**2 Timothy Commentary**

**2 Timothy Chapter 1**

2Tm 1:1

**“in keeping with *furthering* the promise of life.”** God made a promise of everlasting life through Jesus Christ, so in keeping with that promise, God now provides people, e.g., apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, who help people get born again and thus take advantage of that promise of life. Through the ministries of these people, God furthers the spread of the Good News by reaching out in many different ways to people so they can understand the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.

**“life.”** This refers to everlasting life, that is, the life that has been promised. See commentary on Luke 10:28.

2Tm 1:2

**“child.”** The Greek noun translated as “child” is *teknon* (#5043 τέκνον)**.** In this context, “child” is a term of endearment. The more legal term would be “son.” Paul referred to Timothy as his child several times (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19; 1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 2 Tim. 1:2).

**“Grace, mercy, *and* peace.”** Here Paul uses the figure of speech asyndeton, which does not have the “and” between mercy and peace. Paul also uses it in the opening of 1 Timothy (1 Tim. 1:2).

2Tm 1:3

**“I give thanks to.”** This same opening formula is in 1 Timothy 1:12. Here it is in a prayer to God, while in 1 Timothy 1:12 it seems to clearly be in a prayer to Christ.

**“as my ancestors did.”** This tells us that Paul came from a long line of devout Jews. By “my ancestors” he would mean his personal family line. As a whole, the nation of the Jews had not been particularly devout, as any study of Jewish history will show. It can be a great advantage to come from a truly godly family. Many important lessons can be learned and wonderful habits established while a youth. The Greek is more literally, “from [my] ancestors,” but that could be confusing as if Paul’s clear conscience came from his ancestors.

2Tm 1:4

**“having remembered your tears.”** These would be tears that Timothy shed the last time that he and Paul parted from each other. It shows their deep friendship. Life is filled with inescapable sorrows, and parting from dear family and friends are part of those sorrows, and also part of the joy of the hope, when we will live forever and do not have to part thinking that we might not ever see each other again.

2Tm 1:6

**“For this reason.”** The Greek phrase, *di ēn aitian* (Δι᾽ ἣν αἰτίαν; the lemma: διά ὅς αἰτία) means “for this reason,” and encompasses everything in the long sentence that precedes it (2 Tim. 1:3-5 are one sentence in the Greek text). In modern English we would usually say, “For these reasons” rather than “For this reason,” making it seem like just one reason when it is actually several reasons. Because of Paul’s prayers, and because of the sincere trust that lived inside Timothy, the kind of trust that both his grandmother and mother had, Timothy should not let the gift of God, his ministry, go dormant, but rather should fan it into flames. Yes, Paul was in jail and about to be executed. Yes, the people in Asia (where Timothy was) had turned away from Paul (and thus Timothy also). Yes, times were tough and dangerous. Nevertheless, God gave believers His gift of holy spirit, and with it, power, love, and self-control. Therefore, Timothy should not be timid or cowardly but should fan his gift into flames and do the work of an evangelist and see if anyone was still willing to hear and obey the message.

We should note that Paul told Timothy to fan his trust into flames, heating up his commitment to God. So 2 Timothy 1:6 shows us that it is our responsibility, not God’s, to get ourselves excited about the things of God. The difficulties of life can cool us off concerning the Good News, but it is our responsibility to take those coals and fan them back into a burning flame for the Lord.

**“fan into flame the gift of God.”** This is the only time in the Bible a person is told to “fan into flame” something, in this case, the gift of God. This metaphor had to be particularly impactful to Timothy at this time. The Great Fire of Rome in July of 64 AD burned more than 70% of the city of Rome and resulted in Emperor Nero making Christianity illegal and persecuting Christians, often executing them in horrific ways. Nero, the one who had Paul executed, died in 68 AD, only four years after the fire, and so Paul would have been executed likely in 66 or 67 AD. Thus, the book of 2 Timothy would have been written in those years, likely 66 or 67, because it was written shortly before Paul was executed (2 Tim. 4:6). The memory of the flames in Rome would have been fresh on Timothy’s mind, not just because of the fire itself, but because of the widespread persecution that subsequently made being a Christian so dangerous. The flames that burned the city of Rome resulted in Christianity being illegal, but in spite of that, Paul was telling Timothy to remain faithful. Likewise, Christians today are to ignore persecution and fan into flame the gift of God that is in us.

**“that is in you through the laying on of my hands.”** This verse is very easy to misunderstand because many people think that it is referring to a gift ministry (charisma; #5486 χάρισμα) being somehow conferred by Paul laying on his hands. But in this case, it is not the gift that is being given, but it would be understood in the culture that it is the authority and recognition to publicly minister, along with a blessing, that is being given. This then subsequently led to the person being in charge of a church or churches.

The Bible makes it clear that each person has a gift from God (Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:7-8). No one needs to have a person or a group to lay hands on him or her in order to confer a ministry. In fact, a ministry cannot be conferred that way; they are given by God, not conferred by people. The laying on of hands by the elders is a public recognition of a ministry in operation in the Body of Christ, and it is important for the proper order and continuation of the Church. The public ceremony of laying on of hands lets all the people know that a group of elders whom they trust and follow put their trust in this new and upcoming leader. William Mounce writes: “There is nothing in the context of these three passages [1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6] to suggest that we have here a sacramental act whereby ‘the grace of the office is transferred’…The Spirit showed that Timothy was equipped for ministry, and in accordance with custom, this fact was publicly recognized by the leadership of the community. The predominant note is not one of authority transferred or of the importation of an official status, but of a blessing given.”[[1]](#footnote-24036)

At some point in his life, Timothy was ordained to ministry by Paul and other elders (1 Tim. 4:14), and Paul exhorted him to live his life and wage his warfare according to his calling in the Body of Christ (1 Tim. 1:18).

2Tm 1:7

**“spirit of timidity, but of power and love and self-control.”** The Greek word translated “timidity” is *deilia* (#1167 δειλία), which means lack of mental or moral strength, cowardice, or timidity. It is not the standard word for “fear,” which is *phobos*. Many Christians do not rise up and do what they should do in the Church, not because they are “afraid,” but because they are timid, they “just don’t feel comfortable” doing it.

The phrase “spirit of timidity” is the figure of speech amphibologia (double entendre); it has two meanings and both of them are true. One of the meanings is that the “spirit of timidity” is a demon. There is a demon that causes people to be timid and to stay on the sidelines of God’s battle, and that demon does not come from God. The spirit God gives us is the gift of holy spirit, and it urges us (but cannot force us) to do God’s will and be powerful, loving, and controlled (cf. Phil. 2:13). When the phrase “spirit of timidity” refers to a demon, then the genitive is a genitive of production; “God does not give us a spirit (demon) that produces timidity in us, but a spirit (His gift of holy spirit) that produces power, love, and self-control.”

[See Word Study: “Amphibologia.”]

Due to the semantic range of the word “spirit,” the phrase “spirit of timidity” can also have a second meaning, which is an “attitude of timidity,” or more simply, a “timid attitude.” God does not give us a demon of timidity, nor does He give us a timid attitude. When the phrase “spirit of timidity” is used of our attitude, then the genitive would be something like a genitive of material, i.e., that God has not given us an attitude consisting of timidity, but one that consists of power, love, and self-control.

Christians need to get over their feelings of not being comfortable stepping out and doing God’s work. Any timidity we feel is not from God. The attitude that comes from God is one of power, love, and self-control.

