

LESSONS FROM 2 TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 2

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The last book that the apostle Paul wrote was 2 Timothy. He penned this short book from the dark prison cell called the Mamertine prison in Rome. This prison was the “last stop” for many prisoners waiting for execution. Paul was waiting for his execution date and did not waste his last days, but filled them with prayer and writing.

Paul wrote 2 Timothy, one of the Pastoral Epistles, along with 1 Timothy and Titus, to give quick instructions to the “shepherds” of the flock, or the “pastors” as he knew he was about to be removed from the scene. These three books are unique (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus) and should be read and treasured by all shepherds, elders, and deacons and all everywhere.

Paul must have had a great deal of physical difficulty writing this book. My wife and I visited this prison in Rome twice! It is hard to find. It is not one of the top ten tourist attractions of Rome. Most tourists flock to the crowded places of historical splendor that represent the past glory of Rome. But we were intent on finding the hard-to-reach prison cell where Paul spent his last days and where he wrote possibly three of the New Testament books. Peter also spent time in this infamous cell.

As we stood there in the cell’s emptiness and ugliness, with no adornment, we had an indescribable feeling wash over us, as we were in the presence of greatness. Paul and Peter were ordinary men, but they were apostles, chosen by God. They were here in this cell before leaving this earth.

For a brief moment, I was reminded of the great relay race through the ages that all we saints are in, each running our race or course in time and passing the baton on to the next generation. Paul ran his race and finished it mostly from this prison. Now, we must run and hand off to the next generation.

“And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (Hebrews 11:39-40, NKJV).

The Mamertine Prison, in antiquity the Tullianum, was a prison with a dungeon located in the Comitium in ancient Rome. It is said to have been built in the 7th century BC and was situated on the northeastern slope of the Capitoline Hill, facing the Curia and the imperial forums of Nerva, Vespasian, and Augustus. (Wikipedia 2024. “Mamertine

Prison” Wikimedia Foundation. Last modified March 4, 2024, 13:55.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mamertine_Prison.)

This prison cell or dungeon is a large abandoned cylinder-shaped water cistern, with only one large hole at the top for lowering the prisoners into it.. There is now a stairway for tourists, but in Paul’s day, there was only a hole at the top by which he was lowered into the cell, along with his provisions, and for the removal of waste. This was the only source of light and ventilation. One can imagine the smell. The cold. The claustrophobic environment. There was no escape.

Many scholars believe that the apostle Paul had poor eyesight based on many hints from his writings. I can only imagine the aged apostle, sitting on the cold floor of the cell (in 2 Timothy 4:13, he asked Timothy to bring the coat that he had left behind), with only, at most, candlelight, a quill, ink, and parchment, writing with large letters his last epistle.

The book of 2 Timothy is a beautiful, abbreviated book, full of quick, short, powerful instructions to the “pastor” of today, and for all of the saints of this hour. Paul did not have the luxury of time to “expound” in detail on many of his finer points and would close with statements such as, “*think over what I say for the Lord will give you understanding in everything*” (2 Timothy 2:7). Is there a better way to leave a spiritual truth than to leave it in the Lord’s authority to “give understanding?” To physically write at length was difficult with the cramped, cold quarters, the lack of light, and no reading glasses.

This book should be read slowly and thoughtfully. Each verse should be given time to be digested into the soul, heart, and mind. These are the most important truths that the great apostle Paul felt to write to young Timothy before his promotion to heaven. He knew these were most likely his last words. He had to make them count.

Paul’s intended audience was Timothy, who today would be called a “traveling deacon” or “apostolic deacon.” Timothy’s mother Eunice and grandmother Lois were believers and had passed their faith on to Timothy. Timothy’s father was a Greek and most likely was not a believer. His name is never mentioned, and Paul became Timothy’s spiritual father. Let me pause a moment and say thank you to Eunice, to Lois, and to all the godly mothers and grandmothers who helped change the world with their faith.

Paul’s intended audience was Timothy. However, with God, things are never as we often intend. Paul’s letter has been read by countless billions of believers worldwide through the ages. Paul’s intended audience was one beloved son. God’s intended audience was countless beloved sons and daughters through the millennia!

For this miniature study, we will look at the expectations

and characteristics that should be found in the life of Timothy, and for all those who follow “in this way.” These truths and characteristics that Paul briefly touches on were a preparation for the growth and development of the church through the ministry of Timothy and countless others as Timothy would “*commit these truths to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*” (2 Tim. 2:2).

The truths that Paul spoke, recorded in the second chapter of Second Timothy, are timeless and relevant today. These truths recorded in isolation in the dark Mamertine Prison shine as a beacon of kingdom light to all who will read Paul’s admonitions. Here are just a few of Paul’s admonitions and expectations for the believer.

Characteristics Of A Teacher - Sharing The Truth, Passing On The Revelation

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2, NKJV).

One of the hallmarks of the church is the setting of elders in local assemblies to carry the load that the church may grow. It is the basis of church growth and transition through time.

“And when they (apostles Paul and Barnabas) had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’ So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:21-23, NKJV).

“For this reason I (Paul) left you (Titus) in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you” (Titus 1:5, NKJV).

However, there is a place where all believers should have a working knowledge of the Scriptures and be ready to answer those who ask about the peace that is in their lives.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15, NKJV).

The believer teaches using words as well as with the example of a life properly lived.

Characteristics Of A Soldier

“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please those who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:3-4. NKJV).

