

Read the New Testament in a Year

Bangor & Holyhead Circuit

Supporting Notes & Questions

Paul's 2nd letter to Timothy – starting 3 June 2021

Prepared by Ian Russell

Of the 3 Pastoral Letters, the purpose of this letter is most obvious because it was written while Paul was in prison awaiting the outcome of his trial. In particular he urges Timothy to reach him while there is still time.

Thursday 3 June – 2 Timothy Chapter 1 – Thanksgiving & encouragement

vv1-7: Paul greets Timothy as “my dear Son”, even warmer than in his previous letter, gives thanks for his sincere faith, and encourages him to rekindle his distinctive gift – the gift that had enabled Timothy to overcome his natural timidity through “power, love & self-control”. What gifts should we strive to rekindle?

vv8-14: Paul urges Timothy not to be ashamed of earthly circumstances, like the imprisonment of Paul his mentor. Instead he should rejoice in the grace of Jesus Christ, the eternal life that that confers, & the responsibilities entrusted to him through the Holy Spirit. Are we conscious of the responsibilities entrusted to us?

vv15: Paul regrets that everyone in Asia (which includes Ephesus, where Timothy succeeded him) has deserted him. Had they deserted the Christian faith or, more likely, Paul's uncompromising preaching? Are we in similar danger?

vv16-18: In contrast Onesiphorus, not otherwise mentioned in the Bible, has come from Ephesus to care for Paul in prison (essential in 1st Century, when prisons did not feed convicts). Who do we support in prison, or in poverty?

Friday 4 June – 2 Timothy Chapter 2 – Working for Jesus Christ

vv1-7: Paul gives Timothy 3 models for Christian behaviour: soldiers (of Christ) must fulfil their duties; to win the prize athletes must keep to the rules; to claim their share of the harvest (tenant) farmers must share in the work. The duties, rules & work that Paul requires of Christians is to spread the Gospel of Jesus. How in the 21st Century?

vv8-13: Paul contrasts his prisoners' chains with the salvation that Jesus offers, & offers Timothy a simple but profound jingle: “If we die with Him, we shall live with Him; if we endure with Him, we shall reign with Him”. How should we interpret and apply that in the secular & agnostic world of the 21st Century?

vv14-19: Paul gives clear advice to Timothy & all Christian leaders: preach the Good News of Jesus as simply as you can; avoid explaining away difficult issues; and avoid wrongdoing. Good advice, especially for the 21st Century?

vv20-26: Paul reminds Timothy of the distinction between best & ordinary crockery; & urges him to avoid the ‘ordinary’ passions of youth & pursue the ‘best’ virtues of justice, faith, love & peace. More practically he advises him to avoid quarrels, & to be gentle in correcting opponents. More good advice for the 21st Century?

Monday 7 June – 2 Timothy Chapter 3: The last days?

vv1-9: Paul warns that human behaviour will deteriorate before it improves. His reassurance that everyone will see that the offenders are stupid may be less robust than we expected. As the pandemic & the climate crisis have both generated both altruism & greed, should we be more robust than Paul as we seek to refresh our mission?

vv10-12: Paul reminds Timothy of his own persecutions, from all of which the Lord rescued him. Our persecutions include Covid, climate emergency, & more; is Paul's witness the example we need?

vv13-17: Paul commends Timothy on his Christian life. Do we too find Scripture useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, & giving instruction for right living?

Tuesday 8 June – 2 Timothy Chapter 4: Paul's farewell message

vv1-5: Paul's final charge to Timothy: preach the Good News whether the time is right or not; keep control of yourself; endure suffering; & perform your whole duty as a servant of God. Do we need any more?

vv6-8: In writing his own obituary, Paul offers 4 metaphors: he is ready for his final sacrifice; he has completed his race; he has won the prize of being right with God; & he will meet King Jesus. What would we say in our obituaries?

vv9-22: Paul asks Timothy to bring his cloak from Troy & his books – an early Bible? While sad he had no support at his trial, Paul thanks God for enabling him to defend himself (successfully that time) & to prepare for His heavenly Kingdom. If we face near-certain death, would our faith enable us to transfer so cheerfully to Jesus's world?