

Chapter Summary: 2 Timothy

Paul had sent Timothy on many assignments over the years, most recently to Ephesus to stop those whose teaching was contrary to the truth. Paul supported Timothy in his work from a distance by writing him letters of instruction. Here Paul is sending him a second letter, one that includes an urgent message: "Come as soon as you can."

Paul was in prison while writing this letter, possibly as a result of the opposition of Alexander the coppersmith, whom he warns Timothy about. Emperor Nero is now actively persecuting Christians, and the Roman officials who had previously protected Paul are probably now sympathetic to his enemies instead. Paul expects to be executed in the near future because of his faith in Jesus, considering his life "poured out as an offering to God." So he writes to Timothy, telling him to leave Ephesus immediately and join him in Rome.

In this second letter, Paul weaves in many words of personal "charge" to Timothy. Simply coming to visit Paul in prison would require as much courage and resolve as Timothy's previous assignment in Ephesus. Paul is preparing his young charge for the challenges he would face under Roman persecution. Attacks would come from all sides, and Timothy needed to know that leaders in particular would be called to follow in the Lord's steps, persevering in the face of suffering and persecution.

Some of Paul's co-workers in Rome had been intimidated by this opposition and had abandoned him. He sadly reports, "The first time I was brought before the judge, no one came with me." Paul had to stand alone, as Jesus himself did at His own trial. He urges Timothy to show the same resolve when his time comes.

Without Paul's presence, Timothy would need to be steadfast in stopping those who reject the truth and lead other believers astray. He would need to focus on the critical work always before him, steadily preaching the word of God, always prepared to defend the Good News as he originally learned it. Paul instructs him, "Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach."

The Bible doesn't record what happened to Paul or Timothy after Paul wrote this letter. Tradition says that Paul gave his life for Jesus during Nero's reign. Meanwhile, Timothy was no stranger to persecution, as indicated by an imprisonment mentioned by the author of the book of Hebrews. "I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released from jail." Timothy had already proved himself ready to suffer as Paul did, and Paul certainly assumes in this letter that Timothy would experience further persecution. Paul gives him this charge:

“You must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.”

We can be thankful that this letter was added to those "holy Scriptures" and that believers today are encouraged to walk faithfully as they wait for the return of Christ Jesus.