

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Bible Survey Lesson 81: The Book of 2 Timothy

Introduction:

Many of us are intrigued by the last words of famous people. In fact, we have added that concept to our daily vocabulary. When someone says something we consider daring or chancy, we often say, "famous last words."

People even collect them and some are humorous, some poignant:

A murderer named James French went to the electric chair in 1966. His last words to assembled reporters were *"How about this for a headline? French fries."*

General John Sedgwick was a commander in the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War. While inspecting his troops at the battle of Fort Wilderness he approached a parapet and peered out over the surrounding countryside. His officers urged him to take cover from the small arms fire. Sedgwick scoffed at them, *"What! This will never do, dodging from single bullets! They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist..."* He was shot in the head by a Confederate sharp shooter.

When Joan of Arc was burned at the stake as a heretic in Rouen, France her last words were, *"Hold the cross high so I may see it through the flames!"*

This noble report is in contrast to Saint Lawrence, who when being tied face down over burning coals for refusing to give valuable church relics to the government, said, *"Turn me, I am roasted on that side."*

One of my favorites is the last statement from a man named Wilson Mizner, a writer, who briefly regained consciousness before dying and found a priest standing over him. He waved the priest away saying, *"Why should I talk to you? I've just been talking to your boss."*

When notable men or women of influence die, many wait to hear the report of their last words of insight and wisdom. Sometimes these words are repeated world wide by various media.

One of the most knowledgeable, influential, and loved men in history was the Apostle Paul. Here was a man who covered most of the known world with the Gospel, planted churches in more than thirty major population areas, reached thousands of people for Christ, and left a lasting influence on the world.

The second letter to Timothy contains the last known words of Paul. It is intense, moving, intimate, personal, and important. We need to study it!

Background:

We have studied Paul extensively both in our introduction to the epistles and in the introduction to each letter. We reviewed the relationship between Paul and Timothy and the historical setting of these letters in our study of 1 Timothy. So, we have little need for a long review.

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Paul was released after his house arrest in Rome in AD. 60-62, and traveled to a number of churches. While in Macedonia, he wrote letters to the pastor he had appointed to the church at Ephesus, Timothy, and to his man working in Dalmatia (modern Turkey), Titus.

He was rearrested in Greece or Asia Minor and returned directly to Rome to stand trial as an enemy of the state. While in prison he wrote this last recorded letter to his "dear son," Timothy. Let's set the scene:

1. Paul was in prison.

Some would say that this is the only true Prison Epistle. Unlike his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul was not in rented quarters, under house arrest, and free to interact with his guards, neighbors and visitors (Acts 28).

This time he was in a real Roman prison, most likely the Mamertime Dungeon, which was called the "Well Dungeon" because it was deep underground and very damp. This was a part of the infamous Tallianium, known as "the sepulcher" because many of its prisoners died often killed by rats.

Paul was alone. Paul could have visitors, but, since this was the period of the most intense persecution that Christians had yet seen, virtually everyone deserted him and no one was about to visit. (1:15; 4:9-12, 16)

Paul was in chains. Prisoners in the dungeons were always chained, and that, combined with lack of light, furniture, and writing materials made it extremely difficult to do what Paul did best, communicate. (1:16; 2:9 NIV)

Paul was cold and needy. Paul was lacking his cloak for protection from the cold, damp cell, and he had been taken prisoner without time to gather his "books," probably papyrus rolls of current correspondence and the Apostle teaching," and "parchments," most likely Paul's personal copies of the Old Testament Scriptures. Without these he felt lost. (4:13)

2. Paul was facing death.

During the Emperor Nero's great campaign to obliterate Christianity which began in AD. 64, Paul was arrested, tried and convicted of being an enemy of the state. Paul's position was terminal. There was no hope of deliverance, he would soon be executed, and he knew it. (14:6-9)

He was beheaded on the Ostian Way, west of Rome in AD. 67.

3. Paul wrote one last letter.

Paul wrote to his "*beloved son*," Timothy to insure that he would carry on in Paul's footsteps. Many scholars believe that Paul had reason to fear that Timothy was not strong enough spiritually to carry on the work as Paul had, especially under growing persecution. They see evidence of this in Paul's exhortation to "stir up" his gift (1:6), replace fear with love, power, and a sound mind 1:7, to hold on to the truth (1:13,14), etc.

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(See example in *The MacArthur Study Bible introduction to 2 Timothy.*)

Paul instructs Timothy to:

1. Persevere in courage and faith.
2. Withstand false doctrine.
3. Choose faithful men for ministry.
4. Come to Rome and bring Mark with him.

Historic church documents disagree as to whether he made it to Rome or not, but, most indicate he did. Imagine how Timothy reacted when he received the letter. He must have read the letter over and over, studying each and every word. This is his last letter from his spiritual father, his mentor, and his co-worker.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF II TIMOTHY

I. PERSEVERANCE (Chapter 1)

Paul, who referred to Timothy as *"my true child in the faith"* in I Timothy now greets him, in II Timothy, as *"my beloved son."* This section is a call to loyalty, courage, and perseverance in the midst of increasing persecution.

A. Encouragement (1-5)

The first words of encouragement to Timothy take the form of a reminder. Timothy has a great heritage of faith passed on by his mother Lois and grandmother Eunice, and great ministry memories.

