

FINISHING THE RACE

PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY



Bible Study Guide



Study 1: 2 Timothy 1

Paul writes this letter from Rome, where he is imprisoned for being a follower of Jesus. He is convinced that his execution is near (4:6) so he writes his final thoughts and exhortations to his protégé Timothy. Timothy was a well-regarded disciple who Paul had adopted as his assistant (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy is mentioned several times in the accounts of Paul's ministry and is named as co-author of several of Paul's letters. Paul had stationed Timothy in Ephesus to guard the church there against false teaching (1 Tim 1:3).

As we read this letter today, we are not apostles like Paul or apostolic representatives like Timothy. Most of us are not formal church leaders at all. But by considering what Paul says to Timothy we learn valuable things about the gospel message, how to hold onto it firmly, and how to be faithful servants of Christ whatever our context.

Read 2 Timothy 1:1-18

1. What key facts do we learn about Paul and Timothy in this chapter?

Paul	Timothy

2. What is attractive about the relationship between Paul and Timothy?

In verse 6 Paul gives Timothy an interesting command: to “fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands”. This seems to be a reference to a moment when Timothy was commissioned for spiritual leadership, and the “gift” is his role as an official gospel messenger.

3. Looking at verses 6-8, what does this “fanning into flame” look like in practice? What resources should Timothy draw on? What attitudes should he avoid?
4. The Holy Spirit “gives us power, love and self-discipline” (v7). Which of these do **you** most need the Spirit to keep giving you?
5. Find the verses where “shame” and “being ashamed” are mentioned in this passage.
 - a. Why would this have been a danger for Timothy?
 - b. In what ways are **we** tempted to be ashamed of Christ’s name, other believers, or the gospel?

6. In verses 9-10, Paul spells out some of the main features of the gospel message that he and Timothy are proclaiming. What key words and phrases describe this gospel?

7. How does Paul persevere through the suffering that has come to him as a herald of the gospel (see v12)? How can this mindset help us, when we find it difficult to be Christians?

8. Re-read the responsibility that Paul gives Timothy in verses 13-14. How can we "guard the good deposit" of the gospel today?

Look again at verses 15-18.

9. Paul gives positive and negative examples of people's reaction to his imprisonment. Can you think of examples of both groups today?

10. How can you follow the example of Onesiphorus this week?

Notes and Prayer Points

Study 2: 2 Timothy 2

1. When is being strong a good thing, and when is it a bad thing?

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7

2. Why do you think Paul told Timothy to be strong in “grace” rather than something else such as knowledge? (v1)
3. Timothy’s job of passing on the gospel will involve enduring hardship (v3). What three jobs does Paul use as illustrations? What common point is he making through all three examples?
4. What kind of soldier, athlete or farmer are you?

Read 2 Timothy 2:8-13

1. What key components of “his gospel” does Paul name? Is this how you would answer the question “what is the gospel”? Can you think of other parts of the New Testament that agree or disagree with Paul’s gospel declaration here?

2. What does this section show us about Paul's circumstances? What keeps him going amidst difficulties?
3. How do these verses encourage us, and how do they warn us?

Read 2 Timothy 2:14-26

4. What various instructions regarding speech does Paul give to Timothy in this section?
5. Which parts of this passage talk about speech which should be avoided? How is this speech described? What are its effects?
6. How do these kinds unprofitable talk occur around us today? What types of unprofitable talk are we in danger of engaging in? How can we avoid this?

7. How can we become vessels/instruments for God's special use?
From the context, what could this look like in practice?

8. What did Paul tell Timothy to flee and pursue, and why? (verses 22-23). Can you think of contemporary examples of these things?

Flee from...	Pursue...

9. What qualities should characterise God's servant? Give a practical example of each quality in action.

10. Most of us are not in formally-appointed teaching roles like Timothy. But the character traits mentioned here show what God calls all his people to be like. Which of the traits mentioned here do you need to grow in? How can you pursue this growth?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 3: 2 Timothy 3

Read 2 Timothy 2:22-3:9

1. If Timothy is successful in being kind (v24) and gentle (v25) in his teaching, does this mean he will have an easy life?

Paul refers in 3:1 to “the last days” which often makes people think of a time just before the return of Christ. But the New Testament writers use this label for the whole period between Christ’s first and second comings, because in the resurrection of Jesus, the old age has already begun to pass away. (See Heb 1:2, James 5:3, 2 Pet 3:3). This is why the description of the “last days” had relevance to Timothy’s immediate ministry, and has relevance to our lives today.

2. Paul lists 19 characteristics of people in the “terrible times”. Which of the characteristics mention “love”? Is some kind of love at work in the other items in the list?

3. The final characteristic is at the beginning of verse 5. Do you find it surprising? What does it reveal? Can you think of current examples of this description?

4. Can you think of people today (of either gender!) who are “always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth” (v7)? What does it look like?

5. Jannes and Jambres (v8-9) were, according to Jewish tradition, the names of two Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses. Read Exodus 7:8-12. What outcome does Paul predict for the false teachers Timothy will encounter?

Read 2 Timothy 3:10-17

6. What key facts about himself does Paul want Timothy to recall? (v10-11)

7. Why would Paul highlight these facts? How are they helpful to Timothy?

8. Verse 12 makes a stark statement. Do you believe this claim? Have you experienced it?

In verses 15-17 Paul has a number of things to say about "Holy Scripture". At the time of writing, he was referring to the Old Testament since the New Testament had not yet been written. But before long, Christians were realising that the apostles' writings fitted in the same category (see 2 Peter 3:15-16).

9. How does this section describe the **authority** of the Scriptures?

10. What is Scripture **for**? Are you using it for all the purposes mentioned here?

11. How does this passage encourage you to press on in trusting and obeying Jesus?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 4: 2 Timothy 4

1. If you died today, how do you think people would describe your life? How would you *like* people to describe your life?

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-8

2. Consider the things Paul says about Jesus in verse 1. How do they set the scene for his exhortation to Timothy in verse 2?
3. What do you think it would be like to receive a charge like this?
4. Verses 6-8 are like an inscription Paul would like to have on his tombstone. As he faced his death, what aspects of his life did he want to be remembered?
5. How would Paul's attitude, as he faced death, encourage Timothy to endure?

Read 2 Timothy 4:9-22

6. Verses 9-16 are filled with Paul's sense of loneliness in prison. Yet why was he not bitter about being abandoned?

7. Demas (verse 10) had been one of Paul's close associates. Why did he desert Paul? How does his attitude contrast with verse 8? Can this be a danger for us?

8. Paul has steadfast confidence about his future. Yet he still has desires in the present. What are they? What do they reveal about him?

9. How does Paul describe the circumstances of his first defence (ie. trial) in verses 16-18? What outcome is he most happy about? How would this story impact Timothy?

10. What sort of rescue is Paul looking forward to?

11. How can Paul's example at the end of his life encourage you when your faith is tested or your friends abandon you?

12. What is the most important truth you have learned from the book of 2 Timothy? How will you put this into practice this week?

Notes & Prayer Points
