy vice list. Vice lists were stereotypical rhetoric in both Jewish and Hellenistic writings of the period that were used to paint a general picture.<sup>53</sup> Köstenberger says of this specific list:

Some expressions relate to attitude, others to the manifestation of inner dispositions in speech or action; but all of them, in one way or another, depict a person's godless self-centeredness. This list as a whole isn't meant to serve as a

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<sup>51</sup> For example, D. A. Carson states in "Matthew" in Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds., *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 9:559-560, "Birth pains' [in Mat. 24:8] . . . stems from such OT passages as Isaiah 13:8; 26:17; Jeremiah 4:31; 6:24; Micah 4:9-10. By this time it was almost a special term for 'the birth pangs of the Messiah,' the period of distress preceding the messianic age (see Str-B, 1:905; 4:977-78; TDNT, 9:667-74; cf. 2 Bar. 27:1-30; b. *Šabb.* 118a; b *Sanh.* 98b)." See also, Fee, 269; Towner, 554.

<sup>52</sup> Towner, 553.

<sup>53</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 403.

comprehensive description of depraved humanity. Rather, the desired rhetorical effect is moral outrage. The list paints a picture of the evil conditions and actions of people in the last days, which are also exhibited by the false teachers in the Ephesian church.<sup>54</sup>

C. The last item in the list (v. 5a) – having a form of godliness but having denied its power – leaves no doubt that the rebellious forces of the last days include those with certain outward appearances of piety, such as the false teachers. Their sinful character reveals they are pretenders, those who are without the transforming power that is available through a genuine relationship with God.

D. Paul commands Timothy to turn away (present tense) from those people, leaving no doubt that "the last days" were already present. He is saying that these people are wolves in sheep's clothing who must be rejected by Timothy and the community of faith. Marshall comments, "they must be kept out of the congregation where they can exercise a bad influence on the others. Some kind of excommunication may be in mind. Indeed, it is difficult to see what else can be meant other than exclusion from fellowship."<sup>55</sup>

E. I think this group is distinct from those in 2:25 regarding whom Paul required patient and gentle instruction. That is part of why I believe *tous antidiatithemenous* in 2:25 is better understood as passive referring to those who were taken in by the false teachers. Towner says of those referred to in 3:5, "the people in view now are probably those who are completely hardened in their opposition – the core of the movement (about to be discussed in 3:6-9) that can no longer be reached."<sup>56</sup>

F. Included among these hardened false teachers are those who gain access to households by manipulation and pretense and then win over women who are vulnerable to exploitation because their sin is weighing down and directing their lives. Because there is no peace of conscience in that state, they are theologically volatile or unstable, always unsatisfied and never able to appreciate and rest in the truth.

G. Paul analogizes these false teachers to Jannes and Jambres, men who in Jewish tradition were notorious opponents of Moses. Perhaps Paul referred to them because of the false teachers' fondness for the OT and Jewish myths.

1. "The names do not occur in the story in Exod 7.8-13, which refers simply to 'the Egyptian magicians' who turned their staffs into snakes, but developed in Jewish tradition."<sup>57</sup> Towner comments, "Paul's purpose is to place the false teachers troubling the Ephesian church into the same category as those who oppose God's work and who will consequently never succeed, and more implicitly to establish the connection between Moses' authority as YHWH's specially appointed servant and his own apostolic ministry (just as in 2:18-19)."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Köstenberger, 256.

<sup>55</sup> Marshall, 776.

<sup>56</sup> Towner, 561.

<sup>57</sup> Marshall, 778.

<sup>58</sup> Towner, 564.



2. The false teachers are corrupted in mind and rejected with respect to the faith, meaning their faith has been found unfit, not genuine. As God's working exposed the error of Moses' opponents, the error of the false teachers will eventually be plain to all.

## VI. Stay the Course (3:10-17)

*<sup>10</sup>But you have followed my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance <sup>11</sup>in the persecutions and sufferings such as happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, what kinds of persecutions I endured, and the Lord delivered me out of them all. <sup>12</sup>And indeed, all who desire to live in a godly manner in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. <sup>13</sup>But evil people and impostors will progress [from bad] to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup>But you continue in what you learned and became convinced of, knowing [those] from whom you learned <sup>15</sup>and that from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be proficient, having been equipped for every good work.*

A. In contrast to the false teachers, Timothy had "followed" various aspects and qualities of Paul's life and things he had experienced, meaning he knew them well enough that they could function as examples. Timothy was well aware of what Paul taught, how he lived, the purpose of his life, the genuineness of his faith, the patience with which he met circumstances and disappointment, and the depth of his love for the saints and the lost.

