

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

by

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Note: Author's introduction in his *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, First and Second Timothy and Titus, and the Epistle to Philemon* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1890). The text has not been modified, except that punctuation has been modernized and long paragraphs have been divided.

When and to What Place Written

The martyrdom of Paul, as already seen, probably occurred in the summer, A.D. 68. This Epistle was written not long before that event, in a dungeon at Rome, during an interval between his trial before the Imperial Court on the first charge and his trial on the second, which resulted in his condemnation. The Epistle, therefore, may be dated early in the fall, A.D. 67.

Whether it was addressed to Timothy at Ephesus is uncertain, but several circumstances point strongly to that place. "Alexander the coppersmith" is mentioned (4:14), and an Alexander is noticed as put forward by the Jews in the theatre at Ephesus (Acts 19:33). A Hymeneus is referred to (2:17), who may have been the same as the Hymeneus spoke of as at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:20). Onesiphorus is mentioned as having ministered to the apostle at Ephesus (1:18), while "the household of Onesiphorus" are among those to whom salutations are sent (4:19). The heretical teachers and their doctrines as presented in this Epistle have a marked similarity to those in the First Epistle, which was certainly addressed to Ephesus. The local notices, in general, agree best with the supposition that Timothy was then in that city; and the preponderance of judgment among scholars has always favored this view.

Occasion and Purpose

The apostle was now a prisoner, held as "a malefactor" and undergoing the nameless horrors of a Roman dungeon, while in near prospect appeared the end of his course in a martyr's death. He desired, therefore, to see once more this loved and trusted fellow-laborer and impart, if possible face to face, his dying instructions. Most of his friends and disciples, appalled by the terrors of the Neronian persecution, were scattered from him, so that at his first hearing before the Imperial Tribunal he stood unbefriended and alone. He might well, therefore, like his Lord when about to suffer, feel the need of human sympathy, especially such as the presence of this ever-faithful friend would afford. Hence, he urges Timothy to hasten his coming to Rome; but lest the disciple should reach the city too late and he should see him no more on earth, the apostle writes to him special directions and solemn warnings respecting the duties and dangers of the Christian ministry, and charges him to exercise his sacred office with holy self-devotion and unswerving fidelity.

To animate him in such a career, he first appeals to Christ's unchanging faithfulness to his faithful servants, as seen in his own case when he stood before the Imperial Court, where all men forsook "him," nevertheless the Lord stood with "him" and strengthened "him," and then holds up "the crown of life, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge" shall bestow on all who serve him at the last day. The Epistle, while thus admirably serving its immediate purpose, stands through all the ages as the dying charge of Paul to the Christian ministry, to warn, to guide, and to inspire them in the noblest of earthly vocations.

The Contents

This last of the Pauline Epistles, issuing from the dungeon of the aged and worn apostle, is marvelous in the thoughtfulness, tenderness, and wealth of affection that it exhibits; but, like the other, it has no premeditated plan. The topics occur as they welled up in the fruitful mind and large heart of Paul. The following is a general outline.

Chapter First -- Salutation and invocation (1,2); expression of his gratitude to God for the faith of Timothy (3-5); Timothy is exhorted to a fearless faith in the exercise of his ministry (6-12); admonition to an unswerving adherence to the apostle's doctrine, and fidelity to the ministerial trust (13-18).

Chapter Second -- Necessity of being filled with the power which comes from the grace of Christ (1,2); exhortation to endure, with Paul, hardship for the gospel with the manner and motives of such faithful endurance (3-13); directions respecting his spirit and conduct as a Christian teacher, especially in dealing with disturbing and heretical tendencies, believing that, in all changes, the foundation of God stands sure and the pure gospel shall in the end triumph (14-26).

Chapter Third -- Troublous times predicted in the last days, with a description of those who fall away and warning against them (1-9); exhortation and motives to steadfastness in these perils, especially from the certainty and fullness of God's word (10-17).

Chapter Fourth -- Solemn charge to fidelity and earnestness in the ministry, especially in view of the imminence of defections from the faith, and of the apostle's removal from earth (1-8); Timothy urged to hasten his coming to Rome, with various directions and warnings (9-15); account of Paul's first defense before the Imperial Court (16-18); various salutations with the benediction (19-22).

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