

2 TIMOTHY

Lesson 1

2 Timothy Chapter 1

This study is focused on the second of two personal letters that Paul sent to Timothy in Ephesus. These letters are to be distinguished from the letter that Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, entitled "Ephesians," which is a separate study in our curricula.

Timothy was much more than simply an evangelist in the city of Ephesus. We find, for example, that he was not the pastor or the bishop of the church at Ephesus, but rather he was serving as Paul's local representative—just as he had been in Corinth, Thessalonica, and Philippi. From a study of 1 Timothy, we know that the city of Ephesus consisted of a people who embraced its false religions and pagan practices. Against this backdrop, the work of Paul and Timothy saw a number of the city's Gentile and Jewish residents become active followers of Christ in the establishment of the church there.

As was mentioned in our 1 Timothy study, Ephesus had become the center of false teaching within the new church, as predicted by Paul in Acts 20:17-18, 26-31. This would come as no surprise to anyone who knew that religious life in Ephesus was heavily focused on the black arts, magic, divination, demon control and the like (see Acts 19:13-17). Furthermore, Ephesus was specifically cited in Jesus' letters to the seven churches contained in the book of Revelation.

In this lesson, we learn that several years have passed between Paul's writing of his first letter and his writing of 2nd Timothy. This is the last letter that Paul will write before he is executed. While no one is sure of the exact timeframe that has passed since he wrote 1st Timothy, we do know the letter was written in 67 AD, the same year that Paul was executed—presumably beheaded.

In Ephesus, at the time of Paul's second letter, rebellious leaders have risen within the church—specifically Alexander and Hymenaeus, who were continuing to oppose Paul and his teaching. Worse, others were now following these two renegade leaders as they led these followers into a corrupted version of their faith. As part of their perversion of the Gospel, these two stressed unrest, endless debate, dissension and argumentation—all of which ran counter to Paul and Timothy's teaching of purity and obedience.

Discouraging as it was to both Paul and Timothy, it was particularly troubling to Timothy, as he was becoming intimidated by the false teaching and corrupt leadership which was overtaking the work at Ephesus. Paul's second letter is a somber note to Timothy not to be discouraged. He also reminds Timothy that in the days leading up to Christ's return, these things were foretold to take place. False teachers, treacherous and insincere people, unjust persecutions, and much more will all be present in our day as well, just as they were at Ephesus.

And just as Jesus charged Ephesus in his letter to this church in Revelation 2:1-7, Paul charges Timothy to focus on the Gospel message; and to hold on to the Holy Word of God, so that he may finish the work that God has given him.

With this backdrop, let's begin our study of 2nd Timothy by looking at Chapter 1. Read this chapter and consider the following:

1. Who did Paul credit with having a strong faith that was passed along to Timothy? (See 2 Timothy 1:3-5.)

2. Paul then addresses the struggles that Timothy is experiencing at Ephesus, as the rebel leaders continue to negatively influence the church, while casting aspersions on Paul and Timothy. In an atmosphere of contention and an environment of false teaching, what does Paul instruct Timothy to do in order to battle this evil within the church? (See 2 Timothy 1:6-14.)
3. In the closing verses of Chapter 1, Paul identifies those who have been disloyal to him and those who have been loyal to him. Whom does he call out as being disloyal, and whom does cite as being loyal?

In this lesson, we observed that, several years after Paul's initial work in Ephesus, much trouble remains; as Timothy continues to fight against the false teachers and treacherous leaders in the church. We also see Paul encouraging his protégé Timothy and reminding him that the Holy Spirit was sent to empower him. He further reminds Timothy that the foundation of his faith, which was established in his early childhood teaching and love of the scriptures, will afford him the capability for even deeper faith and empower him to complete the work that God has given him.

Let's keep in mind that Paul's words to Timothy are also recorded in scripture to encourage us today. We are similarly empowered by the Holy Spirit, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10) So, let's be about that work in our daily lives, as we seek opportunities to share the Gospel and to minister to others in the name of Christ.

May God richly bless you this week!

In Christ,

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