B. The last item Paul lists is his endurance of persecutions and sufferings, which he expands on because of its relevance to Timothy. Timothy knows how Paul endured persecutions and sufferings such as what he went through in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, which included being stoned and left for dead. These episodes of persecution are recorded in Acts 13:45, 50; 14:1-7, 19. Knight comments

These towns were in the area from which Timothy came, and Timothy was aware of these episodes when he agreed to join Paul in the ministry (Acts 16:1-6). Paul mentions these earliest persecutions rather than later ones, probably because he wants to remind Timothy of his commitment to the apostle and his ministry from the very beginning and that from the very beginning the ministry has involved persecutions.<sup>59</sup>

C. Having pointed to Timothy's knowledge of his endurance in persecutions and sufferings in the examples of his early persecutions, Paul broadens the scope of Timothy's knowledge with the clause "what kinds of persecutions I endured." Then he declares that the Lord delivered him out of them all. The point is that the Lord is sovereign, in control of every situation, and that he will deliver his faithful servant, whether in this life as in the past

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<sup>59</sup> Knight, 440.

deliverances or in the next as contemplated in 4:16-18. Deliverance is sure because of who he is, which is a source of encouragement and peace, only its form may vary.

D. Paul notes that persecution is not restricted to Christian leaders but is the expectation of all genuine disciples, all who, unlike the false teachers, desire to live in a godly manner in Christ Jesus. Opposition, hostility, discrimination, abuse, and even violence come with varying degrees because this world is in rebellion to the Lord Jesus. As he put it in Jn 15:18-19: *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. <sup>19</sup> If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.* Serving Jesus faithfully accentuates and challenges that rebellion and thus intensifies and draws the world's ire.

E. Evil people and posers, on the other hand, face no such opposition or resistance. They fit in this fallen world. It is their comfort zone, a place largely of kindred spirits. The reference to "impostors" and their "deceiving and being deceived" shows the false teachers are in the foreground.

F. Turning back to Timothy specifically, he urges him to steadfastness in the things he learned, not to be swayed from them.

1. He is to do so knowing the knowledge, character, and trustworthiness of those who taught him, being confident that they had committed to him the truth of God. This would include his mother, grandmother, Paul, and the elders.

2. He is also to do so knowing that from infancy he was taught the holy writings, the Jewish Scriptures, which confirm or validate the truth of what he had been taught, as those scriptures point to the truth of the gospel. That is what he means in saying they are able to make one wise for salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

G. Having referred to the holy writings in which Timothy was steeped, Paul reflects on their divine character.

1. He declares that all Scripture is "God-breathed," meaning it is from God, produced by him. As Peter says in 2 Pet. 1:19-20: *<sup>19</sup>And we have the wholly reliable prophetic word, to which you do well in paying attention as to a light shining in a dark place, until [the] day dawns and [the] morning star rises in your hearts, <sup>20</sup>knowing this first [of all] that no prophecy of scripture is [a matter] of one's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For no prophecy ever was brought by [the] will of man; rather, men being moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

2. These divine writings are useful for teaching, rebuke, correction, and training in righteousness precisely because they are divine in origin. Scripture is the word of God, the revelation of truth.

3. A consequence or result of the fact Scripture is God-breathed and thus useful for teaching and correcting is that the "man of God" may be proficient or capable, meaning able to meet the demands of his calling.

a. Though the phrase "man/person of God" can refer to believers generally, I am with those who think that in this context it refers (at least in the first instance) to Christian leaders like Timothy.<sup>60</sup> Yarbrough states, "The phrase [man of God] is used over sixty times in the LXX to refer to figures including Moses, Samuel, Shemaiah, Elijah, Elisha, several unnamed prophets, and David. Like Timothy, these men were called to leadership through prophetic gifting (see 2 Tim 1:6; also 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14)."<sup>61</sup> The only other time the phrase is used in the NT (1 Tim. 6:11) it refers to Timothy.

b. The Scriptures are useful for teaching, rebuke, correction, and training in righteousness, as a result of which the "man of God," the Christian leader, may be capable, able to meet the demands of his role, because those Scriptures equip him for the task. They are crucial for Timothy in fulfilling his responsibility to teach the truth and to oppose error. Holy Scripture is the standard to be employed in those tasks, which today, of course, includes the complete canon of new-covenant Scripture.

c. It follows from the utility of Scripture for Christian leaders that knowledge of Scripture is spiritually beneficial for all Christians. We live in a time of unparalleled access and should take advantage of it for our spiritual strengthening and growth.

