

No.22, Second Timothy

The progression from 1 Timothy to 2 Timothy is very obvious. In 1 Timothy the emphasis is largely on the pastoral interests associated with the Church – how it is to be governed; its responsibility to be the pillar and ground of the truth; its ministry in prayer and in the care of its members. These are some of the matters that are covered in the first letter sent to Timothy. However, in the second epistle the emphasis is decidedly on the man of God, the minister of Christ, focusing on the service that he is to exercise for the Lord's sake and glory. Thus, in this epistle Paul clearly shows Timothy what he ought to be as a minister of Christ – that is the theme of 2 Timothy.

It is vital to note when Paul wrote this epistle, for in doing so we will note the appropriateness of its theme – it was written when Paul was at the very point of martyrdom, ch 4: 6 & 7. Hence, this epistle was written from the prison – as many of Paul's epistles were. It was, therefore, penned at a time when the Apostle's ministry was just about to close, a fact that adds to its theme. Since Paul was about to leave the scene of time then how important that he write a letter in which he would lay down certain marks or features that should characterize the Gospel minister like Timothy. A very solemn point is made here: faithful Gospel ministers are not here forever, thus it is imperative that we beseech the Lord to raise up a fresh group of young men to carry on. See this emphasis in ch 1: 12 & 13 and ch 4: 5 & 6 and note the clear connection of thoughts: Paul was about to leave the earthly scene, thus he exhorts Timothy to exercise a faithful ministry.

We can form an outline of this epistle by noting certain key words in each chapter that relate to the position and the service of the Gospel minister.

1. He must exercise his ministry in the power of the Spirit.

See ch 1: 6 & 7 – by “*the gift of God...*” Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as v.7 indicates where the Holy Spirit is in view by inference and is identified as the Spirit of “*power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*” The language shows that the Spirit had come upon Timothy at the time of his ordination to the ministry. Note Paul's statement that this gift of God in Timothy was there by the putting on of his (Paul's) hands. Then in vs. 13 & 14 the Apostle again makes reference to the Holy Spirit as the enabler of Timothy in his ministry.

The context in which Paul reminds Timothy of his possession of the Spirit for ministry is such that it is obvious that Timothy very much felt his weakness & the oppression of the enemy. Note v.8 – it is clear that Timothy was under pressure to be ashamed of Christ and His servant. Paul was a lonely and isolated figure, v.15; thus there was the mental pressure being brought to bear on Timothy to distance himself from the Lord's servant. Thus, Paul encourages Timothy not to be ashamed but to hold fast. Note in vs. 16-18 that he cites this man Onesiphorus as an example to encourage Timothy, as well as reminding him of the enablement of the Spirit that was at his disposal. Note again v.7 and observe the qualities of *power, love, and of a sound mind* that the Spirit creates within the man of God or the believer to enable him to exercise his ministry.

2. He must exercise his ministry in the strength of Christ's grace.

See ch 2: 1 – the section that commences here runs down to v.13; and in these verses there is great emphasis on the afflictions of the Gospel minister, a point denoted by various imageries. V.3 – ***soldiering*** in the midst of hardness. V.5 – ***striving*** in the race: the words could also be read *contend in the games* giving the clear picture of the athlete exerting all his energy in the competition. V.6 – ***serving*** in the toil of the field; the sense of the verse is that there must be labour first if there is to be any enjoyment of fruit. Vs. 8 & 9 – ***suffering*** for the sake of the Gospel and that to the most extreme degree.

But for Timothy, as he was reminded by these different images of the intensity of his afflictions, there was Christ's grace to make him strong. Note that Paul seeks to encourage his younger colleague from his own experience, v.10 – a verse in which we can hear the echo of Christ's sufferings for His elect.

3. Then he must exercise his ministry through the study of God's word.

One of the problems that Timothy had to face – and that every true minister of Christ has to face – is that of those who aspire to a teaching role for which they are not qualified. But though they are not called or equipped for such they imagine that they are, causing all kinds of havoc. This is the setting in which Paul gives the vital command of ch 2: 15 – Timothy is to study the Scriptures in order, for one thing, to help those who have been well-nigh wrecked spiritually by dangerous errors spewed out by unscrupulous rascals.

Paul certainly does not mince his words as he describes those who Timothy could only resist through his own diligent study of the word. Such subvert those who listen to them. The word for *subverting* literally means “to turn down” not in the sense of rejecting something but in the sense of turning an object face down. Thus, it sometimes translated *to overthrow, to pull down*. The actual Greek word is “*katastrophe*” giving us the English equivalent *catastrophe*. It is certainly a catastrophe when people are spiritually overthrown because of error. False teaching also promotes ungodliness, v.16; and then v.17 – it eats away like a *canker*. The word for “*canker*” is *gangraina* giving the English “*gangrene*” and signifying the sense of the word. Once gangrene sets into the limb it eats and destroys so rapidly bringing decay and death. Thus, see v.18 to see the terrible results of false teaching. In the face of such Timothy's role was clear, v.15. The words “*rightly dividing*” mean *to cut straight*; the reference being to cutting a straight furrow. The minister must not deviate from the Scripture's central theme of redemption.

4. Timothy must also exercise his ministry by adhering to the Scriptures.

Ch 3: 14-17 – this is a familiar passage and its teaching is clear, with v.14 being the key verse. Timothy had been grounded in the truth through early instruction in the Scriptures. But he is reminded of the divine origin of the Scripture and its sufficiency therefore for every area of ministry, furnishing the man of God with all needed to serve the Lord.

Again the setting here is important – vs. 1-13. Here is a vital passage describing the advent of perilous or difficult times for God's people. These perilous times or seasons cover the entire NT period, which is what is meant by *the last days*. Only by adherence to God's word can the Lord's servant exercise his ministry.

5. Finally Timothy could only exercise his ministry by focusing on the primacy of preaching.

This is really the great thrust of the final chapter, based on the words of v.2. Timothy is exhorted to preach the word *urgently* which is the meaning of the word "instant". He must also apply it to his hearers, v.2b. Moreover, in his preaching ministry Timothy was going to face the clamor of men for something to suit their carnal tastes, vs.3 & 4. But he was to remain faithful in the face of it all.

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