

2 Timothy: Unashamed: Strengthened to Serve in Suffering

Introduction

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to a new season in the life of Grace Baptist Church as we start our series through 2 Timothy — although new season may be a bit of an exaggeration, since this letter follows so naturally on the heels of 1 Timothy, which we studied in the spring, as well as our summer series through lament.

Providentially, though, this letter is about as perfect as it gets for our current situation, as we continue moving forward from the GBC of old and into something new in God's difficult but unfailingly good plan.

I say this because 2 Timothy is a letter penned as a result of circumstances neither Paul nor Timothy chose for themselves, yet which the Lord orchestrated for both of their good, and, more broadly, the good of the churches they ministered to, and, even more broadly, us today.

Before we go further into those circumstances, I want to give a brief preview of what we're going to do today.

First, we're going to look at the historical background of this letter — who wrote it, when, who it was written to, and all that good stuff that you'd expect to hear in an introductory sermon.

Then, I'm going to give a brief overview of the entire letter and point out its broad structure and divisions so we get an idea of how Paul is saying what he's saying — this is the proverbial getting familiar with the forest as a whole, so we don't get lost as we start looking at each individual tree.

After that, I want to point out a couple of major themes of the entire letter, just to get a feel for what Paul's biggest ideas are as he prepares to pass the baton on to his dearly beloved son in the faith — ideas which that beloved son passed on to others, who passed it on all the way down to us today.

Finally, I'm going to read the entire letter. A brief note on this — today, I'm going to read from the Christian Standard Bible, but as we preach each paragraph, we may use a different translation.

We don't hold dogmatically to any one translation over another here. As I was preparing for today, I simply thought that the CSB did the best job of translating it in a way that was both pleasant to read out loud and pretty close to the underlying Greek.

Background

2 Timothy is the last letter we have from Paul in the New Testament. The book of Acts concludes with Paul in prison in Rome, but we have good reason to believe that he was

released and resumed his missionary work, only to be imprisoned in Rome a second time — and this imprisonment was different.

Paul was no stranger to being behind bars for the gospel, but he says in [2 Timothy 4:6](#) that he knows his time on this earth is coming to an end, as opposed to his normal “pray that I’ll be released soon so I can get back to work”. Church history confirms that he was right. 2 Timothy was written in about 65-67 AD, and Paul was executed under the Roman emperor Nero, who died in 68 AD.

Accordingly, many interpreters view this as a sort of last will and testament — not so much in the legal sense, but in the sense that these are some of the words to which Paul gave his most careful attention, which makes this letter’s contents all the more striking.

Paul is, of course, the greatest theologian in church history who isn’t named Jesus of Nazareth. Yet his last words are not some grand systematic theological exploration of the deepest mysteries of God, nor a plea to Christendom in general to heed his words lest the gospel be forgotten and lost in the next generation in the face of theological or moral drift.

No, as Paul is getting his affairs in order, he is writing to an audience of one, his beloved son in the faith, Timothy, whose tears he remembers and whose presence he longs to enjoy one more time.

Having previously charged Timothy to remain in Ephesus to bolster the floundering church and carry on the work of the ministry, he now pleads with Timothy to do everything in his power to leave Ephesus and come to Rome as quickly as possible. We don’t know if Timothy and Paul ever got to see one another again this side of glory, but we can be confident that Timothy heeded these words of Paul’s and carried on his legacy.

Now, we’ll fill in more details of the background of the letter as they become pertinent, and especially as Caleb and Hayden preach, because they’re much better at history and background than I am — so I’ll leave that to the experts. I think now we’re ready for a brief overview of the whole letter.

Today, we’re dividing it into 5 big sections, but we’ll be preaching the letter in 11 weeks, so don’t get too worried if you feel like this is way too broad. I promise we’re not going to just skim the surface.

Overview

1. 1:1-2 — Introduction

2. 1:3-2:13 — Personal Instructions to Timothy

a. Major commands:

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| i. rekindle the gift of God | vi. be strong in grace |
| ii. don't be ashamed | vii. commit the teaching to others |
| iii. share in suffering | viii. share in suffering |
| iv. hold the pattern | ix. remember Jesus Christ |
| v. guard the deposit | |

3. 2:14-3:9 — Instructions to Timothy for the Church

a. Major commands:

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|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| i. remind "them" | vi. pursue righteousness |
| ii. charge "them" | vii. reject disputes |
| iii. be diligent | viii. know hard times are coming |
| iv. avoid irreverent speech | ix. avoid godless people |
| v. flee youthful passions | |

4. 3:10-4:8 — Final Instructions to Timothy

a. Major commands:

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| i. continue in what you have learned | iv. exercise self-control, endure hardship, do the work of evangelist, fulfill your ministry |
| ii. preach the word | |
| iii. correct, rebuke, and encourage | |

5. 4:9-22 — Conclusion

So, there's a brief overview of how the letter is put together and how Paul is trying to accomplish his goals of encouraging and strengthening Timothy for what is to come when Paul has gone home to glory. It's an intensely personal letter, with tons of reminders of Timothy's past, both his own past and his past with Paul.