**“self-control.”** The Greek word is *sōphronismos* (#4995 σωφρονισμός) and it refers to having “sound judgment” as well as “self-discipline.” Sadly, in much of Western culture self-control is severely lacking. People constantly do things that they regret (or should regret): they eat too much, drink too much, sleep too much (or too little), watch too much TV or video games, while at the same time praying too little, reading the Bible too little, exercising too little, etc. Self-control comes from the inner self, not the flesh. The flesh has worldly desires. The inner self is the “real you,” the self that is talking when you talk to yourself. The inner self can be godly or ungodly, depending on how it is trained and/or how often it is followed or ignored. Godly people need to learn to cultivate a godly inner self and then listen to their inner self, which if properly educated tells the person, “Don’t buy that extra drink” or “You don’t need to eat that whole plate of food, cut it down a little.” The godly inner self is constantly giving good advice (which often comes as knowing what you “should” do). Self-control is listening to, and following, the advice of the inner self.

2Tm 1:8

**“do not be ashamed.”** The aorist subjunctive verb shows us that this is an exhortation due to the difficulty of the times. Timothy has not become ashamed, as a few commentators suggest. Paul was simply speaking words of encouragement, as we are all inclined to do when in battle. One warrior shouts to another, “Keep fighting,” not because the other has given up, but simply as words of continued encouragement. Lenski has an excellent discussion on this.[[2]](#footnote-31566)

**“but share with me.”** The Greek is more simply just “share with in suffering” but the subject of the sharing seems to be Paul, thus, “share with me.” In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul wrote that everyone who lives a godly life will be persecuted. Persecution is never enjoyable, but persevering through it and continuing to live a godly life will be richly rewarded. Christ spoke about it in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:11-12).

**“relying on.”** The Greek preposition *kata* is best understood in this context as it is in the NRSV. “according to” makes it seem as if the power of God somehow dictated or controlled the suffering.

2Tm 1:9

**“before the ages began.”** The Greek is literally, “before the times of the ages” (cf. YLT; see commentary on Titus 1:2).

2Tm 1:10

**“brought life and incorruptibility to light.”** The Old Testament, particularly prophets such as Ezekiel and Daniel, contains some seemingly clear verses on the resurrection from the dead. Nevertheless, there was almost no clear understanding of it at the time of Christ (and very little today since there has been more than 1,500 years of “orthodoxy” teaching the doctrinal error of “the immortal soul”). The teaching of Jesus Christ (and then his death and resurrection), brought “life” and incorruptibility (immortality) to light for all to see.

In this verse, the word “life” is being used in its fuller sense. While “life” does refer to a fulfilled life now, that is its lesser meaning; the greater meaning is that “life” refers to “everlasting life” as it does in a number of other verses (e.g., Matt. 7:14; 18:8, 9; 19:17; Mark 9:43, 45; John 3:36; 5:40; 20:31; Acts 11:18; Rom. 5:18; Gal. 3:21; 2 Tim. 1:1; 1 John 3:14; 5:12).

[For “life,” meaning “everlasting life,” see commentary on Luke 10:28. For more information on the soul and the phrase “immortal soul,” see Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

2Tm 1:11

**“herald...apostle...teacher.”** Paul describes himself the same way in 1 Timothy 2:7.

2Tm 1:12

**“which is why.”** The Greek is literally, “for this reason,” just like in 2 Timothy 1:6. However, here in 2 Timothy 1:12 the expression could be misconstrued as if Paul was “supposed to suffer these things” because of his appointment into the ministry. That is not the case. Paul did not suffer because of his appointment to the ministry, but it was the result of ungodly people opposing his activity as a herald, apostle, and teacher.

**“he is able to guard that which he has entrusted to me.”** The Greek words *parathēkē phulassō* (παραθήκη φυλάσσω) occur in 2 Tim. 1:14 and 1 Tim. 6:20 where they refer to something committed to someone, and many commentators argue that they should be taken the same way here: that Jesus Christ committed a ministry to Paul, and it will not die when Paul does, but because it is guarded by the Lord, he will make sure it continues even after Paul is martyred.

It is important to note that the Greek text, which quite literally means “my entrustment,” is unclear. Grammatically, Paul can speak of “my entrustment” meaning that which Christ entrusted to him, or what he entrusted to Christ. So is it Paul’s “entrustment” (or “deposit”) because Christ entrusted it to Paul, or was it Paul’s entrustment because Paul entrusted it to Christ? Scholars have had heated debates about that for years, with competent scholars on both sides of the issue. For example, the ASV, BBE, KJV, NASB, NIV, NLT, and NRSV side with what Paul has committed to Christ, while the CEB. CJB, CSB, ESV, NAB, NET, and RSV side with what Christ has committed to Paul.

The REV takes the position that it was the Lord who entrusted to Paul a great deposit, and now Paul was about to be executed (2 Tim. 4:6). Yet Paul was convinced that the Lord was able to guard that wonderful deposit and that it would not be lost because the Lord would keep working in others even after Paul’s death. That it was Christ who entrusted a deposit to Paul fits the context and scope of Scripture well. The Bible says that the Lord committed an administration to Paul (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2) and the Good News (2 Tim. 1:11-12). In contrast, although we know Paul trusted Christ to save him, there is no verse that specifically states that Paul entrusted anything to Christ. Christ entrusted the Good News to Paul, and Christ would guard it and promote it even after Paul died, something he expected would happen shortly (2 Tim. 4:6).

2Tm 1:14

**“Guard the good deposit.​”** The “good deposit” (or perhaps “good thing”) is the word of God that we have and know; it is the “sound words” spoken of in the previous verse, 2 Timothy 1:13. The Bible says that the words of God we have heard, and know, and guard are a “treasure” (2 Cor. 4:6-7). Christians are to guard the treasure of the Word that we have, just as Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13, “Hold to the pattern of sound words that you have heard.” Part of the way to “guard” the Word of God that we know is through using the power of the gift of holy spirit. The holy spirit is the gift of God with which each Christian is sealed (Eph. 4:30), and the manifestations of the holy spirit, written about in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, are very powerful. Operating the power of holy spirit helps guard the knowledge of the Word that we have. Signs, wonders, and miracles help confirm the written and spoken word, and so the manifestations of the gift of holy spirit such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, healings, and miracles, help guard the Word of God and demonstrate the truth of it.

This verse has been misunderstood by many translators, primarily because they do not understand that the holy spirit is a gift from God. If the holy spirit is the third person of the Trinity as most translators erroneously believe, then the verse means something totally different—we have to enlist its help in guarding the treasure as per the NIV, ESV, NASB, etc.

[For more information on the uses of “holy spirit,” see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

2Tm 1:15

**“*the province of* Asia.”** “Asia” was the name of the Roman province that covered the southwest portion of what is now Turkey. Today “Asia” is a much bigger area and in a totally different place on the globe.

**“turned away from me.”** The Bible does not say why the different people in Asia turned away from Paul, however it is astounding that “all who are in Asia” turned from Paul. When Paul arrived in Ephesus the believers there knew very little truth and did not understand the gift of holy spirit. Paul taught them about the power of God and led the first small group of them into speaking in tongues (Acts 19:1-6). Ephesus was the Roman capital of the Roman province of Asia, which encompassed what is now western Turkey. Paul ministered in Ephesus for more than two years (Acts 19:8, 10), and in that time all Asia heard the Good News about Jesus. Given that powerful start, what could have happened that “all” Asia turned from him?

People turn away from God and from truth for various reasons, but all of them are false or selfish reasons and have serious consequences. God is a good, kind, merciful, and gracious God. He does not harm people in any way, and He greatly rewards those people who faithfully follow Him. In contrast, the Devil is evil and a liar, and sadly, through his lies he has gained control of the world (see commentary on Luke 4:6). The Devil has managed to lie about God and twist the beliefs of the religions of the world and also Christianity and has gotten people to blame God for the things the Devil has done. It is very important that people who are angry with God or disappointed in Him examine their fundamental beliefs about God. For example, God is not in total control of what happens on earth and He cannot override people’s freewill decisions no matter how evil or illogical they may be. He has to act righteously and cannot “do evil so good may come.”

**“Phygelus and Hermogenes.”** These two men were apparently leaders in Asia who one would have expected to have stayed faithful to Paul and his teaching, but who did not. They were known to Paul and Timothy but not to us today.

