

Covenant History—Second Timothy: *Faithful to the End*

Introduction

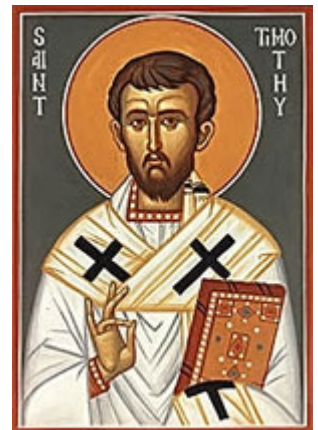
Author and Recipient

The books of First and Second Timothy were not written *by* Timothy, of course, but *to* Timothy. This sometimes confuses people because we have a number of books in the New Testament that are named after certain men because that's who *wrote* them. For instance, First and Second Peter are named First and Second *Peter* because it was Peter who wrote them. Likewise, First, Second, and Third John are named First, Second, and Third John because *John* wrote them. Same thing for James and Jude, not to mention the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They go by these names because these men were their authors.



However, in the case of First and Second Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, we have books that are named, not for their author, but for their recipients.

So then, First and Second Timothy were written *by* the apostle Paul *to* Timothy, his young apprentice and co-worker in the cause of the gospel, whom Paul looked upon as his own son in the faith. He calls him his faithful and beloved child (1 Cor. 4:17; cf. 1 Tim. 1:2). And in Philippians 2, he says, "You know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel" (Philip. 2:22).



Date

Second Timothy is Paul's last letter, which makes it all the more interesting. It seems to have been written during a second Roman imprisonment. You may recall that the book of Acts ends with Paul under a kind of house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30-31). It was during this time that what are called his "prison epistles" were written: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

There is pretty solid evidence that Paul's imprisonment in Rome that we read about in Acts 28 ended with his acquittal and release, and that afterward he resumed his ministry of traveling and preaching Christ throughout the empire.

What evidence do we have for this? In the first place, in the prison epistles, Paul clearly expects to be released (Phil. 1:25; 2:24; Philemon 22).

In the second place, in Titus he mentions having been in Crete. In Acts, however, which follows his ministry very closely, there is no record of him ever going there. He must have gone to Crete after the book of Acts was written. Consequently, he must have been acquitted and released sometime after Acts 28.

In the third place, we have the testimony of what is regarded to be a trustworthy source outside the Bible in a very early Christian document, perhaps the earliest outside the writings of the New Testament—the epistle of First Clement, written about A.D. 95. Clement says that Paul, "taught righteousness to all the world...reaching the furthest limits of the West."¹ The furthest limits of the West would be Spain. But we have no record in Acts of Paul going to Spain; consequently, it must have happened subsequent to the

¹ First Clement 1:5

period of time covered in Acts; which means that he must have been acquitted and released.

Paul had expressed a desire to go to Spain in his letter to the Romans when he said, “I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you” (Rom. 15:24).

Chronology of Paul’s Letters

And in the writings of the early church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea, writing in about the year 325, we have this account:

Paul spent two whole years in Rome in free custody, preaching without hindrance. After defending himself [successfully], the apostle is said to have set out again on the ministry of preaching and, coming a second time to the same city, found fulfillment in martyrdom. During this imprisonment he composed the second epistle to Timothy, mentioning both his earlier defense as well as his impending fulfillment.²

Period	Letter	Date	Written From	Acts
First Missionary Journey		c. 46-47		13-14
	Galatians	c. 48	Antioch in Syria	14:28
Second Missionary Journey	1 Thessalonians	c. 49-51	Corinth	18:1-18
	2 Thessalonians	c. 49-51	Corinth	18:1-18
Third Missionary Journey	1 Corinthians	c. 53-55	Ephesus	19:20
	2 Corinthians	c. 55-56	Macedonia	20:1
	Romans	c. 57	Corinth	20:2-3
First Roman Imprisonment	Ephesians	c. 60-62	Rome	28:30-31
	Philippians	c. 60-62	Rome	28:30-31
	Colossians	c. 60-62	Rome	28:30-31
	Philemon	c. 60-62	Rome	28:30-31
Fourth Missionary Journey	1 Timothy	c. 62-64	Macedonia?	
	Titus	c. 62-64	Macedonia?	
Second Roman Imprisonment	2 Timothy	c. 65-67	Rome	

So, as best as we can tell—and there’s a pretty general consensus about this among conservative scholars—Paul wrote First Timothy and Titus after he was released from his first Roman imprisonment, and Second Timothy during a second Roman imprisonment, shortly before

² Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius: The History of the Church—A New Translation with Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), 2:22, p. 80

his martyrdom. This makes the letter all the more interesting, doesn't it, to know that it is his last letter, and he's expecting in a short time to give his life for Christ.

Theme

There are several things we could point to as themes in Second Timothy.

One is that there is no shame in being a Christian or in believing the gospel or in suffering on account of the gospel.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God (2 Tim. 1:8)

I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me (2 Tim. 1:11-12)

One might be tempted to feel a sense of shame when he is imprisoned and punished as if he were a criminal, and exposed to public humiliation. But Paul says, "Not me. I am not ashamed, because I know him whom I have believed. And I know that my trust in him is not misplaced. Now it looks to all the world like I am in the wrong. Now it looks to all the world that I am a fool. But I know him in whom I have believed. I know that my trust in him is not in vain, and my labor for him is not in vain, and my suffering for his sake is not in vain. He is faithful; he is willing and he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him."

It might be expected, in light of all that he suffered, and on account of the apparent foolishness of the message he preached—a crucified Messiah—that Paul would feel ashamed. Not so. He makes an

emphatic denial in Romans when he says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel [though some think I should be], for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). So far is he from feeling shame on account of the gospel, that instead he says he boasts in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 6:14).

And in 1:16 he says:

May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains (2 Tim. 1:16)

And he urges Timothy,

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has *no need to be ashamed*, rightly handling the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15)

Another theme we find in the book, which is related to the first, is that of enduring suffering for the sake of the gospel.

1:8 “share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God”

2:3 “share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus”

2:8-13

4:5

Another interesting thing is Paul’s use of “sayings” in the Pastoral Epistles. I didn’t have time to point this out last week, but we find several “trustworthy sayings” that Paul quotes.

First Timothy

1:15

3:1

4:8-9

Second Timothy

2:11-13

Titus

3:8

Exposition of Selected Passages

Chapter one consists of an opening greeting, along with some words of thanksgiving and praise for Timothy and some general exhortations to fulfill the work to which he had been called, along with some personal reminiscences of times they had shared together.

2:1-7

2:14-25

3:1-17

4:1-5

(4:6) What a beautiful image! “Paul describes his impending death in OT sacrificial language.”³ (For the drink offering in Israel, see Ex. 29:40-41; Num. 15:5-24; for another metaphorical use, see Philip. 2:17)

(4:7-8) Do you see here how Paul faces the future with a clear conscience? He has discharged his duty. He has fulfilled his calling. He has been faithful to the end, and he expects to be received with the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord!”

³ ESV Study Bible

(4:9-13) Even though he's in prison, and he's expecting martyrdom, he wants to be fruitful in the meantime in his service to Christ.

(4:14-22)