

# Through the Bible Book by Book

## New Testament

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### SECOND TIMOTHY

#### **Theme:**

After Paul had left Titus at Crete, he sailed north intending to pass on to Nicopolis by the way of Troas and Macedonia (Titus 3:12). Trophimus, his traveling companion, fell sick on the voyage, and was left at Miletus (II Timothy 4:20).

Sailing to Troas the apostle stayed in the house of one named Carpus. About that time persecution arose against the Christians, instigated by the emperor Nero, who accused them of burning Rome. Paul, the acknowledged leader of the Christians, was probably arrested at Troas, and so sudden must his arrest have been, that some of his belongings were left behind (II Timothy 4:13).

On arriving at Rome, the apostle was placed in close confinement. Knowing that his martyrdom was approaching, he wrote this, his last letter to Timothy, begging the latter to visit him. Paul was sorely in need of his son in the faith, for those in Asia who should have supported him had deserted him; because of the recent persecution, most of the Christians were afraid to befriend him.

Knowing that the timidity of Timothy's disposition might cause him to shrink from the risk of persecution that a visit to the capital might entail, Paul exhorts him not to fear persecution, nor to be ashamed of him the apostle, but to be bold in his testimony and to endure hardness like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He also advises him as to his attitude toward false teachers and their doctrines.

The following theme has been suggested for the Epistle: Loyalty to the Lord and the truth in view of persecution and apostasy.

**Why Written:** The Epistle was written for the following reasons:

- To request Timothy's presence at Rome;
- To warn him against false teachers;
- To encourage him in his duties;
- To strengthen him against coming persecution.

**When Written:** Shortly before Paul's martyrdom at Rome.

## Contents:

**I. Introduction.** 1:1-5.

**II. Exhortations in View of coming Suffering and Persecution.** 1:6 to 2:13.

**III. Exhortations in View of Present Apostasy.** 2:14-26.

**IV. Exhortations in View of Future Apostasy.** 3:1 to 4:8.

**V. Conclusion.** 4:9-22.

### I. Introduction. 1:1-5.

The following are the contents of the introduction:

1. Paul's calling - an apostle appointed by God's will to proclaim the promise of life centered in Christ. v. 1.
2. Paul's greeting to Timothy. v. 2.
3. Paul's ceaseless prayer for him. v. 3.
4. Paul's desire to see him again, remembering Timothy's tears at their last parting. v. 4.
5. Paul's memories - the unfeigned faith of Timothy, a faith that first had its home in the heart of his mother and grandmother. v. 5.

### II. Exhortations in View of coming Suffering and Persecution. Chs. 1:6 to 2:13.

Paul exhorts Timothy-

1. To stir up - *kindle into a living flame* - the gift of God which was bestowed upon him at his ordination, and to put away the spirit of cowardice as inconsistent with the spirit of that gift (vv. 6, 7).
2. To be bold in the face of persecution. vv.9-11.
3. To hold fast the trust committed to him by the power of the indwelling Spirit. vv. 13, 14.
4. To recognize the attitude that believers were taking toward the apostle:
  - (a) Some like those of Asia, were forsaking him. v. 15.
  - (b) Others like Onesiphorus were supporting him. vv. 16-18.
5. To be strong in the power of God's grace. 2:1.
6. To commit to others the instructions he had received from Paul. 2:2.
7. To be ready to face hardship -
  - (a) Like a soldier, yielding whole-hearted service. vv. 3,4.
  - (b) Like an athlete, abiding by the rules of the game. v.5.
  - (c) Like a farmer, receiving the reward of patient toil. vv. 6, 7.
8. To remember two facts:

(a) The gospel of the risen Christ which enables Paul to endure suffering for the elects' sake. vv. 8-10.

(b) The faithful saying - to suffer with Christ is to reign with Him; to deny Him is to suffer loss. vv. 11-13.

### **III. Exhortations in View of Present Apostasy. Ch. 2:14-26.**

Timothy is exhorted:

1. To urge Christians to avoid idle discussions. 2:14.

2. To be a true teacher of the Word of God, avoiding the empty, irreverent talk of false teachers. vv. 15-21.

3. To flee, not only evil doctrine, but also evil living; to follow, not only true doctrine, but also true living. v. 22.

4. To avoid foolish and superficial speculations that cause contentions, and which hinder the work of a preacher. vv. 24-26.

### **IV. Exhortations in View of Future Apostasy. Chs. 3:1 to 4:8.**

Timothy is exhorted:

1. To avoid false teachers, for -

(a) In the future there will arise an empty profession of religion, combining an utter lack of power with a low moral standard. 3:1-5.

(b) The ministers of this religion will be characterized by their lack of principle and opposition to the truth. vv. 6-9.

2. To abide loyally by his convictions, remembering:

(a) The lesson that suffering is the Christian's lot in this world, as illustrated by Paul's example. vv. 11-13.

(b) The lessons learned from Paul's holy life. vv. 10, 14.

(c) The lessons he has learned from the Holy Scriptures. vv. 16, 17.

3. To do his full duty as an evangelist, preaching the Word with tireless patience, adapting his teaching to every capacity, preaching, pleading, and reproving, whether the opportunities seem favorable or unfavorable (4:1,2).

He is to do this for two reasons:

(a) The people in the future, will grow impatient of sound teaching and reject it. vv. 3, 4.