2Tm 1:16

**“and was not ashamed of my chains.”** 2 Timothy was written during Paul’s second imprisonment in Rome. During Paul’s first imprisonment, he had been in his own rented house, and was therefore somewhat comfortable (Acts 28:30). In contrast to that, in this second imprisonment, Paul was in a Roman prison, likely a Roman dungeon. Apparently, he was chained to a Roman soldier (2 Tim. 1:16) and the place where he was kept was cold, so he asked Timothy to bring his cloak (2 Tim. 4:9, 13, 21). Paul was being kept as a prisoner of the state, so it was not easy to find where he was. When Onesiphorus came to Rome, he had to search diligently to find Paul (2 Tim. 1:17).

2Tm 1:17

**“he diligently searched for me and found me.”** Paul was a prisoner of the Roman state, and it was not easy to find him in the Roman prison system (see commentary on 2 Tim. 1:16).

2Tm 1:18

**“the Lord…from the Lord.”** The commentators are divided about this phrase, as to whether it means “Jesus…Jesus,” “God…God,” “Jesus…God,” or “God…Jesus.” Since God and Jesus always work in harmony, and since Paul almost always uses “Lord” to refer to Jesus, the best choice seems to be that Paul is referring to Jesus, who will be the judge when Christians stand before “the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10). For his part, Jesus said that he judged according to what he heard from God. He said, “I am not able to do anything on my own. As I hear, I judge” (John 5:30). So the text is saying that Jesus will be the judge on the throne, but he will judge according to what he hears from God.

**2 Timothy Chapter 2**

2Tm 2:1

**“Therefore, you.”** Paul spoke about many serious matters in chapter 1. These include that Christians are saved, and called, and have a wonderful everlasting life ahead, so we are to hold to the pattern of sound words and guard them through the power of the holy spirit. We are not to be like the people of Asia who abandoned Paul and the truth he taught. So it makes sense that Paul would now say, in essence, “So now Timothy, strengthen yourself in grace.” Timothy will need that strength to keep standing faithful when so many others have turned away.

**“strengthen yourself.”** The Greek verb is *endunamoō* (#1743 ἐνδυναμόω), and here the form of the verb can be either passive or middle. Here it has an active sense[[3]](#footnote-15120) and thus would be middle, so the REV translates it as a middle voice verb with an active sense, as do many other versions that have translations such as “be strong” or “take strength from the grace” (NJB). This verse is a word of encouragement from Paul to Timothy that he should encourage himself in grace.

We can see why Paul would write to Timothy to strengthen himself in grace. Timothy was having a difficult time. When he received the letter we today refer to as 2 Timothy, Paul, Timothy’s mentor, was in prison and soon to be executed (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Furthermore, the believers in Asia, where Timothy was (he was in Ephesus, the Roman capital of the province of Asia), had turned away from Paul (2 Tim. 1:15). Also, some of the men who had been faithful to Paul abandoned him (cf. Demas, 2 Tim. 4:10). This would have made Timothy’s life challenging and he fought with discouragement, which explains what we see in chapter 1 of the Epistle.

In 2 Timothy chapter 1, Paul told Timothy that he loved him and prayed for him (2 Tim. 1:2-3); Paul exhorted Timothy to fan the gift of God into flame and reminded him that God did not give us a spirit of timidity (2 Tim. 1:6-7); Paul told Timothy not to be ashamed of Paul’s imprisonment and encouraged him to share in suffering for the Good News (2 Tim. 1:8). Paul told Timothy to hold on to what he had been taught and to guard the good deposit he had been given (2 Tim. 1:13-14). Then Paul obviated the fact that the believers in Asia had turned from him and he pointed out the good example of Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:15-18).

In light of those pointed exhortations, and keeping in mind that there were no chapter breaks in the original text, 2 Timothy 2:1 might have been better understood if it had been numbered as 2 Timothy 1:19, following immediately after 2 Timothy 1:18, without the chapter 2 chapter break. After all the exhortations in chapter 1, we can see why the next thing Paul said to Timothy is, “You, therefore, my child, strengthen yourself in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

What a great lesson we can learn from what Paul wrote to Timothy! It is easy to feel like Timothy today. If we let ourselves get caught up in the worldly stuff around us, it can seem that “everything” is against the Gospel. Christians are being persecuted all over the globe. Many governments are openly against Christ. The news is ungodly, music is ungodly, television is ungodly, the weather is going crazy, crime of all kinds is on the increase, and more. It can be easy to become discouraged and lose our energy and passion like Timothy seems to have done. But if we take the time to think about it, we will remember that the grace of Christ is consistent, unfailing, and never-ending. And, there is a better world coming. And, Christians have the holy assignment of telling a fallen and falling world about a God who loves them. The antidote to being discouraged is to do exactly what Paul told Timothy to do 2,000 years ago: strengthen yourself in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

[For more on Timothy being in Ephesus, the Roman capital of the Roman province of Asia, see commentary on 2 Tim. 4:19.]

**“in the grace.”** This is the static “in” and thus, “in connection with.”[[4]](#footnote-29691) We strengthen ourselves “in connection with” that grace that we have: for example, that it is free, unfailing, is due to the love of God and Christ, etc.

There are scholars who take the “in” more in the sense of agency or source, and thus have “by the grace,” but that does not seem to be what is going on in this verse.

[For more on the static use of “in” see commentary on Eph. 1:3.]

2Tm 2:2

**“entrust.”** The Greek is *paratithēmi* (#3908 παρατίθημι), and it means to place beside or near or set before, to set forth, to deposit, to entrust, to commit to one’s charge.

2Tm 2:3

“**Share with me in suffering hardship.”** Christians will endure hardship; it is part of being committed to Christ in this fallen world. Paul is urging Timothy not to shrink back from the hardship involved with being a minister of Christ.

2Tm 2:4

**“entangles himself in the activities of *daily* life.”** The Greek verb translated as “entangles” is *emplekō* (#1707 ἐμπλέκω), and it refers to becoming involved with an activity or activities to the point that that activity interferes with other activities or objectives. A soldier has to be focused on training and fitness, and to lose sight of that fact can be fatal. The Christian must take Christianity as seriously as a soldier takes preparing for battle. It does not mean that the Christian can’t get involved in the necessities of family and job, those things are part of living a godly and responsible life. But if hobbies and “play” fill a person’s life to the point that he or she has no time to dedicate to prayer, Bible study and fellowship, and helping others, then the “play” has gone too far and the person is entangled in it. Part of self-control (2 Tim. 1:7) is knowing when to stop distracting activities and devote time to the Lord’s work.

2Tm 2:5

**“unless he competes according to the rules.”** This seems self-evident, but it is very important in the context of Christian leaders, which Paul’s letters to Timothy are about. Timothy was not just another disciple, he was a leader in the Church. Leaders must not let their position and authority become a source of pride and lead to selfish, reckless, or thoughtless actions. Leaders can get caught up in sin, certainly, but this is more subtle than that. There are actions that are not blatant sin but that are not following the leading of the Lord. There can be subtle favoritism (e.g., James 2:1-4). There can be teaching or leading in a way that avoids difficult subjects that might drive people away (like teaching about sexual sin) and instead teaching subjects that tend to build large congregations. In this context, the “rules” are to obey God and follow His leading. It might not be easy or build a large congregation, but if it is the leading of the Lord, that is what the leader is to do.

2Tm 2:7

**“all *these* things.”** The Greek adjective *pasin* without the definite article is all of something. The adjective should modify a noun, pronoun, etc. In this context, it would be “all” of “this,” i.e., the subject that Paul is referring to. It is not true that the Lord will give understanding in “everything” as many versions have, even though the Lord gives understanding in many things.

2Tm 2:8

**“from among the dead.”**[[5]](#footnote-19888) See commentary on Romans 4:24.

**“of the seed of David.”** God promised David that his kingdom would last forever, and that is accomplished in Jesus Christ who will reign forever.