## VII. Final Charge (4:1-5)

*I charge [you] before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup>preach the word; be ready in season [and] out of season; correct, rebuke, and exhort, with all patience and instruction. <sup>3</sup>For there will be a time when they will not put up with sound teaching, but in accordance with their own desires, they will accumulate teachers for themselves to satisfy their itching ears. <sup>4</sup>They will turn their ears away from the truth and will turn to the myths. <sup>5</sup>But you be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill [the duties of] your ministry.*

A. Paul heightens the gravity of his charge to Timothy by declaring it is laid on him in the presence of God and Christ Jesus. He emphasizes that they are witnesses to the charge and thus fully aware of Timothy's responsibility under it.

B. He adds that Christ Jesus, before whom the charge is issued, is going to judge all humanity, both those alive at his return and those who died before it (Acts 10:42; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Pet. 4:5). Paul states this fact as added motivation for Timothy to faithfully discharge the responsibility laid on him.

### [Note on "the Judge" in the Gospel of John](#)

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<sup>60</sup> See, e.g., J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles: Timothy I and II, and Titus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1960), 204; Fee, 280; Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 764; Johnson, 421; Towner, 592-593; Yarbrough, 432; Hutson, 195.

<sup>61</sup> Yarbrough, 432.

The identity of "the Judge" in the Gospel of John is complex and confusing but ultimately coherent. The solution lies in the different aspects of Christ's two comings and in his relationship with the Father.

Jesus' first coming was not the final judgment but rather was a rescue mission. The purpose and intent were not to condemn but to save. Yet, inherent in that rescue mission is the condemnation of all who reject the way of salvation, all who refuse to trust in Jesus as he is revealed in the gospel. Jesus is the criterion of salvation and conversely the criterion of God's judgment. God will judge the world *by Christ Jesus* (e.g., Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16). Jesus is the separator; people are saved or condemned based on their response to him. In executing the judgment of the Father at his second coming, based on the criterion of faith in him, there is a sense in which Jesus is judging (Jn. 5:22; Acts 10:42) – he is carrying out the judgment – but there is also a sense in which the judging is not his but the Father's because it is pursuant to the Father's will (Jn. 5:30). So Paul says in Rom. 14:10 that we will all stand before the judgment seat of God and in 2 Cor. 5:10 that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. I think that framework can account for Jn. 3:17-19; 5:22-32; 8:15-16, 26, 50; 9:39; 12:47-49.

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C. And he issues the charge in view of "his [Christ's] appearing and his kingdom." When Jesus returns, appears again, the kingdom he inaugurated at his first coming will be consummated or finalized. That is the time of the judgment just mentioned and the ushering in of the glorious eternal state in which all who trust in Christ will share. This future is to be added motivation for faithfulness. Marshall comments, "The fact that Christ will come and rule adds weight to the admonition. ἐπιφάνεια here refers clearly to the future parousia of Christ (1 Tim 6.14 note; see Pax 1955:236-8)."<sup>62</sup>

D. Timothy is commanded to "preach the word," meaning the Christian message, the word that has come from God through the apostles and the Jewish Scriptures. The gospel needs to be proclaimed in the world to draw the lost and in the church to edify the saints.

E. And Timothy is to be ready to do so in season and out of season, meaning when people are open to the word, as they are to produce in its season, and when they are not. He is to speak the truth of God to those who receive it gladly and to those who resist it because, being the truth, it is needed by all, even those who think otherwise.

F. He is to correct the erring by exposing their error with the truth. He is to rebuke those who resist correction. And he is to exhort everyone to follow in the steps of Christ. In doing all of this, he is to exhibit extraordinary patience with the ignorant, erring, and even the resistant (as distinct from hardened rebels like the false teachers) as he seeks to enlighten them about the truth of God.

