

## ABIDE: A BIBLE READING CHALLENGE

# JOURNEY THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

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## HELP FOR YOU, HELP FOR ME

### *2 TIMOTHY*

The tone is quite different from 1 Timothy to 2 Timothy. One might think that it would simply be a clarification or a continuation from Paul's first letter to Timothy— Thessalonians is that way. But once you read this letter, you begin to realize quickly that this is not what is happening. In Paul's first letter to Timothy, it's clear that Timothy needed Paul. In the second letter, it's clear that Paul needs Timothy. The roles have reversed.

It might be helpful to remember at this point that the letters you read in the New Testament are not in chronological order. In the case of 2 Timothy, this letter is believed to have been the last letter Paul was able to write. This means that you are looking at a ministry that changed drastically.

Paul is an old man now, but his age is just the beginning of his problems. He is writing from prison once more, but this time it's different. In many of the letters, Paul had been on somewhat of a house arrest, on other occasions, he was chained to a rotating guard. However, by this time, while awaiting to be heard by Caesar, it is believed that Paul was writing from the infamous Mamertine Prison in Rome. This place was more of a hole in the ground rather than a prison. There was an opening in the top where food was shoved down to the prisoners. It had a small creek that ran underneath and in this combination, caused the environment there to be both dark and damp year round. It is said that the locals nicknamed this place "The Sepulcher" or, "The Tomb." The reason was because by the end of an individual's stay, they would become the main course from the dense rat population that this prison hosted. When Paul was placed in this prison, he would never leave.

But just as dark and lonely as the prison, was the Christian culture at the time. The persecution that Christians faced was greater than ever. Emperor Nero was the leader of Rome and he developed a deep, psychotic, and torturous hatred for Christians, and the price to pay to identify as a Christian was just too high for many.

When you read this letter there is a sense of abandonment that you can see as Paul is writing. In **2 Timothy 1:15**, here is what you find, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me..." Again in **2 Timothy 4:10**, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia."

All of what Paul had come to hold dear physically was being stripped away at the end, and he calls on this young man that he had led to Christ and personally trained, and says, "There was a time when you needed help, but it's your turn, Timothy. Now,

I need help from you.”

Now, the picture that is painted up to this point is a sad one. But that’s not all you will find. Let’s get into the letter and see how Paul handled his circumstances.

### ***How to Think About 2 Timothy***

Besides asking for Timothy’s help, in light of the persecution and the temptation to just give up on the faith, Paul basically makes four different appeals to Timothy for him to keep in mind.

**Keep Your Ministry Burning (2 Timothy Chapter 1)**— Because preaching not only places a target on you, it causes you to continually place yourself in a vulnerable position. Standing before people, pouring out your heart, and teaching people truth that is not popular is not the easiest of tasks, and the temptation is to just stop— especially when you don’t feel like people are listening to you anyway.

**Stir Up Your Gift (2 Timothy 1:3-6):** When Paul speaks to Timothy, he first tells him that he remembers Timothy’s heritage of faith. Paul remembers his grandmother, who taught his mother, and how his mother taught him. With a genuine gift of salvation, God gives genuine gifts of service, and for Timothy that was the gift of preaching and teaching. But when God gives you a gift, it must be developed. That’s what Paul told Timothy, “Stir it up! Keep it hot!”

**Stay Away from Fear (2 Timothy 1:7-18):** In these verses Paul tells Timothy not to be discouraged or hesitant about what is going on all around him. Verse 10 really illustrates the reason why, “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” That is not a message that ever needs to be discouraged; it’s a message that needs to be proclaimed!

**Keep Your Ministry Bolstered (2 Timothy 2)**— In this chapter Paul uses several pictures that help remind us exactly what God’s preachers, and God’s people are to do.

**You Are a Steward (2 Timothy 2:1-2):** Every generation is just one generation away from losing the message of the gospel. It’s up to the current generation to pass on our faith. We are stewards of God’s truth.

**You Are a Soldier (2 Timothy 2:3-4):** Don’t be surprised that the Christian life is hard. You’re in a spiritual battle, of course it’s hard. But you’re a soldier who is equipped to endure hard things.

**You Are a Succeder (2 Timothy 2:5):** Like warfare, Paul continually comes back to this picture of an athlete who knows what it takes to succeed.

**You Are a Sower (2 Timothy 2:6-14):** We are called to sow the seed of God’s Word.

**You Are a Student (2 Timothy 2:15- 23):** The preacher is to rightly divide— cut even slices— God’s truth. But this takes careful study. He must be a student of the word.

**You Are a Servant (2 Timothy 2:24-26):** In all of this, the preacher must never use all of the information that he gains, all the leadership skill he develops, all of the talent he sharpens as a means to be overbearing. He uses it to serve people. It gives him a keener sense in helping people in the right way.

**Keep Your Ministry Bold (2 Timothy 3)**— Paul lists off a set of challenging defining features that will present itself to preachers, but tells Timothy that there is a way to handle it.