2Tm 2:10

**“chosen.”** From the Greek adjective, *eklektos* (#1588 ἐκλεκτός). We chose God (through) Romans 10:9, then He chooses us and saves us. This verse is not saying that God chooses apart from our will although some people teach that. Quite the contrary. If God could choose us apart from our will, why would Paul have to endure anything at all? He could live a good life and God would choose who He willed. No, we must strive to reach out with the Good News so that people can hear and then choose God—and our striving may mean hardship.

**“everlasting glory.”** The term “glory” is described by the adjective *aiōnios* (#166 αἰώνιος), which most versions render “eternal.” See commentary on John 3:16. *Aiōnios* can mean “age” as in the Messianic Age, or it can have a strictly temporal meaning of “everlasting.” Here the meaning is probably both—it refers to the glory of the age to come, glory that is everlasting. We prefer to stay away from “eternal” in this verse. Technically, “eternal” is something with no beginning and no end, whereas “everlasting” refers to something that, once it starts, never ends. As English has become less precisely used over the years, the word “eternal” has very often been used when the actual meaning is “everlasting.” The loss of clarity can be confusing in some contexts. God is truly eternal, but the Kingdom is not.

2Tm 2:11

**“this statement is trustworthy**.” See commentary on 1 Timothy 1:15.

**“died with him...live with him.”** The verses 2 Timothy 2:11-13 comprise one section that has four statements within three verses, and it is important to take the four statements as a unit to get their full effect.

The opening statement of this three-verse section is very comforting and assures the Christian that their identification with Christ in his death means that they can view themselves as having died as well, and if that is true, then the believer can, with full confidence, eagerly anticipate their own resurrection, just as Christ was also raised from the dead. The identification of the believer with Christ is what Paul wrote about in more detail in Romans 6:5, 8, 10 (abridged): “For if we have become united with *him* in a death like his, we will certainly also be *united with him* in a resurrection like his. ...Now since we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ...For *the death* that he died, he died once and for all with respect to *the power of* sin….”

The person who has died in Christ is dead to sin—his sin is paid for, and thus, he will live forever with Christ. Although we still sin and still feel the effects of sin while we live here on earth, the ultimate price of sin has been paid: Christ died for sin and we died with him. No wonder Romans says, “we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” No wonder Paul says that he is confident (he believes it!) that if we died with Christ we will live with him (Rom. 6:8; 2 Tim. 2:11).

[For more information on the New Birth, see commentary on 1 Pet. 1:3, “new birth.” For more on Christian salvation, see Appendix 10: “God’s Promise of Salvation.” For more on rewards in the future kingdom, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.”]

**“live.”** This refers to living forever. See commentary on Luke 10:28.

2Tm 2:12

**“If we endure, we will also reign with him.”** This is the second sentence in a four-sentence section (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

It is a consistent theme throughout Scripture that on the Day of Judgment, people will be repaid for what they have done on earth (e.g., Job 34:11; Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Ezek. 33:20; 44:10-16; Matt. 16:27; Luke 9:26; Rom. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:8, 17; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:23-25; 1 Thess. 4:3-6; 1 John 2:28). When Jesus returns, fights the battle of Armageddon, and sets up his kingdom on earth, Jesus will rule from his throne in Jerusalem and his kingdom will cover the entire earth (Ps. 2:8; 66:4; 72:8-11; Dan. 2:35, 44; 7:13-14; Zech. 9:10).

As with any kingdom, there will be many different jobs and positions in Christ’s future kingdom, including rulers and leaders (Isa. 1:26; 32:1; Jer. 3:15; 23:4; Ezek. 44:24; Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26). Jesus’ apostles knew that, which is why the mother of James and John asked if her two sons could be Jesus’ second and third in command, and the other ten apostles were angry at the request (Matt. 20:20-24). The statement that if we endure we will reign with Christ, and the other verses like it about getting rewards in the Kingdom, are meant to encourage us to always seek first the Kingdom of God, and to be godly and obedient. Rewards can be a great motivator to obedience, as we see even from great people like Moses (Heb. 11:24-26).

There are many things that distract us or discourage us from actively obeying God and doing what we should do for Him every day, such as loving people and putting others before ourselves; praying; fellowshipping with other Christians; giving of our time, money, and material goods to the cause of Christ; reading the Bible; and many more such things. But the wise Christian works diligently to endure in the cause of Christ and not be distracted or discouraged. As Corinthians says, “my beloved brothers, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

**“If we deny him, he also will deny us.”** This is the third sentence in a four-sentence section (2 Tim. 2:11-13). The Greek word translated “deny” is *arneomai* (#720 ἀρνέομαι), and it occurs 33 times in the New Testament. It means “to refuse to consent to something; to state that something is not true; to disclaim association with a person or event, thus deny, repudiate, disown; and, to refuse to pay attention to.”[[6]](#footnote-22524)

This sentence is quite clear that Christians can forfeit their salvation. The key to seeing this teaching is understanding who the “we” is in the phrase “If we deny him.” Paul is writing to Timothy, who is a Christian, and Paul himself is also a Christian. Then Paul clarifies even more who the “we” is in 2 Timothy 2:11-13 when he says, “If we died with him, we will also live with him.” Who is united to Christ in such a way that they die with him and live with him? Christians (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12). So, Christians are the “we” in 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

Therefore, for all of these reasons, when Paul says, “If we deny him, he will deny us,” he is teaching that it is possible for Christians to deny Christ, and thus, forfeit our salvation.

[For more on this four-sentence section, see commentary on 2 Tim. 2:11. For more on rewards and loss of rewards in the future Kingdom of Christ, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.” For more on Christian salvation, see Appendix 10: “God’s Promise of Salvation.”]

2Tm 2:13

**“If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself**.” This is the fourth sentence in a three-verse section (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

The Greek verb translated “unfaithful” here in 2 Timothy 2:13 is *apisteō* (#569 ἀπιστέω), and in this context in which it is in juxtaposition to the Lord, who is “faithful,” it means “unfaithful.” The first phrase in the fourth sentence, that Christ is faithful even when we are not, should give us comfort, because who among us can be faithful all the time? Even the best believers slip into sin, and sometimes there are even periods of time when they do not focus on the Lord. Abraham gave his wife to another man’s harem—twice! Moses disobeyed God and then was not allowed into the Promised Land. David committed adultery and murder. Peter denied Christ three times. And the list goes on for everyone. Even the apostle Paul wrote that he was not always able to do what he knew to do, but in fact, often did what he hated to do (Rom. 7:15-20). But we are not to be dismayed at our failures because even when we are unfaithful, God and Christ remain faithful—they do what they promise, love us, forgive us, and bring us back to themselves.

2Tm 2:14

**“in the sight of God.”** There are texts that read “in the sight of the Lord,” and there are texts that read “in the sight of God,” and the manuscript evidence is quite evenly divided. Many scholars think “God” is original due to the fact that Paul seems to use “God” in these kinds of contexts (cf. 1 Tim. 5:4, 21; 2 Tim. 4:1).

2Tm 2:15

**“Be diligent.”** The Greek word translated as the phrase, “be diligent” is *spoudazō* (#4704 σπουδάζω) and it means to make a diligent effort, or be diligent in doing what you are doing. The NIV’s translation, “do your best,” is an attempt to bring out this meaning in an easily understood manner. The KJV of AD 1611 reads “study,” which can be confusing. The “study” of the KJV is a good example of how the meaning of words changes over the years. In 1611, only something like ten percent of the population could read, and at that time the word “study” meant to make a diligent effort to learn something, almost the way we today use “understudy.” In 1611, a person “studying” to be a silversmith, for example, did not read anything at all, but rather went and worked for the silversmith. The student would start with the menial tasks, and then as the master smith saw him applying himself, would give him increased responsibility. Sadly, many modern readers see “study to show thyself approved” in the KJV and think that approval before God relates only to the mental activity of learning. As it is used in this context, being approved before God requires us to make a diligent effort in all that we do in our walk before Him.

