

# SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

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**Approximate date:** 66-67 C.E.

**Time period:** growth of Messianic community with rise of Paul's successors, in the midst of some false teachings and apostasy, as well as rising persecution

**Author:** the Apostle Paul with Luke (secretary)

**Location of author:** Rome

**Target audience and their location:** Timothy in Ephesus

**People:**

Paul, Timothy, Luke, Mark, Lois, Eunice, Phygelus, Hermogenes, Onesiphorus, Hymenaeus, Philetus, Demas, Crescens, Titus, Tychicus, Carpus, Alexander, Priscilla (Prisca), Aquila, Erastus, Trophimus, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia

**People mentioned:**

Yeshua the Messiah, David, Jannes, Jambres, Moses

**Places:**

Rome, Ephesus, Asia, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Thessalonica, Galatia, Dalmatia, Ephesus, Troas, Corinth, Miletus

**Key Themes:**

encouragement for Timothy not to be ashamed of his faith in Yeshua the Messiah or his calling / need for Timothy to endure through any hardship he may face for the Lord / instructions on how to admonish the local assembly / God-less behavior to be present in the Last Days / admonition for Timothy to continue in what he has learned, performing the duties of his ministry / Paul reflects on his soon death / Paul's request for Timothy to visit him

**Key Scriptures:** 2 Timothy 1:8-10; 2:15; 3:1-5 / **Greeting** (1:1-2); **Thanksgiving** (1:3-5); **Encouragement from Experience** (1:6-14); **Paul and His Associates** (1:15-18); **Directions to Timothy** (2:1-26); **The Last Days** (3:1-9); **Further Exhortations to Timothy** (3:10-17); **Paul's Farewell Message** (4:1-18); **Conclusion** (4:19-22)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 655-657.

**Theological Summary:** The Epistle of **2 Timothy** is regarded by conservative interpreters as being the final letter composed by the Apostle Paul, who knows that he is soon to die and meet his Lord in Heaven (2 Timothy 4:6-8, 18). Unlike the Epistles of 1 Timothy and Titus, given the rather personal nature of 2 Timothy, there are liberals who will at least acknowledge the possibility of there being some genuine Pauline fragments existing in this letter.<sup>2</sup> The issues surrounding genuine Pauline authorship for 2 Timothy are the same as those for 1 Timothy (authorship issues of the **Pastoral Epistles** are summarized at the beginning of the entry for **1 Timothy**). Yet, while Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy is accepted by many conservatives, the strong likelihood of Luke serving as Paul's amanuensis for this letter has to be recognized, given his presence with the Apostle in his final days (2 Timothy 4:11). This would account for some of its advanced wording, and similarities with Luke-Acts.

The letter of 2 Timothy is generally agreed to have been written during Paul's second imprisonment, during the time of Nero in 66-67 C.E., from Rome, prior to the winter (2 Timothy 4:21), and after Paul's letter to Titus which would have been written during his time in either Macedonia or Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). While Paul's first imprisonment in Rome was in a rented house (Acts 28:30), this second imprisonment came from a dungeon (2 Timothy 4:13), where Paul was chained and he languished like a criminal (2 Timothy 1:16; 2:9). Conservative examiners are divided as to whether or not Paul was arrested when he was in Western Greece, possibly because of something to do with Alexander (2 Timothy 4:14), or if ministry circumstances eventually brought him back to Rome.<sup>3</sup> Paul writes this letter with confidence (2 Timothy 1:12), reflecting on the fact that the work God had for him had been completed, and that his life was ending (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Paul probably wrote Timothy because of an extreme loneliness he was feeling, as only Luke, of Paul's inner circle, was still with him (2 Timothy 4:11). Others had either abandoned him, or were away accomplishing important work for the good news (2 Timothy 1:15; 4:10-12). Due to the close relationship that Paul and Timothy had, with Paul considering him to be a kind of "son" (2 Timothy 2:1), Paul desired Timothy to come visit him soon (2 Timothy 4:9, 21; cf. Hebrews 13:23). Paul writes Timothy because he was greatly concerned for the persecutions that were coming, presumably at the hands of Nero. Timothy is admonished by Paul to keep and persevere in the gospel (2 Timothy 1:14; 3:14), and if necessary suffer for it (2 Timothy 1:8; 2:3). Timothy was overseeing the Believers in Ephesus at the time, and by extension Paul is issuing some important instruction for them.

A significant personal tone is witnessed in 2 Timothy, not only as Timothy is considered dear to Paul, but in how the Apostle remembers Timothy's own mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). "Timothy is urged to continue living out the faith he had received through Paul and through Timothy's mother and grandmother, a faith fully grounded in the Scriptures of Israel. With this heritage he has to prepare for the Lord's judgment by indefatigable proclamation of the Pauline word..." (ABD).<sup>4</sup> Paul requests that Timothy bring him personal items such as his heavy cloak, needed for the winter cold, and various

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. PHEME PERKINS, "Pastoral Epistles," in *ECB*, 1428.