**Beware of the Future (2 Timothy 3:1-7):** If there was any one person that would be categorized by this list, there is not doubt you would probably want to stay away from them. But what is so jarring is the fact that these

characteristics will one day be said of an entire generational makeup.

**Learn from the Past (2 Timothy 3:8-9):** If you stop at verse 7, then the prospect of ministry seems pretty underwhelming. Why in the world would God call preachers to minister to people who simply will not listen? Well, you need to understand that in the course of the Bible, evil never has the last say. Just like God dealt with people who resisted truth in the past, he dealt with them in the worst cultures this world has to offer as well.

**Preach in the Present (2 Timothy 3:10-17):** How is the preacher to react to this kind of culture? How should the preacher respond to destructive logic, and people, en masse, turning away from God? 2 Timothy 3:14 “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned as hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;” Remember why you have a relationship with Christ in the first place, and just keep moving on in that same teaching no matter what happens. You don’t get to look at the culture and say, “What’s the point? No one else is living like this.” That’s not an option.

**Keep Your Ministry Bright (2 Timothy 4)**— A preacher’s ministry is to stay burning. If you start a fire in order to keep yourself and your family warm, it’s going to take some work to keep the fire going. But you’re not just looking to keep the fire going, you’re looking to also protect it. There are elements that keep coming in from the outside that would threaten the flame, and what you’ll need to do is bolster the flame. Not only this but there are dangerous predators around you and those you need to protect, and so, this flame is going to need to be bold. It’s going to need to be set somewhere, and you have to refuse to be removed from it. And then your eye has to be on those who would need to see this light and come to it. That’s why the fire of ministry must burn bright.

**Let Your Preaching Shine Bright (2 Timothy 4:1-4):** Verse 2, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exert with all long-suffering and doctrine.” This leaves no subject off limits, and teaches us that we all need to be taught the entire counsel of God. This is how preaching becomes bright. The main problem with many celebrity status preachers in our time is not so much what they say, but what they don’t say. Preaching brightly means that you preach it all.

**Let Your Life Shine Bright (2 Timothy 4:5-8):** Some of the great verses of the Bible exist right here. As Paul analyzed his life for Christ, this is the conclusion that he came to in verse 7, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith;” A life that shines bright, is a life that finishes well.

**Let Your Desire Shine Bright (2 Timothy 4:9-22):** It’s interesting. While the circumstances of Paul are those that no one would like to experience, pay attention to what one of Paul’s greatest desires is aside from needing support from Timothy. Verse 13, “The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the book, but especially the parchments.” Paul had some physical needs; he needed a coat— it was cold in that prison. But watch— he also had some intellectual needs. Paul said that he wanted some books. He wanted to keep on learning. Even while in prison, even in his old age, he wanted to feed his mind. We’re still not done, though. Paul had some spiritual needs. He especially wanted Timothy to bring him God’s word so that he could warm his soul. Paul’s desire tells us much about this man. What do you desire to have more than anything?

### *What to Look for in 2 Timothy*

**Themes**— The themes that surface come by way of several commands that Paul gives along the way in this letter. Three are mentioned here, but on your own, see if you can find more.

**Boldness:** There are bold claims all over the place in this letter, and it starts right at the front, 2 Timothy 1:8, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the

afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;” Or how about this statement in 2 Timothy 3:12 “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Over and over Paul calls Timothy to grind against the culture, and how he was tempted to just give up. But Paul peppered Timothy with a series of bold statements to help this young preacher take another step forward... and then another... and then another.

**Remembrance:** Multiple times this theme will surface as well. Paul reminds Timothy of their relationship. Paul reminds Timothy of how his own mother and grandmother invested in him. Paul reminds Timothy that he serves a risen Savior, and that Christ is the source of the power he needed. Paul reminds Timothy to stay away from temptation and to keep himself pure.

**Warning:** Chapter 3 really is just one large warning. Paul begins to describe what the future generations will look like, and it’s not good at all. Paul warns Timothy about what to expect, and how to teach other preachers what to expect when it comes to people who will break your heart because there will be a time when they won’t listen to God’s word anymore. Paul says, “I’m warning you; don’t be surprised when this happens. It’s coming.”

### *What to Gain from 2 Timothy*

**Advance the Truth**— Obviously this advancement was supposed to come from Timothy— He was to preach, he was to teach, he was to grow, and he was to live a life worthy of the gospel, all for the advancement of the gospel. But like Paul, one day, Timothy would be at the end of his life, and then what? Well, Paul tells Timothy to advance the Gospel by teaching faithful men who were able to teach others also. The advancement of the truth is to move seamlessly from generation to generation!

**Guard the Truth**— There will never be a time when truth stops taking heavy fire from Satan while God allows princely rule over this world. Satan attacks truth in discouraging God’s people, in tempting God’s people, in assaulting God’s people, and trying to overwhelm God’s people. But the command of God has not changed. Our orders are still clear— guard the truth, and guard it to the end. Teach those behind you that the gospel is worth losing your life over. Let’s preach to ourselves, and preach to others that it’s okay to be confused, it’s okay to struggle, but it’s never okay to quit.

HELP FOR YOU, HELP FOR ME - II TIMOTHY

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