The context of 2 Timothy 2:15 is not salvation, it is about being approved and rewarded on Judgment Day. Every person who is saved is “approved” by God in the sense that they are spiritually holy and will live forever. However, salvation and everlasting life are not the context of 2 Timothy 2:15; the context is living a godly and obedient life. The believer is told not to argue about words or participate in “empty chatter” (2 Tim. 2:14, 16), and they are to “turn away from unrighteousness” (2 Tim. 2:19). The believer is to “flee youthful passions and diligently pursue righteousness, faithfulness, love, peace,” and “be gentle with everyone, skilled in teaching, patient in the midst of evil” (2 Tim. 2:23-24). In the midst of this context, 2 Timothy 2:15 instructs that the believer is not to be lazy or halfhearted about living a godly life, but to “be diligent” to be approved before God.

[For more information on rewards on Judgment Day, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.”]

**“rightly handling.”** The Greek word is *orthotomeō* (#3718 ὀρθοτομέω), and there has been no small amount of discussion about how to translate it. It is a composite verb and only found here in the NT. The well-known meaning “rightly divide” (cf. KJV) is built from the two base verbs, but it is well established in linguistics, including Greek, that compound verbs are often not closely related to the base verbs. The base verb *temnō* means “to cut,” but “cutting” was such a fundamental part of ancient life that it became used for many things that were not literally cut. The common Hebrew expression for making a covenant was “to cut the covenant,” and that phrase continued even when nothing was literally “cut” when a covenant was made, such as in a covenant of salt or in a marriage covenant. Proverbs 11:5 (LXX) says that the righteousness of the person “cuts his way straight,” even though nothing is literally cut. The Greeks (and we today) speak of “cutting” a liquid, when we mean “dilute” it.

The context, both before and after 2 Timothy 2:15, is about unprofitable use of words and worldly chatter. In contrast to that, God’s people are to “rightly handle,” the Word and the words in it, and not wage useless word battles with them. Clearly implied in the meaning of *orthotomeō* is that we can “rightly handle” the Bible in the way we understand it and explain it, and we can “rightly handle” it in the way we deal with it in relation to others. The Bible can be wrongly believed and taught, and it can also be wrongly used as a weapon against other people.

2Tm 2:16

**“lead to further ungodliness.”** Disobeying and defying God only leads to more disobedience (cf. commentary on 2 Tim. 3:13).

2Tm 2:18

**“saying that the resurrection is past already.”** Paul did not explain exactly what the false teachers were saying when they taught that the resurrection was past already. However, we do have some information about it from the Church Father Origin (c. 185-c. 253), and his information is likely at least mostly correct even though he lived more than 100 years after Paul wrote. Apparently, some people in the early Church were claiming that the “resurrection” referred to what happened when a person confessed Christ and was baptized and that at that time they were “resurrected” from spiritual death to spiritual life. However, they were denying the physical resurrection of the body, which is an essential part of the Christian’s hope—a resurrected body living on a regenerated and wonderful earth. The Greeks denied there would be a physical resurrection (cf. Acts 17:32), so it would have been natural that some Greeks would spiritualize the verses in the Bible that speak of a resurrection of the physical body and say the “resurrection” occurs at the time someone is saved. Believing that, they would tell other Christians that their resurrection had already happened.

But physical resurrection is a huge part of what will happen for Christians and thus a huge part of the Christian’s hope. Paul writes about it in 1 Corinthians 15, especially 1 Corinthians 15:1-20, and in those verses, it is clear that Paul is not writing about a “spiritual resurrection,” but an actual resurrection of the physical body. He writes that Christ got up from the dead, and if he did not then we are still in our sins (1 Cor. 15:17). If Christ did not get up from the dead in a physical body, and believers will not get up from the dead in a physical body, then the trust we have in the Scriptures that people will live in new bodies like Christ’s body (Phil. 3:21) and live on a wonderful restored earth like so many prophecies promise is indeed overthrown. Indeed, no one can tell us what life in a spirit body will be like because the Bible never describes that, which is because it is not what is going to happen. The Bible does describe what will happen, which is that believers will live in wonderful bodies like Christ’s glorious body and live on a restored earth.

[For more on Christ’s kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

2Tm 2:19

**“The Lord knows.”** This is not a specific quotation from the Hebrew Old Testament, but it is an exact quotation from the Septuagint of Numbers 16:5. It continues to be a commonly expressed sentiment among believers.

**“Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord must turn away from unrighteousness.”** This is not a specific quotation from the Old Testament, but may be an allusion to Numbers 16:26. In any case, the admonition for the righteous to depart from evil is a very common biblical admonition. The phrase “calls upon the name” of the Lord is literally in the Greek text, “names the name” of the Lord. In the biblical culture, names of gods, demons, and great people were often called upon to give authority, power, or assistance. A person who “named the name” of the Lord called upon Jesus for authority and support (cf. Acts 4:7; 19:13). We today call upon the name of Jesus Christ and pray in his name.

**“the name of the Lord.”** The textual evidence for “the Lord” is early and overwhelming. Even the majority text family, which often favors the reading of the Byzantine text family that is reflected in the King James Version, has the reading “Lord” and not “Christ.”[[7]](#footnote-23861) The note in the *Expositor’s Greek Testament* says that the reading “Christ” is in a few cursive manuscripts.[[8]](#footnote-25950) It is possible that a scribe made a note in the margin of his manuscript that he thought the word “Lord” referred to Christ, and that a later scribe then copied “Christ” into his manuscript.

**“must turn away from.”** In Greek the imperative mood can be an invitation “Let everyone,” or a command (Everyone must!). In this case the context calls for the word “must.” God never forces anyone to use the name of the Lord, but anyone who does “name the name of the Lord,” that is, use it for personal identification (“I am the Lord’s”) and for power (“In the name of Jesus Christ….”) must depart from unrighteous behavior. It does great harm to Christianity when professing Christians act like unbelievers and participate in evil and ungodly behavior. Christians who act like that will suffer consequences (see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10).

2Tm 2:20

**“for honorable *use*, and some are for dishonorable *use*.”** There is a wordplay in the Greek text between “honorable” (*timē*) and “dishonorable” (*atimia*). Although many modern versions have the word “dishonorable,” readers must be careful with that translation because “dishonorable” may not really convey the sense of *atimia*, which in the Greek culture can mean more like “ordinary” as well as “dishonorable.”

2Tm 2:21

**“cleanses.”** The Greek word translated “cleanses” is used of cleansing or purifying, often from sin, almost always a cleansing from something bad. For example, in 2 Corinthians 7:1, we cleanse ourselves from defilement and perfect holiness in the fear of God. Here in 2 Timothy 2:21, it is used of cleansing from things that defile as well, and prevent a person from being a vessel of honor.

**“Master.”** The Greek is *despotēs* (#1203 δεσπότης) meaning master, lord, or owner, and it refers to someone who has legal control and authority over others, such as subjects or slaves (cf. 1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:9), or over things. It is used both as a title for God (Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24), and as a title for Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:4). See commentary on Luke 2:29.

2Tm 2:22

**“faithfulness.”** The Greek noun we translate as “faithfulness” here in 2 Timothy 2:22 is *pistis* (#4102 πίστις), which can be translated as either “faithfulness” or “trust,” and in this verse actually incorporates both meanings. Although in the New Testament, pistis means “trust” more than “faithfulness,” we agree with other translations that believe “faithfulness” is being emphasized here (cf. CJB, NET, NLT). See commentary on 1 Timothy 4:12.

[For more on “faith” and “trust,” see Appendix 2: “‘Faith’ is ‘Trust.’”]

