



Bible In a Year by Aaron Ferguson

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One Year Chronological New Testament.  
They are Aaron's commentary on  
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# Spirit of Fear or Power?

2 Timothy 1:1-18

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## Today in Your Reading

Paul's second letter to Timothy is his last letter, his farewell address. In 64 AD, the psychotic Emperor Nero set a large part of Rome on fire, to make space for a new construction project. When angry citizens demanded retribution, Nero blamed the Christians and launched the most intense wave of persecution to that point.

Scores of Christians were arrested and killed. The Apostle Paul was one of them. Therefore, he wrote this letter to Timothy while in prison (a second time), just before his death (66-68 AD).

Knowing that his days were numbered, Paul wanted to warn and encourage Timothy one last time. Before he warned Timothy of the difficult days ahead (Chapter 3), Paul affirmed and challenged him in several areas. First, after his standard greeting (1:1-2), Paul affirmed Timothy with his prayers (v.3).

Second, Paul affirmed him by expressing his desire to see him again, knowing that he wouldn't (v.4). Finally, he affirmed Timothy's sincere faith, which was handed down to him by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (v.5).

After these affirmations, Paul laid out several challenges for Timothy. "For this reason, I remind you..." he wrote. Paul's first challenge was to "kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you..." (v.6), referring to Timothy's spiritual gifts of leadership, preaching, and teaching. Evidently, Paul had either heard or sensed that Timothy was too passive in confronting the problems in the church at Ephesus (e.g., dealing with false teachers).

Paul's second challenge related to the first. He reminded Timothy that "God has not given us a spirit of timidity (or fear), but of power and discipline" (v.7). Because of Christ, we have overcome our sin and flesh. Because of Christ, we have overcome the devil and his evil forces.

Because of Christ, we can have confidence to go to God for help. **We need not to exhibit fear.**

Paul's third challenge related to the intensity of the Roman persecution and the fact that he was in prison again. "Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner..." (v.8-11).

Paul told Timothy that he was not ashamed of Christ, "for I know whom I have believed," he said (v.12). He believed that Christ, who had "abolished death and brought life and immortality would keep what he had entrusted to Him" until that day when he met Him in glory (v.10, 12).

Paul's fourth challenge was to remain faithful to the gospel. "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me..." he wrote (v.13). He followed by pointing out that "all who are in Asia (province) had turned away," except for Onesiphorus (v.15-18).

This unfaithfulness was due in part to the success of the false teachers and the rise in persecution. Thus, Paul issued his final challenge (in this passage), "Guard the treasure which has been entrusted to you" (v.14). Timothy had to do more to ensure that the gospel message was protected from evil men who would distort or destroy it.

## Daily Reflection

Why are today's Christians not bolder and more outspoken about their faith in Christ? What is it that we fear? What about you?

**Fear is selfish. Love is unselfish. Fear is not of God. He has given us a spirit of power and love.** How should love empower our testimony?

# Good Soldiers

2 Timothy 2:1-26

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## Today in Your Reading

We continued Paul's second and last letter to Timothy. In the opening (1:1-18), Paul challenged Timothy to be bold, fearless, and disciplined when dealing with the issues facing the church at Ephesus (e.g., false teachers). Paul carried this challenge into our passage today, charging Timothy "to be strong, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2:1, 3).

While Paul used multiple analogies in our passage, they all build on this idea of a soldier of Christ. For example, **soldiers are under command. They have their orders.** Timothy's orders were to protect the church from phony gospels (1:13-14), battle the false teachers, and leave the church in the hands of faithful men, referring to elders (2:2; 1 Tim. 3).

In the course of completing their mission, **good soldiers will inevitably suffer hardship** (2:3). But the question is what will soldiers do when they encounter difficulties? If they are single-minded, focused on the mission, then they will be determined to complete it, avoiding distractions and any unnecessary entanglements (v.4). Like an athlete, soldiers discipline themselves and follow the rules of engagement, being diligent and keeping their eyes on the reward, like a farmer who waits for the harvest (v.5-6).

**Good soldiers understand that they are fighting for something bigger than themselves, a noble cause, for which they consider themselves expendable.** They will gladly give their lives to fight for that cause. In this case, Paul said "he endured all things for the sake of the chosen," which is the Church for whom Christ died (v.8). Though he was imprisoned, Paul said, "The word of God cannot be imprisoned" (v.9), for the gospel is worthy of any sacrifice (v.7-13).

To battle the enemy (false teachers), Paul challenged Timothy to be competent with his weapon, "handling accurately the word of truth" (v.15). Competency requires diligent practice.

The last obstacle before facing the enemy is a soldier's own lusts and desires. While Christ has dealt with our sin and shame forever, our sinful flesh can get in the way. It frequently trips us and causes us to stumble. We must "cleanse ourselves of these things" and "flee from youthful lusts," so that we may be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, and prepared for every good work" (v.20-21).

## Daily Reflection

**Though we are all soldiers in the army of God, fighting the enemy, are we good soldiers?** Have we prepared ourselves as Paul instructed Timothy, and are we fighting in such a way as God instructed? "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind and patient with all, gently correcting those who are in opposition" (v.16, 23-26). Though we may be tough on the inside (bold, fearless, strong), we are tender on the outside (gentle, patient, and pure).

**By our fearless yet loving strategy, God can do wonders.** He may even "grant our opponents repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth. They may come to their senses and escape the captivity of the enemy" (v.25-26).

Would you consider yourself to be a good soldier of Christ? Why or why not?

Re-read 2 Timothy 2:15. How competent are you with your weapon — the word of truth?

An incompetent soldier, who can't use his weapon properly, will easily be defeated or taken captive. While Christians cannot lose their salvation, they can be taken captive by the enemy, meaning deceived, derailed, or distracted from their mission. Captive soldiers are no longer in the battle.