B. Exhortation (6-11)

Paul reminds Timothy that he is gifted by God, and urges him to re-light that gift. Gifts are not given fully developed; they need to be strengthened, developed, and matured through work and use. He has no excuse because *"God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline."* (v. 7)

In light of that divine giftedness, Paul wants him to testify by word and action, even by suffering if necessary, to salvation by God's sovereign grace. And, considering that great grace gift, which he presents it so well in verses 9 and 10, he need not be ashamed of the Lord or of Paul.

C. Examples (12-18)

Two examples of great boldness and perseverance were:

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1. Paul (12-15)

Paul was willing to suffer because his faith was founded on his relationship with Jesus instead of people, things or circumstances. *"for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day"* (v. 12).

This faith is so strong that he can remain faithful to Jesus even when *"all who are in Asia turned away from me."* including two very close friends, probably co-workers.

2. Onesiphorus (16-18)

He was not only not ashamed of Paul, he had the guts to search for Paul and found him in the Roman prison as great risk to himself. Paul was not at all surprised, since he had served so faithfully with Timothy in Ephesus, as city of not small animosity toward Christians.

It is always hard for us to understand why God's faithful servants suffer, but for Paul it was not just bearable, it was a privilege to believe *"but also to suffer for His sake"* (Philippians 1:29).

II. PATTERNS (Chapter 2)

In this section Paul presents Timothy with a list of positive patterns to follow in his ministry:

A. Paul (1-2)

In 1 Cor. 4:16 Paul, while discussing ministry under persecution said, *"I exhort you therefore, to be imitators of me."* Here he tells Timothy to do as he has done and pass disciple other men: *"...the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."*

Be strong and reproduce!

B. Soldier (3-4)

"No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."

Be single-minded and focused!

C. Athlete (5)

"...he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules."

Be disciplined and honest!

D. Farmer (6-7)

"The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops."

Be hard working and fruitful!

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E. Jesus (8-13)

The supreme model for Timothy is Jesus himself. He is all of the above, and encompasses all yet to be discussed. He is the one who brought salvation and eternal glory through His redemptive work. And we identify with Him: *"For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; If we endure, we shall also reign with Him;"* (vv. 11-12). When we persevere we give evidence of the genuineness of our faith.

Be faithful and endure!

F. Worker (14-19)

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth." (v 15) To counteract false teachers it is necessary to "cut the word straight," a phrase which came out of the building trade where every cut was essential for a stable building.

Be careful and accurate!

G. Vessel (20-23)

Whether a person is in a public or prominent ministry (gold or silver vessel), or a private or seemingly less important ministry (wood and earthenware), he needs to be clean inside and avoid sin.

Be set apart and clean!

H. Servant (24-26)

The Lord's bondservant (voluntary servant) must have a patient and gentle heart when correcting an opponent so that *"God may grant them a change of heart"* and they may be delivered.

Be patient and have a servant spirit!

III. PERILS (Chapter 3)

Webster's definition of apostasy is. "total desertion of principles of faith."

Apostasy is not error due to ignorance; it is deliberate heresy, an intentional departure from the faith. An apostate is one who knows the truth of the Gospel (*"holding a form of Godliness"*) and yet they choose to allow it to have an affect on their lives (*"they have denied its power"*).

A. Apostasy (1-9)

What is the final outcome of Gospel-preaching? Not the total conversion of mankind, as some believe, and not the ushering in of the Millennium. Quite the contrary--there will come about an apostasy that will virtually wipe out faith on the earth. In these "last days," that period between the writing of this letter and the Lord's return to earth, evil will intensify.

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In verses 2 through 4 Paul listed almost twenty different vices that will continue and increasingly characterize people. They describe people who place self in the place of God, the center of their universe and affections.

B. Orthodoxy (10-17)

What is the only hope to combat the flood-tide of apostasy that is rising more and more? The following and teaching of the truth.

Timothy will stand if he:

1. Follows the teaching and example of Paul (10-13).
2. Follows the training he received in his youth (14--15).
3. Follows the truth of the "God breathed Scriptures" (16-17).

IV. PREACHING (Chapter 4)

Paul's grand finale is to stress the need, once more, to preach the Word.

A. Faithfulness (1-5)

Preach the Word faithfully, "*in season and out of season,*" whether the time for preaching seems right or not to you (v 2). Preach faithfully whether people seem to be listening or not (vv 3-4). Why? Because Timothy is an evangelist and needs to fulfill his ministry.

B. Finish (6-22)

Paul sees his life as a great success as he comes to his execution. He reviews three aspects of that success:

1. A Great Finish

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." (v 7)

2. A Great Future

"In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on the day; AND NOT ONLY TO ME, BUT ALSO TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE LOVED HIS APPEARING." (v 8)

3. Great Friends

True friends become obvious in times of crisis. Some deserted Paul, some opposed him, some went out to minister according to his assignment, and some like Eubulu, Prudens, Linus, Claudia, Luke, Timothy, and Mark were faithful to the end.

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Lessons:

1. Our spiritual heritage is important.
2. Jesus Christ has been revealed, destroyed death, and given us eternal life. (1:8-10)
3. We should live boldly, since we have received "*a spirit of power and love and discipline.*" (1:7)
4. God's truth about salvation and holy living is available in the inspired Scripture. (3:15-17)
5. We need to pass on these truths to faithful men and women who can, in turn pass them on to others.