**“call on the Lord.”** This is a prayer formula, and refers to prayer to Jesus Christ (see commentary on 1 Cor. 1:2).

2Tm 2:25

**“correcting.”** The verb can mean “to correct, to instruct, to train.” In this context of those people who are wrong in their doctrine, “correcting” has the most accurate nuance.

**“those who oppose.”** The verb is in the middle voice, but in this case, it seems to refer to those who themselves hold an opposing view, not that the people oppose themselves, as some older versions have (cf. KJV, RV, ASV).

**“may grant.”** The Greek verb “give” is *didōmi* (#1325 δίδωμι). The verse, and certainly the scope of Scripture, does not ever portray God withholding forgiveness or people’s repentance. Quite the contrary! Like the forgiving father in the “Parable of the Prodigal Son” (Luke 15), the Father is watching and waiting for anyone to come to repentance, and when someone does, there is “more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:7). Leaders correct those in error so that God may give them repentance leading to the truth.

**“knowledge.”** This word, *epignōsis* (#1922 ἐπίγνωσις), is the usual term for “knowledge” (*gnōsis*) with the prefix *epi* added as an intensifier. It thus becomes an intense experiential knowing of the truth as the result of their repentance. It is ultimately up to the person’s free will to decide to repent or not; God does not give repentance in this sense.

2Tm 2:26

**“return to their senses.”** This means that these people had once thought properly and now they must return to their senses and think clearly again. The Greek word is *ananēphō* (#366 ἀνανήφω), to “come to one’s senses again.”[[9]](#footnote-21205) This verse is very enlightening, for it connects the Devil’s snare with muddled thinking. Satan captures us to do his will by confusing our thinking. Like he did with Eve, he mixes in lies with truth to confuse us and cause us to not think clearly. When our thoughts are off track we will behave in the wrongheaded fashion he wants us to.

**“Devil.”** The Greek word is *diabolos* (#1228 διάβολος), which literally means “Slanderer,” but *diabolos* gets transliterated into English as our more familiar name, “Devil.” Slander is so central to who the Devil is and how he operates that one of his primary names is “the Slanderer.”

[For more information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

**2 Timothy Chapter 3**

2Tm 3:2

**“For people will be.”** We must pay attention to the list that follows (2 Tim. 3:2-5), because the Divine Author included it on purpose. God could have simply inspired Paul to write something brief and inclusive such as, “Difficult times will come because people will be selfish and evil.” But no, instead He gave a long and quite specific list of what people will be like, and He did that to warn believers of what they will be up against in life. Expecting life to be easy and people to be honest and nice is a formula for disappointment and despair. A believer can be peaceful in this life (cf. John 14:27), and can have a positive attitude, but to do that takes an honest appraisal of what they will be up against on a daily basis and be forewarned and forearmed. There are many things a believer can do to be more peaceful in life, but it begins with an honest appraisal and genuine preparation in both one’s mental and physical life.

**“lovers of themselves.”** The Greek is *philautos* (#5367 φίλαυτος) from the word *philos*, “friend.” It means to be fond of oneself, concerned about oneself, and thus selfish, self-centered, or “lovers of themselves.”

2Tm 3:3

**“natural affection.”** See commentaries on Romans 1:31; 12:10 and John 21:15.

**“not interested in doing what is good.”** The Greek is *aphilagathos* (#865 ἀφιλάγαθος) from the word *philos*, “friend” and *agathos*, “good,” with the alpha privative to mean “not.” BDAG says “without interest in the (public) good” (cf. *The Source New Testament* by A. Nyland). This is the opposite of the quality expected in elders, who are to like what is good (Titus 1:8). It should be noted that this can be “not interested in doing good,” or it can also mean “opposed to good.” Of the two choices, both apply, and the people in the Last Days will not only not be interested in doing good (that is, “good” by God’s standards), they will actually be opposed to good, but for the purposes of translation, the evidence seems to support the translation “not interested in doing good” as more generally applicable. Some people who are not interested in doing good personally will not be opposed to someone else doing good.

2Tm 3:4

**“lovers of pleasure.”** The Greek is the adjective *philēdonos* (#5369 φιλήδονος), a compound word made up of *philos* (friendship, the noun form of *phileō*, which many translate as “love.”) and *hēdonē* (ἡδονή)), pleasure. A more technical translation would be “friends of pleasure,” but that is not very clear in English, whereas “lovers of pleasure” is. For the difference between *agapaō* and *phileō*, see commentary on John 21:15.

**“lovers of God.”** The Greek is *philotheos* (#5377 φιλόθεος), a compound word made up of *philos* (friendship), and *theos*, (God). A more technical translation would be “friends of God,” but in this context and in contrast with “lovers of pleasure,” the phrase “lovers of God” seems to read better in English and makes the point well. For the difference between *agapaō* and *phileō*, see commentary on John 21:15.

2Tm 3:6

**“For among them are those with false pretenses who slip into homes.”** The Greek word is *endunō* (#1744 ἐνδύνω), and it basically means “to enter in.” However, in this context, it is describing the hidden evil motives that these false teachers enter the home with. And so here *endunō* is describing those who enter into homes under false pretenses knowing that people are unaware of their true motives. Philip Towner uses the word “infiltrate,” which brings out even more to the military imagery in the verse.[[10]](#footnote-31687)

**“capture.”** This is a military term and highlights the ongoing war between Good and Evil. People get captured by the enemy. The women were mentally and emotionally captured, not physically captured, however a lot of women who become enamored with so-called men of God become physically involved with them as well, and thus “captured” both mentally and physically.

**“weak-willed.”** The Greek is the diminutive of women, almost “little women.” The Greek word translated as “weak-willed women” is *gunaikarion* (#1133 γυναικάριον). It is a diminutive form of *gunē* (#1135 γυνή), which is the standard word for “woman” (and where the English word “gynecology,” literally, “the study of women,” comes from). *Gunaikarion* is perhaps most literally translated as something like “little” women, but “little” in what way? The English versions differ. “silly women” (ASV, KJV, NRSV); “weak-willed women” (CJB, NIV, REV); “idle women” (CSB); “weak women” (ESV, NASB, NET); “gullible women” (NKJV); and “vulnerable women” (NLT) are some translations.

The idea that the women are “weak-willed” is imported from the last part of the verse, that the women are weighed down by sin that apparently they cannot seem to resist. Furthermore, they seem to be unable to control their desires and thus are led away by many different passions. Also, the women had no doubt heard the truth but did not grasp it firmly and stand on the truth they should have known. Many verses in the New Testament direct the believer to stand firmly on the truth that they know, and although it is not always easy and can lead to persecution and difficulties, standing up for God and godliness is something believers are called to do. Living a godly life in this fallen world is difficult (2 Tim. 3:1), but that is why Christ said the believer must be ready to carry their cross “daily” (Luke 9:23).

2Tm 3:7

**“who are always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”** The point Paul is making is emphasized by the irony that these women are constantly learning but not able to come to a knowledge of the truth, even though the basic truth of knowing and obeying God is quite simple and straightforward. The women are shown to be “always learning,” that is, they are seeking out all kinds of new teachings and new teachers. The women were in Ephesus, which is where Timothy was, and Ephesus was one of the great trading and traffic centers of the Roman world. It had ancient religions from its past (cf. Acts 19:28-35), and it was also the capital of the Roman province of Asia (now western Turkey) so it had exposure to the Greek and Roman religions and other beliefs from all over the empire and even from outside it. Proponents and so-called teachers of every kind of religion traveled through Ephesus, so there was much that could catch the attention of these women.

But why were these women unable to come to a knowledge of the truth since they had almost certainly heard it, even perhaps from Paul or Timothy themselves. The answer to that question has to do with the nature of truth and the self-sacrifice it takes to believe it and walk in it. These women were weighed down with their own sins, no doubt weighed down both physically and mentally, but instead of directly dealing with them with humility and honesty, they continued to follow their passions and desires into more sin. This is ironic because the women would have been continually searching for some teacher and “some truth out there” that would free their conscience from the burden of their sin, but they could not bring themselves to admit that they themselves were the problem; that was not a palatable solution to them, and so it was rejected. The women were caught up in the consequences of their sin but were unwilling to make difficult and painful decisions. A teacher who promised some kind of enlightenment and deliverance if you believed a certain way was much more attractive.