G. The charge to Timothy to be ready to preach out of season and patiently to correct, rebuke, and exhort is especially needed because Paul recognizes that the openness to new, unorthodox teachings that was already being manifested in Ephesus was going to get worse. That was not the bottom. Consistent with the nature of the last days, people were going to become

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<sup>62</sup> Marshall, 799.

more spiritually promiscuous, gravitating toward teachers who would say what they wanted to hear, who would sanctify their desires. Holding people to the truth was going to become even more difficult and stressful.

H. But however difficult the situation becomes, whether in Ephesus or elsewhere, Timothy is to be sober in all things, to endure hardship, to do the work of an evangelist, and to fulfill [the duties of] his ministry.

1. He is to be sober in the figurative sense of being alert to his circumstances and controlled in his conduct and speech. He must be clear-minded and "on his game" as we might say because it is serious business.

2. He must endure hardship. The nature and intensity of hardship waxes and wanes through time and cultures, but it comes with the territory, especially for a Christian leader and especially in the first century.

3. He is to do "the work of an evangelist."

a. The Greek word translated "gospel" is *euangelion*. The word translated "evangelist" is *euangelistēs*, meaning a proclaimer of the gospel. "Evangelist" most likely refers to one who spread the foundational message of the apostles and prophets to new territories. That seems to be the case with Philip (called "the evangelist" in Acts 21:8) in Acts 8:26-40. Citing Eusebius, Harold Hoehner states, "In the early church it was thought that the evangelists were those who preached the gospel and were the successors to the apostles in that they laid the foundations of the faith in new areas, appointed shepherds, and then moved to other lands and people."<sup>63</sup>

b. But evangelists did not simply preach to non-Christians. They established churches, which involved them in conforming converts to the ethics of the gospel, calling them to a life that is grounded in the message about Christ. D. A. Carson writes:

In short, in the NT the gospel is preached both to unbelievers and to believers. It calls unbelievers to repentance and faith; it calls believers to ongoing faith and conformity to Jesus.

In other words, gospel ministry includes but is not restricted to what we commonly call evangelistic ministry (note the two words, *gospel* and *evangelistic*, making the discussion confusing). Gospel ministry is ministry that is faithful to the gospel, that announces the gospel and applies the gospel and encourages people to believe the gospel and thus live out the gospel. If this is so, then why should "Do the work of a gospeller" mean something more restricted, like "Do that part of gospel work that addresses unbelievers (i.e., that to which we sometimes restrict 'gospel ministry,' calling it 'evangelism')?"<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 543.

<sup>64</sup> D. A. Carson, "Do the Work of an Evangelist," *Themelios* 39 (April 2014), 3.

c. So in commanding Timothy to do "the work of an evangelist," Paul is not using evangelist in our narrow sense. He means evangelist in the broader sense that includes presenting the gospel as a means of protecting the faith and transforming the lives of disciples.

4. He is to fulfill the duties of his ministry. This involves him doing what Paul has just commanded and anything in addition that his role as a servant of Christ may require of him.

## VIII. Paul's Final Testimony (4:6-8)

*<sup>6</sup>For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has arrived. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>Now there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

A. The need for Timothy to do all that is required of him as a servant of Christ is magnified by the fact ("For") Paul will not be around much longer.

1. He says he is already being poured out as a drink offering. This refers to the Jewish worship ritual of pouring out a drink offering of wine at the foot of the altar as a preliminary to the daily offering in the Temple and as part of certain sacrifices (drink offering – e.g., Ex 29:40, Num 28:7). It refers to the fact his life was being given up for God.

2. The word translated "departure" referred to a ship being loosed from its moorings and had become a picturesque euphemism for death. Paul will soon depart the shores of this life, but he speaks of it with great serenity and confidence. That is all the more impressive knowing that he faced execution under Nero.

B. He reveals in v. 7 that his peace and confidence in the face of death is based in part on the fact he had remained faithful to the end. Through all the blood, sweat, and tears, Paul had never abandoned the commitment he made to trust in the blood of Jesus and follow him as his Lord. There is a difference between sinlessness and faithfulness. Paul could say he had "kept the faith."