It's also a theologically rich letter, not for the sake of theological richness itself, but because there's no way on earth Timothy could have had the slightest shred of hope of success apart from catching a glimpse of God's glory and knowing that the God whom

Paul preached was the same God who had called Timothy and who had set him apart for this work.

Speaking of that richness, let's look at a few major themes that arise throughout the letter. I'm also providing some memory verses for each theme.

Coincidentally, there's at least one memory verse from all four chapters. I think that, if you were to commit these verses to memory, they would come in handy at some point in your life — whether you're in a similar situation to Timothy and going through some intense suffering and you need to be reminded of why we're doing what we're doing, or whether you're training someone else to pass on the gospel baton to others.

Major themes and memory verses

1. Facing opposition and sharing in suffering

a. **1:8, 12; 2:3, 9-10; 3:10-13, 4:5**

2 Timothy 1:11–12 CSB

¹¹ For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, ¹² and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.

2 Timothy 2:1–3 CSB

¹ You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

2. Remaining unashamed

a. **1:8, 12, 16-18; 2:15**

2 Timothy 2:15 CSB

¹⁵ Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth.

3. Holding fast to the Scriptures/the Gospel message/the truth

a. **1:6, 1:12-14; 2:2, 8-9, 15-19, 24-26; 3:6-8, 10, 14-17; 4:2-5, 13**

2 Timothy 3:16–17 CSB

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

4. Jesus as coming Judge

a. **1:12, 18; 2:15, 19; 4:1, 8, 14**

2 Timothy 4:1–2 CSB

¹ I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of his appearing and his kingdom: ² Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching.

Now, as far as I'm concerned, I've done enough talking. I feel pretty well oriented to this letter and I hope you're there with me — it's okay if you aren't, of course, but if I do any more talking, I'm only going to get in the way of letting the Lord speak for himself in the Scriptures that he inspired. Now please listen as I read Paul's second letter to Timothy.

Reading the letter.

2 Timothy CSB

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, for the sake of the promise of life in Christ Jesus: ² To Timothy, my dearly loved son. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day. ⁴ Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also. ⁶ Therefore, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

⁸ So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. ⁹ He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. ¹⁰ This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹ For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, ¹² and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.

¹³ Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives

in us. ¹⁵ You know that all those in the province of Asia have deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶ May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. ¹⁷ On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he diligently searched for me and found me. ¹⁸ May the Lord grant that he obtain mercy from him on that day. You know very well how much he ministered at Ephesus.

¹ You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer. ⁵ Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to get a share of the crops. ⁷ Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel, ⁹ for which I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But the word of God is not bound. ¹⁰ This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. ¹¹ This saying is trustworthy: For if we died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

¹⁴ Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to fight about words. This is useless and leads to the ruin of those who listen. ¹⁵ Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth. ¹⁶ Avoid irreverent and empty speech, since those who engage in it will produce even more godlessness, ¹⁷ and their teaching will spread like gangrene. Hymenaeus and Philetus are among them. ¹⁸ They have departed from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and are ruining the faith of some. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, bearing this inscription: **The Lord knows those who are his**, and let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness. ²⁰ Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also those of wood and clay; some for honorable use and some for dishonorable. ²¹ So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

²² Flee from youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. ²³ But reject foolish and ignorant disputes, because you know that they breed quarrels. ²⁴ The Lord's servant must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, ²⁵ instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth. ²⁶ Then they may come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

¹ But know this: Hard times will come in the last days. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, demeaning, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, ⁴ traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to the form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people. ⁶ For among them are those who worm their way into households and deceive gullible women overwhelmed by sins and led astray by a variety of passions, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth. They are men who are corrupt in mind and worthless in regard to the faith. ⁹ But they will not make further progress, for their foolishness will be clear to all, as was the foolishness of Jannes and Jambres.

¹⁰ But you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance, ¹¹ along with the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured—and yet the Lord rescued me from them all. ¹² In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. ¹³ Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, ¹⁵ and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

¹ I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of his appearing and his kingdom: ² Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching. ³ For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. ⁴ They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. ⁵ But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. ⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing.

⁹ Make every effort to come to me soon, ¹⁰ because Demas has deserted me, since he loved this present world, and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you, for he is useful to me in the ministry. ¹² I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak I left in Troas with Carpus, as well as the scrolls, especially the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did great harm to me. The Lord will repay him according to his works. ¹⁵ Watch out for him yourself because he strongly opposed our words. ¹⁶ At my first defense, no one stood by me, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against

them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that I might fully preach the word and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

¹⁹ Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰ Erastus has remained at Corinth; I left Trophimus sick at Miletus. ²¹ Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as do Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers and sisters.

²² The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all.