(b) Paul's ministry is about to close; he is trusting Timothy to continue his work as far as he is able. vv. 5, 6.

## V. Conclusion. 4:9-22.

1. An urgent request (4:9, 10). Like the message of an aged and dying father to his only son, comes Paul's request to Timothy, "**Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me**" (v. 9). The apostle is lonely. Demas has forsaken him; the others are absent on various missions; only Luke is with him.

2. Special instructions. 4:11-13.

(a) Timothy is to bring Mark, who had proved himself worthy of the apostle's confidence. v. 11.

(b) Timothy was to bring his cloak, books and parchments (v. 13).

The apostle must have been in a fireless cell, and facing a cold winter. "The pathos of Paul's position is vivified by quoting from a letter of William Tyndale (an English translator of the Scriptures, who was martyred in the sixteenth century) when he was in prison for Christ's sake in the damp cells of Vivoorde, 'I entreat your Lordship,' he wrote, 'and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I must remain here for the winter, you would beg the commissary to be so kind as to send me, from the things of mine which he hath, a warmer cap. I feel the cold painfully in my head. Also a warmer cloak, for the one I have is very thin. Also some cloth to patch my leggings. My overcoat is worn out, my shirts even are worn out. He has a woolen shirt of mine if he will send it. But most of all, I entreat and implore your kindness to do your best with the commissary to be as good as to send me my Hebrew Bible, grammar and vocabulary, that I may spend my time in that pursuit.'"

- Percy G. Parker.

3. A bitter opponent (vv. 14, 15). Timothy is warned against Alexander, perhaps one who had testified against Paul in court.

4. Paul's trial and first defense (vv. 16, 17).

Paul's second imprisonment was more rigorous than his first.

- During the first imprisonment he had his own hired house; during the second, he was kept in close confinement.

- During the first he was surrounded by his friends; during the second, he was almost alone.

- In the first he was expecting a speedy release; in the second, he was looking forward to death.

He was evidently arraigned on a serious charge, probably that of being one of the chief instigators of the burning of Rome.

"This alteration in the treatment of Paul exactly corresponds with that which the history of the times would have led us to expect. We have concluded that his liberation took place early in A.D. 63; he was therefore far distant from Rome when the first imperial persecution of Christianity broke out, in consequence of the great fire in the following year . . .

When the alarm and indignation of the people were excited by the tremendous ruin of the conflagration which burnt down almost half of the city, it answered the purpose of Nero (who was accused of causing the fire) to avert the rage of the populace from himself to the already hated votaries of a new religion.

“Tacitus, a Roman historian, describes the success of this expedient, and relates the sufferings of the Christian martyrs, who were put to death with circumstances of the most aggravated cruelty. Some were crucified; some disguised in the robes of beasts, and hunted to death with dogs; some were wrapped with ropes impregnated with inflammable materials, and set on fire at night, that they might serve to illuminate the circus of the Vatican and the gardens of Nero, where this diabolical monster exhibited the agonies of his victims to the public, and gloated over them himself, mixing among the spectators in the costume of a charioteer.

“Brutalized as the Romans were by the spectacle of human combats in the amphitheater, and hardened by popular prejudice against the ‘atheistical’ sect, yet the tortures of the victims excited their compassion. ‘A very great multitude,’ as Tacitus informs us, perished in this manner; and it appears from his statement that the mere fact of professing Christianity was sufficient to justify their execution; the whole body of Christians being considered involved in the crime of firing the city. This, however, was in the first excitement which followed the fire; and even then, but few among those who perished were Roman citizens. Since that time, some years had passed, and now a decent respect would be paid to the forms of law in dealing with one, who, like Paul, possessed the privilege of citizenship. Yet we can understand that a leader of so abhorred a sect would be subjected to severe punishment.

“We have an account of the first hearing of Paul’s cause from his own pen. **‘At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion’** (II Timothy 4:16-17).

“We see from this statement that it was dangerous even to appear in public as the friend or adviser of the apostle. No advocate would venture to plead his cause, no ‘Procurator’ to aid him in arranging the evidence, no ‘patronus’ to appear as his supporter and to deprecate, according to ancient usage, the sentence. But he had a more powerful Intercessor and a wiser Advocate, who could never leave him nor forsake him. The Lord Jesus was always near him, but now was felt visibly present in the hour of need . . . From the above description we can realize in some measure the external features of his trial. He evidently intimates that he spoke before a crowded audience, so that all the Gentiles might hear; and this corresponds to the supposition, which historically we should be led to make, that he was tried in one of those great basilicas which stood in the Forum . . . The basilicas were rectangular buildings of great size, so that a vast multitude of spectators was always present at any trial which excited public interest. Before such an audience it was that Paul was called to speak in his defense. His earthly friends had deserted him, but His heavenly Friend stood by him. He was strengthened by the power of Christ’s Spirit and pleaded the cause not of himself only, but of the gospel.

“At the same time he successfully defended himself against the first of the charges brought against him, which perhaps accused him of conspiring with the burners of Rome. He was delivered from the immediate peril, and saved from the ignominious and painful death which might have been his doom had he been convicted on such a charge.” - Conybeare and Howson’s *“Life and Epistles of St. Paul.”*

5. Salutations and benediction. 4:19-20.

Note: Tradition tells us that Paul was beheaded in Rome.

~ end of II Timothy ~

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