1. The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. It must be run to the end. As the writer of Hebrews warned in Heb. 3:12-14: *Watch out, brothers, lest there will be in some of you an evil, unbelieving heart resulting in falling away from the living God, <sup>13</sup>but encourage one another every day, so long as it is called "today," so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup>For we have become sharers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of [our] confidence, firm till the end.* This should not surprise us. Think of how it would be if a husband or wife was not faithful until the end. Would the other be inclined to say, "That's all right dear; you were faithful for many years."

2. The Christian life is not only a marathon; it is also a fight. In this high-tech age, 1 Pet. 5:8b is still true: "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." One who will not fight the fight – who thinks he can remain faithful

without awareness of and conscious resistance to the pull, without the spiritual disciplines of study and prayer, and apart from the fellowship of the church – has already lost.

C. Paul reveals in v. 8 the reason why having remained faithful to the end is so important for his peace and confidence in the face of death. It is because he knows what God has prepared for those who remain faithful to the end.

1. The "crown of righteousness" that the Lord will bestow on the day of judgment, the day of his return, refers not to a crown that consists of righteousness, not to a bestowal of righteousness at that time. Rather, it represents the divine blessing that will be given on that day to those on whom righteousness *has been* bestowed through faith and not forfeited by abandonment of the faith. Johnson renders the phrase, "the crown given to the righteous." He comments, "The contest has been about keeping the faith, and the wreath is awarded to those who have been righteous by faith."<sup>65</sup>

2. The crown, the reward, that God has in store for those who have lived faithfully to the end is eternal life. Paul says in Gal. 6:8-9, *For the one who sows to his own flesh, from the flesh shall reap destruction, but the one who sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life.* <sup>9</sup>*So let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we shall reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

3. Even more specifically, Paul is referring to the realizing of eternal life in the resurrection from the dead. He says this crown will be awarded on "that day," which as the rest of the verse implies, is the day of Christ's appearing. Dead people are coming back to life when Jesus returns (e.g., 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Jn. 5:24-29).

4. For Paul the resurrection was not some minor topic to be given the "once over lightly treatment" every Easter. It was foundational to his life and mission. He lived his life in anticipation of the resurrection and received great strength from his confidence in it (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:50-58). As Alan Gomes observes, "The resurrection of the body – both Christ's and ours – is a foundational teaching of Christianity and central to the Christian's "blessed hope."<sup>66</sup>

a. In Acts 23:6 Paul tells the Sanhedrin that he was on trial because of his "hope in the resurrection of the dead." Acts 24:15 he says to Felix that his hope in God is "that there will be a resurrection." In Acts 26:4-8 he tells Agrippa that he is on trial for his hope in what God had promised his fathers and then specifies what he means by asking, "Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?"

b. He goes so far in 1 Cor. 15:19 to say that if there is no resurrection and our hope in Christ is limited to this life, "we are to be pitied more than all men." We are seeing in Paul's confidence in the face of death a living example of the truth stated in Heb. 2:14-15: Christ shared in our humanity so that by his death he might "free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

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<sup>65</sup> Johnson, 432.

<sup>66</sup> Alan W. Gomes, *40 Questions About Heaven and Hell* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018), 175.

D. He adds that this blessing for the faithful represented by the crown, this eternal resurrection life, is not only for him but for *all* who have been faithful (all who have loved or longed for Christ's appearing). Towner states, "[T]he description characterizes those believers who will, like Paul, qualify to receive the reward as people whose lives have been marked by a determined and expectant look forward to the parousia and the consummation of the victory of God (Titus 2:13; Rom 8:23-25; Phil. 3:20)."<sup>67</sup>

## IX. Personal Instructions and Remarks (4:9-18)

### A. Personal instructions (4:9-13)

*<sup>9</sup>Do your best to come to me soon, <sup>10</sup>for Demas, because he loved the present age, deserted me and went to Thessalonica. Crescens went to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup>Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me in the ministry. <sup>12</sup>But I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. <sup>13</sup>When you come, bring the cloak that I left in Troas with Carpus, and the scrolls, that is, the parchments.*

1. Knowing that his days are numbered, Paul tells Timothy to do his best to come to him soon because Demas's desertion of him had left him in acute need of ministry assistants. He intends to labor effectively as long as he has life.

a. Demas was with Paul in Rome during his first incarceration there. He is identified in Phlm. 24 as one of Paul's fellow workers and in that capacity is included among those sending greetings in Col. 4:14.