<sup>3</sup> ELLIS, "Pastoral Letters," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 662.

<sup>4</sup> JEROME D. QUINN, "Timothy and Titus, Epistles to," in *ABD*, 6:562.

parchments/documents (2 Timothy 4:13), lending strong support for 2 Timothy being a genuine letter from him. “The letter is throughout so personal that it is probably the hardest of the three Pastorals to claim as pseudonymous” (Carson and Moo).<sup>5</sup>

Just like 1 Timothy, no scholar or academic has ever proposed a Hebrew or Aramaic origin for the composition of 2 Timothy. It is impossible given Paul’s circumstances as a chained criminal in a Roman dungeon. If Luke did not serve as Paul’s secretary, then a member of the Roman faith community composed it for him on his authority. This guarantees that the letter was composed in Greek, being sent to Timothy a native Greek speaker, and by extension to the Ephesians in Asia Minor.

2 Timothy is largely a personal letter from the Apostle Paul to Timothy. Paul urges Timothy not to give up in his faith, and not to be intimidated by any false teachings or apostasy around him—likely the same issues as in 1 Timothy. Paul stresses to Timothy that “all Scripture” is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16), and at the time that would certainly have included the canon of the Tanach, but was likely beginning to include any extant Apostolic texts (cf. 1 Timothy 5:18). Paul makes an interesting reference in his letter to Jannes and Jambres (2 Timothy 3:8), who are not described in the Torah itself, but rather in Targum Jonathan on Exodus 7:11. When Paul instructs Timothy to bring him the parchments or scrolls, it is proposed to have included: copies of Tanach books, records and notes on Yeshua’s life and teachings, various workbooks or letters, and/or Paul’s legal papers, including his certificate of Roman citizenship.

Timothy is one of the Apostle Paul’s successors, who is admonished, “be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5). Will Timothy have the tenacity and dedication to continue in serving the Lord after Paul is gone? Any possible theme of martyrdom is not popular to consider in any time period (cf. 2 Timothy 4:6), ancient or modern. “Not the least of the letter’s values is that it shows us the way a Christian martyr should face death” (Carson and Moo).<sup>6</sup>

A clear emphasis in 2 Timothy is for Timothy to maintain “sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3) in the assembly of faith, as Timothy is directed to maintain order among those whom he oversees. An interesting clue about the false teaching more frequently spoken against in 1 Timothy is that in 2 Timothy 2:18 there were those who had claimed that the resurrection had already occurred. Apparently among the various Ephesian Believers, there was a great deal of confusion about this foundational doctrine, with perhaps many not realizing that there was indeed a future Messianic age involving the reanimation of deceased persons’ bodily remains.

Among all the passages in 2 Timothy that the Messianic movement has highly valued, 2 Timothy 3:16 astutely declares, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” Timothy, and by extension all Messiah followers, are to not only value the Tanach or Old Testament in how it prepares people for salvation in Yeshua (2 Timothy 2:15), but how it instructs people in holy living. We do encounter how too frequently in modern Christianity, the Tanach is overlooked as a part of

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<sup>5</sup> Carson and Moo, 579.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 580.

the rubric of “all Scripture”—something most thankfully being rectified in our day! Yet contrary to this, too frequently in the Messianic movement, the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament is overlooked as being a part of Scripture too. There were surely various Apostolic works present at the time 2 Timothy was written which were employed for the instruction of Messiah followers, regarded as Scripture given Paul’s own quote of Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7 *together* in 1 Timothy 5:18.

Today’s Messianic community would also do well once again to take Paul’s words about false teachers arising very seriously (2 Timothy 4:3-4). If there were false teachers present, plaguing the Body of Messiah in Paul and Timothy’s time—then not only will there be false teachers in our own time—but *Messianic* false teachers. Just like Timothy was told by Paul to endure in the sacred call of ministry, each of us, in whatever capacity the Lord has called us to serve, is to do so with all of our being to His glory!

### **Bibliography**

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON 2 TIMOTHY:

- 1. How much do you believe Paul is reflecting on his life of ministry, and the people who have helped and harmed him, in this letter to Timothy?**
- 2. How important would it have been for Timothy to be told about the external *and* internal challenges facing, or soon to face, the First Century saints?**
- 3. Having just examined *both* 1&2 Timothy (and possibly coupled with what you have read from letters like Ephesians or Colossians), how do you now rate or gauge the assembly (or assemblies) in Ephesus (and Asia Minor)? Are there any Messianic fellowships or congregations that you have encountered that are similar? If so, what were its strengths and weaknesses?**

**4. What problems had crept into the Ephesians' midst, reflected in 2 Timothy, which would have been most difficult to see stopped or fixed?**

REFLECTION ON 2 TIMOTHY'S PLACEMENT IN THE CANON

*Write two short paragraphs about what struck you about reading Paul's second letter to Timothy:*