

2 Timothy-by Nathan White

Chapter 1

Second Timothy is the final letter that Paul wrote to his son in the faith. Unlike most of his other letters, this one is not a response to a specific situation in a church but is instead intended to be a farewell address. In many ways, it is reminiscent of other farewell addresses in Scripture from figures like Moses, Joshua, and David. It is warm and heartfelt, full of encouragement to Timothy, but it is also weighty. Paul knows he will die soon and in this short letter, he will reflect on God's grace in his own life, warn Timothy of the difficulties ahead, and charge Timothy to continue in faithfulness. It opens with a typical Pauline greeting and transitions immediately into a loving expression of thankfulness for Timothy. Paul continues to encourage Timothy by reminding him of the grace and faithfulness that God has given to both of them (v. 8-12). Paul also writes that he has suffered the loss of support from many in Asia, which adds even more emotion to the letter, reminding us of how deeply he values Timothy.

Chapter 2

Paul continues his letter to Timothy by addressing the need for Timothy not to let the training he has received end with him. He is to entrust what he has learned to faithful men. And those faithful men are to entrust it to others. Timothy had a responsibility to do for others what had been done for him and the men who followed him would bear that same responsibility. The same is true for us. We all had to be taught. Each of us, especially those of us who grew up in church, have benefited from the efforts of parents, pastors, Sunday School teachers, friends, and mentors. Paul goes on to call Timothy to remember Christ, the resurrected king, in whom Paul has hope for eternal life even while facing death. He is sure of the faithfulness of Christ and, although Timothy is surely scared for his father in the faith, Paul wants him to be sure of it too. Paul also exhorts Timothy to remind his church of all these things, reorienting them toward what is important and away from foolish controversies.

Chapter 3

Paul evidently does not want Timothy to assume that things will get any easier for him. In fact, he expressly warns Timothy about coming godlessness and opposition to the truth. In verses two through four, he provides a lengthy list of the offenses that Timothy can expect to see from his opponents. Timothy is to entirely avoid such people, who will presumably be so unrepentant that the only choice will be to excommunicate them. Paul does give Timothy a glimmer of hope concerning these people, explaining that the folly of anyone so plainly opposed to God will eventually be clear to anyone who is paying attention. In contrast to these liars, Paul calls Timothy to continue in what he has learned. Timothy has followed Paul, even in persecution, because he is convinced of the truth of Paul's message. More importantly, Timothy is convinced of the truth of God's Word, which he has been taught since he was child and which is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (v. 16).

Chapter 4

Finally, Paul charges Timothy to preach the Word. Although a time will come when people will not want to hear it and will prefer to listen to false teaching, Timothy is to continue proclaiming the truth. This commitment to which Paul is calling Timothy is the very thing that has led to Paul's imprisonment and death. He is laboring under no delusions about the difficulties associated with being faithful to the truth. In fact, he explicitly tells Timothy to endure the suffering that he will face for it (v. 5). Emphasizing this call to endure is a final reminder that Paul is about to be put to death. He rejoices that he has finished his race with integrity and remained faithful to the end. It also serves as a reminder that nothing Paul has not asked Timothy to do anything that he has not already done himself. There is no suffering Timothy will endure that Paul did not experience. There is no opposition that can rise against Timothy that Paul did not face. The very same God who sustained Paul will sustain Timothy as well.

-Reflecting on 2 Timothy-

Before moving on to our next book of the Bible, take some time today to reflect on what we've read in 2 Timothy. Perhaps re-visit a favorite chapter or an especially meaningful passage. Or read the beginning chapter(s) again, now that you've read the whole. Or go back to a part of the book that struck you as curious and see if it makes more sense now. Or speed-read the whole thing again, seeking to reinforce its main themes. Or... perhaps you need a catch-up day to finish 2 Timothy before we move forward?

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope." Psalm 130.5