b. Paul says Demas had not simply departed but that he had deserted or abandoned him because he loved the present age, in contrast to having loved Christ's appearing (v. 8), the age to come. In other words, he had acted based on a misjudgment of what is really important and left Paul in the lurch so to speak. That need not mean he was an apostate, one who abandoned his faith in Christ. He may simply have succumbed in that instance to the pull of the world having fooled himself into believing his action was justified. Paul knows otherwise.

c. Demas went to Thessalonica. That was possibly his hometown. Aristarchus was from Thessalonica (Acts 20:4, 27:2), and Demas is mentioned right after him in Phlm. 24.

2. Crescens and Titus were not available to assist Paul because they had gone to Galatia and Dalmatia, respectively. They presumably were on mission business, as Paul does not refer to their absence as a desertion, but they nevertheless were absent. Dalmatia refers to the southwest part of the province of Illyricum.

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<sup>67</sup> Towner, 617.



3. The only ministry assistant, team member, who is presently with him is Luke. He was associated with Paul's earlier incarceration in Rome in Col. 4:14, where he is called the beloved physician, and Phlm. 24, where he is called a fellow worker.

4. He tells Timothy to bring Mark with him because he is useful to him in the ministry. This is John Mark who left Paul and Barnabas during Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:5, 13), as a result of which Paul did not want to take him on his next missionary journey (Acts 15:37-40). But Mark proved over time to be a faithful worker, and he was with Paul during his first Roman incarceration (Phlm. 24; see also, 1 Pet. 5:13).

5. He tells Timothy that he sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

a. This brother "accompanied Paul to Jerusalem on his last journey in Acts and was the messenger who took Col and Eph; he or Artemas was to be sent to Titus in Crete. [I sent] may be an epistolary aorist (Jeremias, 65); if so, Tychicus would be the bearer of 2 Tim and intended to replace Timothy at Ephesus during his absence."<sup>68</sup>

b. But if Timothy is still in Ephesus, as I think likely, and if this is an epistolary aorist, meaning Tychicus is carrying the letter, the addition of "to Ephesus" is odd. The city of his destination would go without saying. Marshall states, "It is perhaps more probable that the aor. is not epistolary and that Tychicus has been dispatched on a journey that will take him longer than the bearer of the letter [2 Timothy] to reach Ephesus."<sup>69</sup> In that event, he is letting Timothy know that Tychicus will be following soon presumably to free him to come to Paul.

6. He tells Timothy to bring the cloak he left in Troas with Carpus and the scrolls, especially or namely (*malista*) the parchments. The cloak was a heavy outer garment, like a poncho, which Paul no doubt wanted should he be alive during the approaching winter. Whether the scrolls for which he is asking are more specifically described as the parchments or whether the parchments are a subset of the scrolls for which he is asking depends on how one understands *malista*. We do not know the contents of these documents, but they could have included portions of OT Scriptures and Paul's own notes, writings, and records.

#### B. Remarks (4:14-18)

<sup>14</sup>*Alexander the metalworker did much harm to me. The Lord will repay him according to his deeds.* <sup>15</sup>*You also be on guard against him, for he greatly opposed our words.*

<sup>16</sup>*At my first defense, no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them.* <sup>17</sup>*But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me so that the proclamation might be fully accomplished through me and all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.* <sup>18</sup>*The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever, amen.*

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<sup>68</sup> Marshall, 818.

<sup>69</sup> Marshall, 717.

1. An Alexander was mentioned, with Hymenaeus, in 1 Tim. 1:20, where Paul says they had been disfellowshipped on his authority, handed over to Satan. It is uncertain if this is the same Alexander. He possibly is located in Troas, which would explain why Paul warns Timothy about him after instructing him to bring him materials from Troas. It is also possible this Alexander was responsible for Paul's current imprisonment, having incited the authorities in Troas against him. He warns Timothy about him and rests in the fact God will address Alexander's wrongdoing with perfect justice.

2. The "first defense" to which Paul refers is understood by most to be the defense he made at a kind of preliminary hearing, known in Roman law as the *prima actio*, that was designed to determine whether sufficient grounds existed for a trial (*secunda actio*). All those who were available and could have supported Paul's defense, perhaps including Demas, abandoned him, but Paul understands the pressure of the situation and the weakness of his brothers and sisters. He is not bitter; rather, he asks that God not count it against them, that they may find mercy for their failure. Luke, who is now with him (4:11), presumably was absent at that particular time.

