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2 TIMOTHY

THEME

Author and Title

The first two verses of 2 Timothy clearly present the author as Paul and the recipient as Timothy. As with 1 Timothy and Titus (the other two “Pastoral Epistles”), the authorship of 2 Timothy has been challenged in the past 200 years. The challenges to Pauline authorship are the same as those leveled against 1 Timothy (see [Introduction to 1 Timothy: Author and Title](#)). However, a number of the scholars who deny Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy and Titus still affirm Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy. The arguments for the authenticity of 1 Timothy apply to 2 Timothy as well, providing a good basis for affirming the straightforward claims of 2 Timothy (and of 1 Timothy and Titus) to be authentic letters written by Paul.

Date

The letter pictures Paul in prison in Rome, awaiting death. Most likely, then, this letter was written during Paul’s second Roman imprisonment (later than the imprisonment recorded in [Acts 28](#)). Therefore this letter would have been written after 1 Timothy and Titus. Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.25; 3.1) claims that Paul was martyred sometime during Nero’s reign (which ended in A.D. 68, but intense persecution began in 64). Since Paul wrote 2 Timothy shortly before his death, it was probably written in A.D. 64–65, though some would place it as late as 67.

Theme

Second Timothy is a bold, clear call for perseverance in the gospel in spite of suffering. Paul calls on his young coworker to continue the fight of faith, even as Paul approaches the end of his own life.

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Paul wrote this letter while in prison in Rome. He mentions that several have abandoned him in this difficult time, and several others are away on duties ([1:15](#); [4:9–12](#)). In such a time Paul’s recollection of the sincerity and devotion of Timothy is

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especially poignant (1:3–5). Paul anticipates death soon (4:6–8). Therefore he writes a final exhortation to Timothy to urge him to stand firm and to ask him to come for one final visit before Paul is executed.

Though death is imminent, the timing is uncertain, so Paul also asks Timothy to bring his books and parchments with him. Presumably Paul intends to keep studying and writing until the end.

Second Timothy is very personal, as would be expected in a final letter to a close friend and coworker. Paul exhorts Timothy to continue in faithfulness and points to his own life as an example for Timothy to follow. What he calls on Timothy to do, he himself has done already.

Key Themes

1. Suffering is a standard part of Christian experience.	1:8, 12; 2:3, 9; 3:11–12; 4:5, 14–18
2. The Christian response to suffering is faithful perseverance by God’s power.	1:8; 2:1, 11–13; 4:1–8
3. The gospel is the ground for the Christian’s endurance.	1:9–11; 2:8–10
4. The Scriptures have power to save and preserve.	2:15; 3:15–17; 4:1–2
5. True believers will persevere; failure to persevere proves one is not converted.	2:11–13, 19; 3:14; 4:7, 10
6. False teaching is deadly and must be dealt with firmly.	2:16–18, 23–26; 3:1–9; 4:3–5

History of Salvation Summary

Christians must live on the basis of Christ’s salvation, looking forward to his second coming. (For an explanation of the “History of Salvation,” see the [Overview of the Bible](#).)

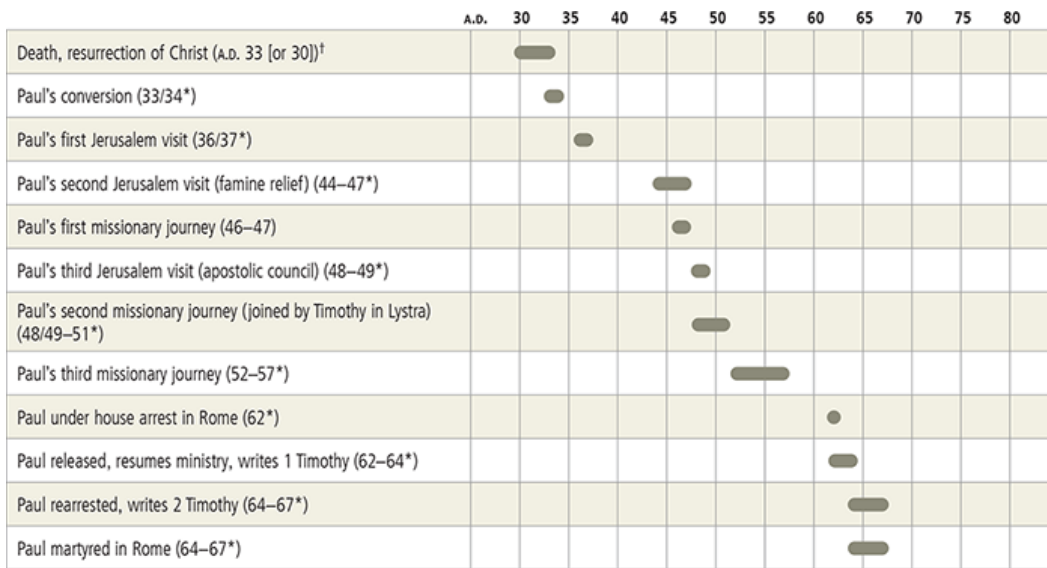
Literary Features

The genre of 2 Timothy is at least similar to the farewell discourse, and many would classify it as such. There are famous farewell discourses in the Bible — e.g., by Moses (the book of Deuteronomy), Joshua ([Joshua 23–24](#)), David ([1 Chronicles 28–29](#)), and Jesus (the Upper Room Discourse, [John 14–16](#)). Conventional motifs include the

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speaker's announcement of his imminent departure, directives to keep God's commandments, predictions of what will happen after the speaker's departure, words of comfort and instruction for the benefit of those who will survive the speaker, and appeals to the addressees to remember what the speaker has taught. If 2 Timothy, Paul's last letter, is read with these features in mind, the book will fall neatly into place. Paul's charges to Timothy in this letter are not limited to a specific situation (as 1 Timothy was) but are what Paul most wants Timothy to heed for the rest of his life and ministry—the last word from a spiritual father. The reader is led to share Paul's reflective mood as he looks back over past experiences.

Timeline



* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

The Setting of 2 Timothy

c. A.D. 64–67

Paul likely wrote 2 Timothy during a second imprisonment in Rome following a fourth missionary journey which is not recorded in the book of Acts. Expecting that death would come soon, Paul wrote this “farewell” letter to Timothy, who was at Ephesus, urging him to stand firm and asking him to come for one final visit.

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Outline

- I. Opening (1:1–2)
- II. Exhortation to Endurance for the Gospel (1:3–2:13)
 - A. Thanksgiving for Timothy’s sincere faith (1:3–5)
 - B. A call to bold endurance in ministry, part 1 (1:6–14)
 - C. Examples, positive and negative (1:15–18)
 - D. A call to bold endurance in ministry, part 2 (2:1–13)
- III. Dealing with False Teachers (2:14–3:9)
 - A. Timothy in contrast to the false teachers (2:14–26)
 - B. Description of the false teachers (3:1–9)
- IV. Exhortation to Timothy in Contrast to False Teachers (3:10–4:8)
 - A. Call to hold fast to Scripture and Paul’s example (3:10–17)
 - B. The ultimate charge (4:1–8)
- V. Conclusion (4:9–22)¹

¹ Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (pp. 2335-2337). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.