

Introduction to 2 Timothy

Where is it in the Bible?

Second Timothy is the sixteenth book in the New Testament and the second Pastoral Epistle. It is found between 1 Timothy and Titus, the other two Pastoral Epistles.

Who wrote it?

The salutation (1:1) and church tradition identify Paul as the author of this epistle. If that is true, it may be the last letter written by Paul that has been preserved and can be seen as his farewell discourse. However, in spite of the personal elements included in 1:15-18 and 4:10-16, the letter is thought by many to have been written by an unknown author after Paul's death.

When was it written?

As with 1 Timothy, dating the letter is very complicated due to the questions about who wrote it. The same three possible scenarios exist for this book¹:

- There are gaps in our knowledge of Paul's career that account for the situations covered in this letter. According to this theory, Paul wrote 2 Timothy when he was in prison in Rome sometime between 60 and 64.
- Paul had a "second career" after everything that is described in Acts. This presupposes that Paul was released from prison. He probably wrote this letter to Timothy between 65 and 67.
- Paul did not write 2 Timothy and the personal elements included in the letter are literary devices. Those who hold this view feel the letter was written in the late first or possibly the early second century.

What is it about?

Unlike the other Pastoral Epistles, 2 Timothy is not concerned with church order and offices. This letter is more concerned with offering encouragement to Timothy, urging opposition to false teachers and adherence to sound teaching. It is a call to faithful ministry, even if that means suffering for it.

¹ This discussion is adapted from Mark Allen Powell, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 402-404..

How is it structured?

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. Thanksgiving and Encouragement (1:3-18)
 - a. Thanksgiving for Timothy (1:3-7)
 - b. Exhortation to Faithfulness (1:8-18)
- III. Instructions to Timothy as a Leader (2:1-26)
- IV. Teaching (3:1-4:8)
 - a. Characteristics of False Teachers (3:1-9)
 - b. Paul as an Example for Timothy (3:10-17)
 - c. Charge to Preach the Word (4:1-5)
 - d. Personal Reflections (4:6-8)
- V. Closing (4:9-22)
 - a. Personal Instructions (4:9-18)
 - b. Final Greetings and Benediction (6:20-22)

What are some things to look for?

- **Portrait of Paul:** This letter holds up Paul as an example of how to live out the faith in all aspects. Although Paul sets himself up as an example in other letters, there is no place where he is portrayed in such a favorable way as in this letter. This has led to speculation that the letter is an early example (perhaps the first) of early Christian hagiography, a piece of literature written to honor a saint.
- **Suffering:** Suffering is seen as a normal part of life as a Christian. In Roman society, suffering would be seen as a reason for shame, but the author says those who suffer for the Gospel should not be ashamed. The response to suffering should be endurance and perseverance through God's power.