2Tm 3:8

**“Jannes and Jambres.”** The names of the primary satanic magicians in Pharaoh’s court who stood against Moses and did miracles such as turning their staffs into snakes (cf. Exod. 7:10-13), was preserved in Jewish history.

**“disqualified.”** The Greek word is *adokimos* (#96 ἀδόκιμος). It refers to something that was tested and failed the test (in contrast to *dokimazō*, #1381 δοκιμάζω; “to test;” and “to be approved or proven genuine after being tested;” Rom. 12:2). So *adokimos* means to be “unfit,” “not approved,” “failed,” “unfit.”

**“disqualified concerning the faith.”** The translation, “the faith” seems to fit the context. But Philip Towner writes, “…Paul categorizes these people as those whose faith has been tested and found to be ‘unfit’ (‘rejected’ TNIV). The commentators and translations are divided over whether the reference point indicated by the qualification ‘as far as the faith is concerned’ is the personal faith of the opponents or ‘the objective faith’ (i.e., the Christian faith). On the basis of the closely parallel phrase in 1 Tim. 1:19, their failure is measured in terms of their personal faith-relationship with God (or claims thereto), which in the case of the false teachers is worthless, nonexistent and a sign of their rejection by God, rather than in terms of their substandard doctrine, though the two things are closely related.”[[11]](#footnote-10198)

In actuality, there can be truth in both translations. As Jannes and Jambres stood against authority (“the faith,” “the truth”), so these subversive teachers are disqualified concerning “the faith.” However, as Towner pointed out, the phrase can also refer to the personal belief of the false teachers, and grammatically could read something such as “They have depraved minds and a counterfeit faith” (NLT). These false and deceptive teachers are disqualified from “the faith,” and they are disqualified in relation to their own trust of God.

2Tm 3:9

**“lack of understanding.”** See Word Study: “Fool.”

2Tm 3:10

**“closely followed.”** The Greek is *parakoloutheō* (#3877 παρακολουθέω), which means “to conform to someone’s belief or practice by paying special attention; ‘follow faithfully,’ ‘follow as a rule.’”[[12]](#footnote-12336) Timothy closely followed Paul in many ways. Culturally, as a disciple, Timothy “followed” his rabbi (teacher), Paul and learned from him. He was there with Paul as his knowledge and experience grew, and as he received deeper and deeper revelations from God. Timothy also “followed” Paul in the sense that he “came after” him and ended up experiencing many of the problems that Paul himself experienced. There are versions that say, “fully known,” and although that is true, it is because Timothy closely followed Paul that he knew all about Paul.

**“doctrine.”** The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it were a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. It seems better to bring *didaskalia* into English as “doctrine” because Timothy followed Paul’s doctrine but not necessarily the manner in which Paul taught, especially considering that Paul was a trained rabbi, whereas Timothy was an untrained Greek. The English with “teaching” implies both the way Paul taught and the subject matter that Paul taught, but it was the “doctrine” that Timothy followed. (See commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13.)

2Tm 3:12

**“a godly life.”** The word “godly” is an adverb, and here refers to a godly life.

2Tm 3:13

**“*from bad* to worse.”** Evil thoughts and deeds originate in the heart (Mark 7:20-23), and the posture of the heart is always changing. As we obey God and believe our hearts become more and more pure, but if we disobey and defy God, our hearts become darker and darker (Matt. 13:15; Eph. 4:17-19; 1 Tim. 4:1-2). It is clearly in Scripture, and has been seen in the world over and over again with all kinds of sin—sexual, drug-related, abuse, murder, etc.—that the sins a person commits become worse over time. This is clearly set forth in many verses of Scripture (cf. 2 Tim. 2:16; Rom. 6:16, 19; Jude 1:13). On the other hand, if we continue to look at the Lord Jesus, we are transformed into his glorious image (2 Cor. 3:18).

**“deceiving and being deceived.”** Not only do these evil people deceive others, but they themselves are also deceived.

2Tm 3:15

**“the sacred writings.”** Logic leads us to believe that these “sacred writings” or “sacred letters” were parts of the Old Testament (“letters” meaning A, B, C, not a “letter” that one person writes to another). Timothy’s father was a Greek, but his mother and grandmother were Jewish (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5). The teaching of those two women built a “sincere trust” in Timothy. Timothy learned to trust God from the Old Testament records about men like Abraham, and he would have also learned about the consequences of not trusting in God from those same Old Testament scriptures.

The Old Testament taught the value of continuing to trust God throughout life (Hab. 2:4; Ezek. 18:21-32; 33:12-20). The New Testament also teaches that trust leads to and guards our salvation (2 Tim. 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:5). It is very encouraging that the Old Testament contains information that helps us understand salvation and how to be saved in the New Testament.

**“wisdom leading to salvation.”** This is a general statement about the Scripture, specifically the Old Testament, that it is able to make a person wise *eis sotēria* (εἰς σωτηρία) “unto salvation.” The Greek preposition *eis* (#1519 εἰς) often introduces a result, as it does here, thus, “wisdom leading to salvation,” or, “wisdom” (wise living) resulting in salvation.” As we saw in the commentary above, the Old Testament contained information that pointed to the value of trust in obtaining and maintaining salvation, and also information about the consequences of abandoning that trust and returning to the lusts of the flesh and the ways of the world.

It is worth noting that the Old Testament scriptures point to the value of remaining faithful (continuing to trust) in order to be saved. There is nothing in the Old Testament that indicates that if a person believes one time they will be saved, nor is there a prophecy that that would be available in the future.

**“through trust in Christ Jesus.”** The text reads, “through trust, the one that is in Christ Jesus.” This is a Greek idiomatic way of speaking that emphasizes the word trust and shows that the trust is to be in Christ, but the idiom comes across poorly in terms of English readability. We have left out the Greek article (translated as “the one”) and preserved the base meaning of the Greek, that our trust is to be “in Christ Jesus.”

The Greek noun translated as “trust” is *pistis* (#4102 πίστις), and here it is properly translated as “trust.” As 2 Timothy 3:15 states, salvation—everlasting life—comes through our trust in Jesus Christ.

2Tm 3:16

**“All Scripture.”** The context defines this as “the sacred writings” (2 Tim. 3:15), so it includes both the Old and New Testament (although the New Testament was not completed by this time). We know the Old Testament is included because it was all that was available when Timothy was a baby and being taught by his mother and grandmother. The fact that Timothy’s mother taught him the sacred writings from the time he was a baby is a testimony to the quality of his upbringing. By the time Paul was writing 2 Timothy, “all Scripture” included the New Testament books that had been written by that point. Jesus referred to the Old Testament as “scripture” (cf. Luke 24:27; John 5:39).

**“God-breathed.”** The Greek word translated “God-breathed” is *theopneustos* (#2315 θεόπνευστος), a compound word from *theos* (God) and *pneuō* (to breath). Therefore, as Friberg’s lexicon says, strictly it means “God-breathed,” but what does that mean? We believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, meaning the original text was actually given by God to the person who wrote it down. This is logical and fits the facts.

That God gave the text of the Bible to the people who wrote it agrees with the testimony in the Scripture itself. For example, dozens of verses say God spoke to the prophets to tell them what to write or what to say (cf. Exod. 6:29; 34:27; Isa. 8:1; Jer. 22:30; 36:1-2, 27-28; Hab. 2:2, etc.). Similarly, Paul said that what he taught he got by revelation from Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12), and Jesus also told the apostle John what to write (Rev. 1:10-11). Also, there are verses such as 2 Peter 1:21 that tell us that the Bible came from God: “for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (NASB). If the Bible was not given by God to the person who wrote it down, then all the verses that say it is are wrong, and the Bible’s testimony of itself is wrong.