Paul was very familiar with the concept of a soldier. All he had to do was look up at the trap door and see and talk

to the soldiers who stood guard over him. Soldiers were required to leave the comforts of home and follow the orders of their commanding officers. Life was not always easy for soldiers, and often their lives would be required. They learned to lay down their wants, desires, and selfish wills for the sake of their command, though in their case it was an earthly one.

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it’” (Matthew 16:24-25, NKJV).

Paul, like a good soldier, was about to lay down his life for his King, for his Lord. Walking with the Lord is not always easy, but it is always right. The road is narrow.

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14, NKJV).

It takes effort and a great commitment to be a soldier. It takes effort, and great commitment to be a child of God. The great outspoken Billy Sunday said, “Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you an automobile.”

Jesus said that we must be born again. There is only one way into heaven. No matter what the world says, there is only one way, one door, one Savior, one God, and one Son of God whereby we must be saved and His name is Jesus.

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’” (John 3:3, NKJV).

“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10, NKJV).

Characteristics Of An Athlete

“And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules” (2 Timothy 2:5, NKJV).

An athlete learns to submit to the rules that he might win. An athlete learns to live a disciplined life; a life of temperance, not extremes. An athlete is disciplined in his training, in his diet, in his habits, and with his time as he competes. These are all important metaphors for our walk with the Lord.

Saints need to learn discipline with their habits and with their time. Most of all, we “compete according to the rules.” By that I mean there are things that the Lord requires of us and has revealed for us to do. There are things that God

has told us to stay away from. We need to be obedient. An athlete cannot make up his own rules in the middle of the game, and yet many Christians are guilty of making up their own rules of the game to suit their lifestyles or desires. Let us compete according to God’s rules!

For this exhortation, I have shied away from listing the “rules” that we should follow and the “rules” of this spiritual game that we are asked to not break. The unbeliever, the skeptic, will argue that they don’t understand the rules, or that they disagree with God’s rules. Forgive me for quoting Billy Sunday again but I love his choice of words as follows”.

“The Bible will always be full of things you cannot understand, as long as you will not live according to those you can understand.” - Billy Sunday

Characteristics Of A Farmer

“The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things” (2 Timothy 2:6-7, NKJV).

My Bible commentary says this about this verse: Hardworking is from a Greek verb meaning “to labor to the point of exhaustion.” Ancient farmers worked long hours of backbreaking labor under all kinds of conditions, with the hope that their physical effort would be rewarded by a good harvest. Paul is urging Timothy not to be lazy, but to labor intensely.

There is another truth in this scripture. The farmer is the first to partake of his crop. This also means that the man who teaches a particular truth, must be the first one to practice it. For instance, the man who preaches “love your wife as Christ loves the Church” better be the one who loves his wife very much! The man who teaches tithing better be the man who is tithing every week! We must all “practice what we preach,” and be “first partakers of the fruit.”

Characteristics Of An Approved Worker

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, NKJV).

This phrase “rightly dividing” the word of truth, is a reference to the exactness demanded in trades such as carpentry, masonry, leather working, and tent making, trades that required cutting a material where precision and accuracy were needed and required. Carpenters today often say “Measure twice and cut once.” In other words, be sure you are accurate and precise before making that cut.

We need to be accurate and precise with the Word of God to be approved. It is not my purpose to throw shade on other religions, but there is a billion-member religion today whose foundation is built on a shaky, misinterpreted, one scripture reference with no other additional scripture confirmation found anywhere else in the Bible. This is not rightly dividing the word of truth. This is not measuring twice and cutting once.

A truth that is from the throne of God will be confirmed in numerous places throughout the Bible. The Bible cross-references itself over 63,000 times according to Louie Giglio. If an odd scripture stands alone with no other scripture adding light or confirmation, it is best to leave it alone. The Apostle Paul was already dealing with false doctrine and was preparing Timothy for the coming onslaught of false doctrine that would not be based on rightly dividing the word of truth.

Philetus and Hymenaeus were two that had “swerved from the truth,” and according to Paul, had spread false doctrine. I like that choice of wording, “swerved from the truth.” That is often how it happens. Mankind does not make a right-hand turn, they just swerve from the truth and eventually end up in the bushes when they don’t accurately and precisely “make the accurate cut,” rightly dividing the word of truth.

People who follow man-made doctrines and opinions become a mortal threat to the church. Paul said that this “*irreverent babble spreads like gangrene*” (2 Timothy 2:17). Paul went so far as to “hand over Hymenaeus to Satan” for chastisement (1 Timothy 1:20) because of this heresy. This speaks of the great importance of keeping the revelation pure and clear by rightly dividing the word of truth.

We live in an hour when men are afraid to call out false doctrine because of the offense it causes, or because of political correctness. As the apostle Paul was facing execution, he was not afraid to call the false doctrine of Philetus and Hymenaeus “spreading like gangrene,” and “handed over Hymenaeus to Satan” for chastisement. Paul warned Timothy that the day was quickly coming when men would not endure sound doctrine. One has to wonder if we have become too timid in our day.

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:2-4, NKJV).

Characteristics Of An Honorable Vessel

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Timothy 2:19-21, NKJV).

Paul reminds Timothy that any great house has many vessels in it, some for honor, some for dishonor. In the house of God today, let’s be honest, we have a mixed multitude. We have those who are “hot,” we have those who are “cold,” and we have those who are “lukewarm.” We have those who come to hear the “words of the Master.” We have those who come for “the loaves and the fishes.” We have those who come to “be blessed.” We have those who come to “belittle.” The Lord knows those who are His and our responsibility is to be a vessel of honor.

“The only way to keep a broken vessel full is to keep it always under the tap.”
- Billy Sunday

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity’” (2 Timothy 2:19, NKJV). †

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