It is imperative for a Christian soldier to know how to use his weapon well — the Word of God — and wield it into battle every day, so that he or she is not taken captive by the enemy.

# Adequate to the Times

2 Timothy 3:1-17

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## Today in Your Reading

Paul warned Timothy of difficult days to come, during which things will “proceed from bad to worse” (v.1-9, 13). Evil men and imposters (of the faith) “will be deceived and deceive” others (v.13). Though “holding to a form of godliness,” they will indulge themselves and even promote all sorts of ungodly behavior (v.5).

Unfortunately, Paul could have been describing the world today, the times in which we are living. What are we to do in such an environment? How did Paul advise Timothy?

First, Paul wrote, “**Avoid such men as these**” (v.5) because they have “a depraved mind, rejecting the faith and opposing the truth” (v.8). It would make sense, if these people do what Paul described, that we would not participate, for they oppose all that we believe. But that’s not all Paul advised Timothy to do.

Second, to be prepared for such a time, **Paul told Timothy to “continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of**, knowing from whom you have learned them” (v.14). Timothy had been taught the truth by his mother and grandmother at an early age (1:5). What exactly had they taught him? Paul used the term *sacred writings* (3:15).

In short, **Paul told Timothy to keep studying the Scriptures, to stay focused on God’s Word**, which is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (v.16). Teaching refers to instruction for living. Reproof is to have one’s faults exposed. Correction refers to a course change, to rectify or recall from error; and righteousness refers to what is right by God, conformity to the divine laws or to the image of Christ (sanctification).

Notice what Paul said is the outcome of studying God’s Word. “The man (or woman) of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (v.16). To be adequate means to be equal to

the task or to have what is necessary. Though God has work for us to do, and the times in which we do it may be evil, God will equip us for the work, primarily through His Word.

**Finally, Paul told Timothy to be prepared for and expect pushback.** “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (v.12). Since the world rejected Christ and persecuted Him, we cannot expect anything less. The only way to be prepared for such hatred and hostility is to be in the Word.

## Daily Reflection

Let’s take 2 Timothy 3:14-17 in reverse order.

God has work for us to do (v.17).

He will prepare us for the work (v.17).

God equips us primarily through Scripture (v.16).

It is profitable for our salvation and spiritual growth (v.15, 16).

Therefore, we must continue reading and studying God’s Word daily (v.14). **How can we be equipped for the work of God if we are not engaged in the Word of God?**

What tasks have you found yourself inadequate to undertake recently? Are you seeking the wisdom of God in His Word?

It’s no secret. These days are evil. Paul’s scenario is unfolding before our eyes. What about the times concerns you?

How does Paul’s advice to Timothy encourage you?

Stay focused on God’s Word, so that you may be adequate to the times. God has work for you to do, and to be ready for it, He must prepare you. Make sure you carefully read His manual.

# Finish the Course

2 Timothy 4:1-22

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## Today in Your Reading

We closed the second letter to Timothy, the last written words of the Apostle Paul. He ended with his strongest appeal, then described his situation in Rome, and finished with some personal requests. Let's look a little more closely at each of these sections.

First, Paul "solemnly charged Timothy to preach the Word" (v.1-2), as he had done several times in his letter already. Remember, Paul sensed Timothy's passiveness in opposing the false teachers in Ephesus. He had already challenged Timothy to rekindle his spiritual gift (1:6), to preach or teach "in a spirit of power and love and discipline" (1:7), to "retain the standard of sound words" of the gospel (1:13), and guard the treasure entrusted to him" (1:14). Paul had also challenged Timothy to "be a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2:3), to be a diligent student of God's Word (2:15; 3:14-17), and to be ready "to suffer hardship" (2:9; 4:5).

Paul was pleading with his young protégé to "do the work and fulfill his ministry" (4:5). He foretold of a time that people in the church "will not want to hear sound doctrine. Rather they will want to have their ears tickled with feel-good messages, in accordance with their own desires (v.3). They will "turn away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (v.4). **But the truth is what we need most, and Paul was urging Timothy to have the courage to give it.**

Second, Paul shared with Timothy a little of his situation. He had been arrested and imprisoned by the Romans a second time, and he was awaiting his execution. He recognized that "the time of his departure (death) had come" (v.6). He was ready to be "poured out as a drink offering," an Old Testament reference to offerings in the tabernacle (v.6). **He was not sad about coming to the end of his life; rather he looked forward to receiving his reward — the crown of righteousness (v.8).**

Upon reflection of his ministry, Paul described it with three metaphors (v.7). He had "**fought the good fight,**" meaning he had done his best. He had "**finished the course,**" meaning he did not quit but bravely endured every hardship to the end. He had "**kept the faith,**" meaning he had not strayed from his task. He had remained faithful to the call of God and His gospel.

Finally, Paul made some personal requests. He was feeling abandoned in Rome, as nearly everyone had left him, except Luke (v.9-18). He wanted to see Timothy one more time (v.9, 21). But even when alone, Paul said he was not alone, "for the Lord stood with him and strengthened him" (v.17). By His help, Paul said, "He was rescued out of the lion's mouth" (v.17). He was certain that the Lord would "bring him safely to His heavenly kingdom" (v.18).

## Daily Reflection

Though it is with a saddened heart that I read Paul's farewell, I am also comforted. He had given God his best effort. He had endured every difficulty the Lord had for him, and he had not strayed from his original task. **What more can you say at the end of your life?**

Through the Lord's help, "the proclamation was fully accomplished, so that the Gentiles might hear" of the gospel (v.17). All we can say of Paul's journey is, "Well done."

What do you want to be able to say at the end of your life or ministry?

What will it require of you to finish the course and hear, "Well done"?