

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

An Expanded Paraphrase

I. SALUTATION (Ch. 1: 1-2)

To Timothy, my dear son, this letter comes from Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, in accordance with the promise of life in Christ Jesus. Grace, mercy and peace be yours from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

II. REKINDLE THE FLAME: GUARD THE DEPOSIT (Ch. 1: 3-14)

Thanks be to God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, I remember you without ceasing in my prayers night and day. As I recall your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I call to mind your sincere faith—the faith which first took up its abode in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and which (I am fully persuaded) continues to abide in you.

That is why I remind you now to rekindle the flame of that divine gift which was given you when my hands were laid on you. It was not a spirit of timidity that God gave us but a spirit of power and love and sound judgment. So, do not be ashamed of your witness to our Lord; and do not be ashamed of me His prisoner. No: endure hardship in the cause of the gospel with the power that God imparts. It was God who saved us, and called us to holiness—not in consideration of any works of ours but out of His own mercy and grace. That grace was bestowed on us in Christ Jesus eternal ages ago, but now it has been brought to light by the manifestation on earth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Christ has broken the power of death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel—that gospel of which I have been appointed a herald, apostle and teacher. That, indeed, is why I endure my present suffering. But I am not ashamed: I know the One whom I have believed, and I am well assured that He can guard until that coming day the trust I have reposed in Him.¹ Meanwhile, Timothy, maintain the standard of the wholesome

¹ Or, the "deposit" (i.e. the truth of the gospel) which He has entrusted to me.

words which you have heard from me, together with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

III. DESERTION AND FIDELITY (Ch. 1: 15-18)

This you know, that all our people in the province of Asia have turned away from me, Phygelus and Hermogenes among them. May God grant mercy to the family of Onesiphorus! He often refreshed me, and he was not ashamed of the chain I wore. Indeed, when he was in Rome, he made diligent search for me until he found me. And you know right well how much service he rendered me in Ephesus. May the Lord graciously grant that he finds mercy at His hand on that coming day!

IV. APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION (Ch. 2: 1-2)

So then, my son, strengthen yourself in the grace which is yours in Christ Jesus. You remember what you heard me say in the presence of many witnesses? Well, commit these words to trustworthy men who will be competent in their turn to teach others.

V. THE SERVICE OF CHRIST (Ch. 2: 3-13)

Endure hardship along with me like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. You know that a soldier on active service does not get himself involved in the concerns of civilian life; his aim is to give satisfaction to his commanding officer. Similarly, in athletic contests an athlete does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. It is right that the farmer who works hard at cultivating the land should receive the first share of the fruits of his labour. Give thought to what I say: the Lord will give you insight into everything. Remember our confession of faith, according to the gospel which I preach: "Jesus Christ, of David's line, raised from the dead".

In the service of this gospel I endure hardship and imprisonment to boot, as though I were a criminal. But they have not been able to imprison the message of God! It is for the sake of God's chosen people that I endure all these things, so that they on their part may attain the salvation to be found in Christ Jesus, and eternal glory withal. Here is a trustworthy saying:

"If we have shared His death, we shall share His life;
 If we endure, we shall share His kingdom:
 If we deny Him, He will deny us;
 If we prove unfaithful, He remains faithful;
 He cannot be untrue to Himself".

VI. THINGS TO AVOID AND THINGS TO PURSUE (Ch. 2: 14-26)

Remind them of this ; urge them in the sight of God not to engage in wordy arguments, which do no one any good, but only upset the hearers. Make it your aim to present yourself to God as a man worthy of His approval. Then you will have no cause to be ashamed in your work for Him, as you press straight on in your exposition of the message of truth. Avoid empty talk about worldly matters ; it leads to more and more ungodliness. Such talk corrodes the soul like a gangrene. I think in this connection of Hymenaeus and Philetus. They have gone astray from the truth, claiming that the resurrection has already taken place; and they have upset some people's faith.

Yet God's firm foundation-stone stands with these words inscribed upon it: "The Lord knows His own people" and "All who name the Lord's name must renounce ungodliness".

In a large house there are many vessels—not only gold and silver ones, but vessels of wood and earthenware as well. Some of them are for honorable service, and some receive no honour. So, whoever purifies himself from these polluting things will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart for the use of the Master Himself, and available for any good service.

Avoid youthful cravings ; pursue righteousness and faith, love and peace, in company with those who with pure heart call on the Lord. Refuse to engage in foolish and stupid speculations ; they only lead to quarrels. And the servant of the Lord must not quarrel ; he should be gentle to everyone, ready to teach them, bearing ill without resentment, courteously correcting those who set themselves against him. The Lord may thus move them to repent and come to know the truth, and they may be rescued from the devil's snare in which he trapped them so that they might serve his will.

(To be continued)