

The Salutation of the Letter

2 Timothy 1:1-2

2 Timothy 1:1-2: *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,² to Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Background Notes

Like 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy is also a letter that was written by the apostle Paul and sent to his younger fellow worker, Timothy. Paul and Timothy had worked together for over fifteen years. When Paul wrote this letter, Timothy was in Ephesus, helping to establish the church there.

2 Timothy was Paul's last letter. It was written around AD 66 or 67 from a dungeon cell in a prison in Rome. Paul realized the end of his life on earth was near. *“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:6-7).* Reliable tradition indicates that Paul was beheaded soon after he wrote this letter to Timothy. He died as a Christian martyr.

At this point it would be helpful to give a brief summary of the Christian lives of Paul and Timothy up to, and including, the occasion of writing this letter of 2 Timothy. Timothy joined Paul's missionary team on Paul's second missionary journey. Acts 16:1-2: *“Then he [Paul] came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.”*

Timothy had probably become a Christian when Paul visited this area on his first missionary journey. It's likely that he was only in his late teens when he joined Paul in his missionary travels, but he already had a good reputation among the believers in his hometown area. Let's pause here to say: if you're a teen, God can greatly use you in His service – even while you're still in your teens!

In the late 50s AD, at the end of his third missionary journey, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and imprisoned in Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast. After waiting in Caesarea for 2 years for his case to be decided, Paul finally appealed to Caesar for a decision. He was then taken to Rome by ship, as a prisoner. After the ship voyage and shipwreck (Acts 27), Paul was held in Rome under house arrest. Acts 28:30-31: *“Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.”*

During his house arrest Paul continued his ministry from his rented house. From this first Roman imprisonment Paul wrote the letters that are often called his "Prison Epistles" - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. All during this time, Timothy was involved in Christian service and missionary travels at Paul's direction. This was in the early 60s AD.

Paul was released from his first imprisonment, and he and his team continued their missionary work. He left Timothy in Ephesus to help build up the church there. He wrote a letter of encouragement to Timothy, giving him instructions on church order and how to combat the false teaching that was infiltrating the church in Ephesus. And that's the letter of 1 Timothy.

Some time later Paul was once again arrested, and imprisoned in Rome - this time in a dungeon. From his dungeon cell, he wrote this Second Epistle to Timothy. It is the most personal of all his letters. In this letter Paul encouraged Timothy to remain faithful - even though others were falling away from the faith, and even though the Roman persecutions had begun. Be faithful, Timothy! Follow my example!

2 Timothy is not just a 1st century letter by Paul to Timothy - this is the Word of God to us! We too should remain faithful at all costs and in every situation.

Doctrinal Points

1. It was the will of God that Paul became an apostle.

Verse 1: *"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God."* Paul didn't decide that he wanted to be an apostle, and then expected God to put His stamp of approval on **Paul's** decision. No. Paul was **chosen by God** to be an apostle. Paul was willing to serve the Lord in any capacity, but it was by the will of God that Paul became an apostle. That's a great lesson for us. It is not our place to choose what is God's will for us! Our place is to be willing to do whatever God's will is for us, and whatever He asks us to do.

Too often we decide what **we** want to do in life - and then we look for God to put His stamp of approval on our decision. But what we have decided for our lives is not necessarily God's will for our lives.

If you want to do God's will, how do you know exactly what it is? Will God give you a "Damascus Road experience," like he gave to the apostle Paul? The best advice on finding God's will for your life comes from Paul himself: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* (Romans 12:1-2)

Romans 12 is the Word of God to us, so these verses are not just Paul's advice - they are **God's advice!** So let's follow the divine pattern for discovering the will of God for our lives. It's clearly outlined in Romans 12:1-2.

Remember, Paul did not decide to be an apostle, God decided. It was the will of God that Paul become an apostle.

2. It is the will of God that people receive the promise of life.

Verse 1: *"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus."* God chose Paul to be an apostle because His wanted people to receive the promise of life in Christ Jesus. That was God's purpose for Paul's apostleship – to spread the word that eternal life was available in Jesus Christ.

Think how the gospel came to Europe because God gave Paul the Macedonia vision! Acts 16:6-10: *"Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them."* Thus the gospel moved from Asia to Europe, and many of us can trace our salvation to that event.

The promise of life in Christ Jesus is still available today. Eternal life is found only in Jesus Christ. We have a responsibility to share this message, because it is the will of God that people receive the promise of life.

Practical Application

1. Let's establish Paul-Timothy relationships.

Verse 2: *"To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."* Paul and Timothy had a close spiritual father-son relationship. Paul had disciplined Timothy. Timothy had learned and matured under Paul's leadership.

Believers today need to establish Paul-Timothy relationships. In fact, each of us should be a "Paul" and a "Timothy" at the same time. No matter what our level of spiritual maturity may be, there will always be Christians who are more mature than we are, and there will always be Christians who are less mature we are. So each of us should be a "Paul" and a "Timothy" at the same time.

a. We should look for "Pauls."

We should look for mature believers who can disciple us and help us grow and mature in our faith and Christian walk. Both my father and father-in-law were "Pauls" in my life. They're both with the Lord now, but how I thank God for the years that they were "Pauls" in my life!

b. We should look for “Timothys.”

We should look for Christians who are younger and less mature in the faith than we are. They need us to help them grow, to encourage them, and to disciple them. At the present time, I am mentoring with several church leaders who are younger men. When I say “younger men,” I don’t mean they are teenagers - but they are younger than I am, in age as well as in the faith. They are to me like Timothy was to Paul. Periodically we meet together or talk by phone. They ask me about difficult Scriptures. They bounce problems off me and ask for my input and advice. I have a responsibility towards them, because I have a Paul-Timothy relationship with these men.

Do you have any Paul-Timothy relationships? We should all “wear two hats”! We need to wear a “Timothy hat,” and look for a “Paul” to help disciple us. We also should wear a “Paul hat,” and look around for at least one “Timothy” whom we can help and mentor. Let’s establish Paul-Timothy relationships.

2. Let’s practice Paul/Timothy correspondence!

Paul was concerned about Timothy’s well-being, so he wrote letters to him. Do we write letters (or emails) of encouragement to other Christians? Part of establishing a Paul-Timothy relationship is practicing a Paul/Timothy correspondence - especially if you’re the “Paul” in the relationship.

Notice in both letters he wrote to Timothy that Paul didn’t just dash off a quick note saying, “How are you? Hope you’re doing well. God bless you. In Christ, Paul.” No, Paul wrote letters that were filled with valuable content! His letters were well thought out, and filled with important teaching, instruction and encouragement.

Do we write letters like that to our “Timothys”? Obviously our Paul/Timothy correspondence will not be inspired Scripture! But the point is, do we put **time** and **effort** and **content** into our letters, as Paul did?

Some of you read the publication I write, entitled “Devotions for Growing Christians.” Do you know how that got started? Many years ago when I went to seminary, Margie and I wanted to stay in contact with some of the teens with whom we had been working. We decided rather than just writing short notes or sending Christmas cards, I’d write a letter with some content. Thus “Devotions for Growing Christians” was born. Some of those teens, who are now middle-aged, are still on our mailing list!

You don’t have to start a publication to maintain correspondence with your “Timothys,” but you do need to be concerned enough to correspond. Maintaining that connection is especially important if your “Timothy” leaves to take a job in another location, or for military service, or to attend university. At those times your “Timothys” are particularly vulnerable, and they need your continued help and encouragement. Be sure to keep in touch! Let’s practice Paul/Timothy correspondence!