

2 Timothy (October 5)

Reading 2 Timothy

Seawater sprays over the ship's bow as it cuts through the Troas harbor on its way toward Corinth. Wobbly tourists grip their bellies, made sick by the September pitch of the Aegean Sea at the close of the sailing season. Travel-hardy merchants chuckle at the tourists. They slurp wine as a precaution against the illnesses that follow the trade routes. "We shall make Rome in a week," they declare, "if the weather holds."

The most famous traveler of the first century, the apostle Paul, was not on that ship, but lay in a Roman prison. He wrote this letter to request Timothy's comfort and companionship. Timothy had been guiding the congregation at Ephesus, but Paul sent a replacement so Timothy, his son in the faith, could travel to him. This is Paul's last known letter, written with special emphasis on faithfully teaching the word in opposition to false teachers and to rising imperial persecution.

Author, Date, and Setting

After Paul's release from prison in Rome in AD 62/63 and after his fourth missionary journey, during which he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus, Paul was again imprisoned under Emperor Nero circa 66-67. It was during this time that he wrote 2 Timothy. In contrast to his first imprisonment, when he lived in a rented house, he now languished in a cold dungeon, chained like a common criminal. His friends even had a hard time finding out where he was being kept. Paul knew that his work was done and his life was nearly at an end.

Reasons for Writing

As his last will and testament, Paul again encourages Timothy to proclaim the message of God's grace, emphasizing its basic truths. What an inheritance for Paul to leave to his spiritual son Timothy – the gospel of God's grace – and for us to leave to our children!

Paul had three reasons for writing to Timothy at this time:

- He was lonely. Phygelus and Hermogenes, "everyone in the province of Asia" (2 Timothy 1:15), and Demas had deserted him. Crescens, Titus, and Tychicus were away, and only Luke was with him. Paul wanted very much for Timothy to join him also. Timothy was his fellow worker, who as a son with his father had served closely with Paul. Paul longed for Timothy and twice asked him to come soon.
- Paul was concerned about the welfare of the churches during this time of persecution under Nero and he admonished Timothy to guard the gospel, to persevere in it, to keep on preaching it, and, if necessary, to suffer for it.
- He wanted to write to the Ephesian church through Timothy.

Blessings for Readers

In 2 Timothy, the Lord is calling you to cling faithfully to his precious word. Paul praises the value of that word most highly in 2 Timothy 3:14-17, where he encourages teaching of the word from childhood onward. In the word, the Lord will grant you strength. No matter how you serve in the Lord's family, consider how God's word guides your work and service.