

Aquifer Open Study Notes (Book Intros)

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This resource has been adapted into multiple languages, including English, Tok Pisin, Arabic (عربي), French (Français), Hindi (हिंदी), Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia), Portuguese (Português), Russian (Русский), Spanish (Español), Swahili (Kiswahili), and Simplified Chinese (简体中文).

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2 Timothy

While imprisoned in Rome near the end of his life, Paul realized that he had reached the end of his race. His life, shaped by the pattern of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, was nearing its conclusion. Paul commissioned his helper Timothy to continue his ministry. When Paul was executed by the Romans, this letter became his final testimony (see [2 Timothy 4:7-8](#)). Through it, he encouraged the church to carry on his work. The mission of the good news would continue.

Setting

After Paul's conversion to Christianity, he worked as an apostle from Jerusalem to Italy ([Acts 9:1-19](#); [Acts 28:30-31](#); [Romans 15:19](#)). He spent a good amount of time in Asia Minor, especially in Ephesus ([Acts 19:1-20:1](#); [20:31](#)).

This period ended when:

- authorities arrested Paul in Jerusalem ([Acts 21:27-36](#)),
- detained him in Caesarea ([Acts 23:23-26:32](#)), and
- imprisoned him in Rome ([Acts 28:16-31](#)).

They eventually released Paul and he continued his ministry. During this time, he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. He was later arrested and imprisoned in Rome again ([2 Timothy 1:8, 16-17](#); [2:9](#)).

This letter, written from prison in Rome, was during the final part of Paul's life (see [4:6-18](#)). Paul wrote it to Timothy, his loyal and fellow worker and representative. Timothy was in the province of Asia then, probably in Ephesus ([4:13](#), [19](#)). Paul asked him to come to Rome quickly. Timothy might also encounter suffering and abuse if he came.

Summary

Paul gave a traditional greeting ([2 Timothy 1:1-2](#)). Then he gave thanks and added a prayer ([1:3-4](#)). He then urges Timothy to "join me in suffering for the gospel" ([1:5-18](#)). Timothy can rely on his spiritual heritage and the gospel. Paul showed this in his life with both positive and negative examples.

Paul urges Timothy once more to be strong and endure suffering with him ([2:1-13](#)). Timothy should find motivation in the gospel and Paul's example. Paul also guides Timothy on how to manage his ministry among false teachers ([2:14-26](#)).

The perspective then expands to place Timothy's task within the context of the end of history ([3:1-4:8](#)). These times will be challenging. But God will deal with those who make trouble as he has before. Timothy should remain true to the faith he has received and remain grounded in the Scriptures.

He should urgently perform his ministry, considering his hope and the growing resistance from his listeners. He should not fear suffering for the Lord and should regard Paul's time to work as complete. Timothy must fill the gap and continue to follow Paul's example.

The letter ends by asking Timothy to come to Rome quickly ([4:9-18](#)). Paul sends greetings, shares news, and urges Timothy to travel to Rome before winter ([4:19-21](#)). Paul then concludes with a blessing ([4:22](#)).

Date of Writing

Paul may have written 2 Timothy during his first imprisonment in Rome ([Acts 28:1-31](#)). However, evidence more strongly supports a later date, during a second imprisonment in Rome, which led to Paul's death (see 1 Timothy Book Introduction, "Date of Writing").

Occasion of Writing

We do not know the details of Paul's second arrest. Perhaps Alexander, a person Paul had corrected earlier, played a role in the arrest ([2 Timothy 4:14–15](#); [1 Timothy 1:20](#); see [2 Timothy 4:16–18](#)). It might have happened in Asia Minor (see [1:15](#)). If so, Paul's opponents, the false teachers mentioned in 1 Timothy and Titus, were not just making empty threats. The struggle Paul and Timothy encountered was not just a metaphor or spiritual ([2 Timothy 2:3](#); [4:7](#); see also [1 Timothy 1:18](#); [6:12](#)).

The instructions to pray for civil authorities may relate to broader issues caused by false teachers ([1 Timothy 2:1–7](#); compare [Titus 3:1](#)). This led to Paul's final arrest and execution for spreading the gospel. The false teachers were still active ([2 Timothy 2:14–3:9](#); [4:14–15](#)). Paul saw his ministry as complete and knew his death was near ([4:6–8](#)). He encouraged Timothy to continue the work. It is possible that when Timothy visited Paul in Rome, Paul formally appointed him to continue his work.

Meaning and Message

The apostle Paul not only shared the gospel of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, but he also lived it. This gospel inspires a lifestyle that denies oneself and follows Jesus, empowered by his resurrection. Paul modeled his life after Christ, and now death confronted him. God's work will continue until Christ returns ([1:12](#)). God's servants have important responsibilities. Paul entrusted his mission to Timothy and urged him to continue the work.

Like Timothy, everyone who follows Jesus and accepts the call to serve must continue the work God has given them. They can do this through the life-giving power of Christ's resurrection.