3. Paul describes the empowering presence of the Lord which enabled him to preach the gospel in that hostile and dangerous setting in the center of the Gentile world. This event was a kind of period at the end of his decades of apostolic labor. Towner remarks, "Now by witnessing faithfully in the Roman courtroom he could claim to have fulfilled his mission to the Gentiles. . . . [T]his is a symbolic statement rooted in the significance of 'Rome' within the Pauline missiological perspective."<sup>70</sup>

4. He was "delivered from the lion's mouth" on that occasion, spared from death, presumably by receiving, for whatever reason, a delay of the trial that he knows will result in his death sentence. That handwriting was on the wall, but in the delay he was given additional time to serve the Lord, which he intends to do with Timothy's assistance and the scrolls he hopes to receive.

5. He declares that the Lord will deliver him from every evil attack, not meaning the Lord will prevent him from being executed – he knows that is coming – but that he will deliver him ultimately by bringing him into his heavenly kingdom. Köstenberger comments:

Earthly kings or emperors may persecute him, but the apostle knows that his eternal destiny is secure (cf. 1 Thess 4:13-18). As he waits for Timothy during a presumable delay in legal proceedings, Paul reaffirms that his entire life and ministry are devoted to the glory of Christ (cf. v. 18): "To him be the glory forever and ever! Amen" (a standard doxology: cf. 1 Tim 1:17; 6:15; Rom 9:5; Phil 4:20).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Towner, 644.

<sup>71</sup> Köstenberger, 285.

## X. Final Remarks and Greetings (4:19-22)

<sup>19</sup>*Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus.* <sup>20</sup>*Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus ill in Miletus.* <sup>21</sup>*Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as do Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers.*

<sup>22</sup>*The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*

### A. Knight says of Priscilla and Aquila:

[They] were the wife and husband team that befriended Paul in Corinth, whom he stayed with, and who worked with him as tentmakers (Acts 18:2-3). Aquila was a Jew and a native of Pontus (18:2). They accompanied Paul to Ephesus and remained there when he went on to Caesarea (18:18-22). Their Christian commitment and understanding was evidenced as they shared "the way of God more accurately" with Apollos (18:26). . . . Paul calls them "my fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 16:3) and mentions the church "in their house" (1 Cor. 16:19).<sup>72</sup>

B. All we know about Onesiphorus is from 2 Tim. 1:16-18. Paul there mentioned both Onesiphorus and his household, and here he mentions only his household. Presumably Onesiphorus was at the time away from Ephesus so Paul speaks of them separately.

### C. Knight says of Erastus:

The [Erastus] mentioned in Acts 19:22, like the one mentioned here, is a coworker of Paul and is associated with Ephesus and with Timothy. Therefore, it is almost certain that they are the same person. It is also possible that the Erastus mentioned in Rom. 16:23, "the city treasurer of Corinth," is the same person, especially since Paul's comment here about this Erastus that he "remained in Corinth."<sup>73</sup>

D. Trophimus was an Ephesian (Acts 21:29). Paul apparently was with Trophimus in Miletus, perhaps on his way back to Rome, and left him there because he was ill. He may be telling or reminding Timothy of this to explain why Trophimus is not with him in Rome in this difficult time and suggesting that Timothy check on him when he comes to Rome.<sup>74</sup> Whatever the reason that Paul did not heal Trophimus, it is clear that it is not always God's will to heal sickness in this present life.<sup>75</sup>

E. Paul instructs Timothy to do his best to come to him before winter can disrupt his travel. He gives greetings from three men and one woman (Claudia), all of whom are otherwise unknown in the NT. Because Luke was the only worker with him (4:11), these brothers and sister

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<sup>72</sup> Knight, 475.

<sup>73</sup> Knight, 476.

<sup>74</sup> Towner, 653.

<sup>75</sup> See my short paper [Christians and Sickness in the Present Age](#).

probably are members of the church in Rome but not part of Paul's mission team. He adds that the other Christians in Rome also greet them.

F. In closing Paul wishes for the Lord to be with Timothy as he has been so powerfully with him. And he prays for God's grace to be on the entire church (you is plural).