The prophecies in the Bible show that it was authored by God. Man does not have the ability to tell the future, but God does, and He says that His telling the future is proof that He is God. In Isaiah 41:22-23 and 48:3-5, God points out that idols cannot tell the future, but He is God and He can. The dozens of fulfilled historically verifiable prophecies in the Bible are substantial proof that God authored it.

The historical accuracy of the Bible is another piece of evidence that God authored the Bible. The historical accuracy of the names of people and places, and the accuracy of the events recorded, is far beyond the level of accuracy that people in the ancient world could attain simply by passing information down by word of mouth. The accuracy of the Bible is possible only because it was authored by an “eyewitness” who was present at every event recorded in it, and that eyewitness is God.

Of course, there are passages of the Scripture that are quotations from other writings, but we believe God could have told the writer to use those too, not just that the writer “thought it was a good idea” to include them.

[For more on the trustworthiness of the Bible: John W. Schoenheit, *The Bible: You Can Believe It.*]

**“teaching.”** The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it were a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse, it seems that bringing *didaskalia* into English as “teaching” was better than “doctrine,” because the wording of the English with “teaching” implies both the fact that “all Scripture” is beneficial to use in teaching (the act of teaching), and also that it is beneficial as “the teaching.” The list here in Timothy is a list of actions; teaching, reproof, correction, and training.

[For more on *didaskalia* see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13.]

**“reproof.”** The Greek word translated “reproof” is *elegmos* (#1649 ἐλεγμός), and in this context, it means to show from the Scriptures that someone is wrong in what they are doing or saying. Louw-Nida defines *elegmos* as, “to state that someone has done wrong, with the implication that there is adequate proof of such wrongdoing.” There is a textual variant in this verse where at some point *elegmos* was miscopied to *elegchos* (#1650 ἔλεγχος), and that variation made it into some Greek manuscripts.

**“correction.”** The Greek word translated “correction” is *epanorthōsis* (#1882 ἐπανόρθωσις), and it refers to restoring someone to an upright or right state.

**“training.”** The Greek word translated “training” is *paideia* (#3809 παιδεία), and it most often refers to the whole training and education of children, but it can apply to adults as well, which it does here in Timothy. Here in this context, “training” from the Scriptures is necessary because just as children need to be told what is right, all people need to learn from the Scriptures what is right and how to live. We are all children of God with fallen natures and so Paul’s use of the word *paideia* brings out the humility that people must have to effectively grow in the Lord. Therefore, the purpose of the training is the cultivation of the mind, morals, and godly behavior in general.

2Tm 3:17

**“the person dedicated to God.”** The phrase “person dedicated to God” is literally “man of God” or “person of God.” “Man of God” or “person of God” is used of people dedicated to God, then in the NT, by implication, to every Christian. It is also used of someone who is devoted to God, that is, a servant of God. A “person of God” can also be a person that God has chosen for a certain task who then gives themself to that task.

**2 Timothy Chapter 4**

2Tm 4:1

**“I solemnly charge *you*.”** The charge is a solemn one indeed. There are two witnesses, God and Christ, and in the culture, if you swore by a god and broke the oath the god would avenge it. Furthermore, the basis of the charge is the appearing and Kingdom of Christ. In the biblical culture, it was common to swear by things when making oaths or giving commands. For example, by the Temple or the gold in the Temple, or the altar in the Temple (Matt. 23:16-18). Here, Paul charges Timothy by the appearing and Kingdom of Christ.

**“who is going to judge the living and the dead.”** Jesus Christ has been appointed by God to judge the living and the dead (see commentary on Acts 10:42).

2Tm 4:2

**“preach the word; be ready…reprove, rebuke, exhort.”** All five verbs are in the imperative mood and are commands. The situation is dire: Paul was in prison about to lose his life and Nero’s persecution of Christians was severe. Worse, people were being hardened to the truth, as 2 Tim. 4:3 tells us: “For the time will come when they will not put up with the sound teaching.” In these circumstances, Jesus commands us to always be ready, to preach, to reprove, to rebuke, and to exhort.

The five imperative verbs are in a string and are the figure of speech asyndeton, “no ands.” In asyndeton, there is no “and” between the final items in the list, and so the reader quickly moves to the conclusion: “with all patience and teaching!” In this case, the figure asyndeton fulfills two important functions. It lets us know that although there are five things in the list, more could be added. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, it is meant to give us pertinent examples. It also places an emphasis on the conclusion, and thus shows us that in trying to stand firm in the faith and in trying to reach others, we must be patient toward others and try to reach them by teaching the truth.

[For a more complete explanation of asyndeton, see commentary on Gal. 5:22. See Word Study: “Syndeton.”]

**“at convenient times and at inconvenient times.”** The wordplay on “times” in the Greek text emphasizes the meaning. The Greek sentence in 2 Timothy 4:2-3 has the root word, *kairos*, in three forms, and reads, *eukairōs akairōs…kairos* (εὐκαίρως ἀκαίρως…καιρός), “convenient times, inconvenient times…the time will come.” The Greek word *kairos* (#2540 καιρός) refers to a point of time, which can be past, present, or future; thus “time,” or “moment” (cf. Matt. 11:25), or it can refer to a fixed period of time marked by suitableness; thus favorable time, right time, opportune time, opportunity, or season (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2). It can also refer to a specific and decisive point, often a divinely allotted time or season (Mark 1:15). It is also used of a future period of time marked by some set of characteristic circumstances, as in the last times, the End Times, the Messianic times (cf. Matt. 16:3; 1 Tim. 4:1).[[13]](#footnote-31627) In these two verses the meaning is to preach now, “at convenient times and at inconvenient times,” because there is a time coming in the future when people will not tolerate sound doctrine. So preach now, while you can. The punchiness of the Greek, if brought into English might be: Proclaim the word: “convenient, inconvenient” or “opportunity, no opportunity,” or “right time, not the right time,” because there is a time coming when no one will listen.

2Tm 4:3

**“doctrine.”** The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it were a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented.

[For more on *didaskalia* see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13.]

2Tm 4:4

**“and turn aside to myths.”** In its narrower use, the Greek word *muthos* (#3454 μῦθος) referred to myths, like the Greek myths, and legends. However, the way Paul is using it here in 2 Timothy 4:4, *muthos* has a wider meaning, referring to things that are not true. People today, including many Christians, are not turning to the ancient mythologies of the world (although a few are!), but they are turning to lies about what is good and godly. Good and godly beliefs and practices are being replaced with perversions when it comes to things like sex and marriage. In those people who distort the truth will be fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness” (Isa. 5:20). Christ also taught about the days when good and godly people will be kicked out of churches because of what they believe and teach (John 16:2).

2Tm 4:6

**“poured out *as a drink offering.*”** Drink offerings were offered with burnt offerings and sacrifices (Num. 15:1-15). They were additional offerings that went along with the main sacrifice or offering, and that may be Paul’s intention here. Because he is being martyred, executed, and not dying a natural death, he sees his death as an offering, but not the main offering, which was Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21), but rather as an additional offering to God.

**“the time of my departure has come.”** It seems at this point that the Lord told Paul he would be executed, in any case, Paul somehow knew it. When Paul was arrested in Rome the first time he was not clear as to whether he would live or die, although he had some confidence he would live (Phil. 1:20-26). That is not the case in this second imprisonment; he made it clear he would die soon. The way Paul handled the fact that he was soon to die is a great example to all Christians. Paul shows no fear or regret for his life, but looks forward to his reward in the future. Barring the Rapture, we will all die, and the way to die like Paul, looking forward to a glorious future, is to live like Paul, putting God first and fulfilling one’s personal ministry.

The historical evidence is that Paul was executed by Nero, and since Nero died in AD 68, that is the longest Paul could have lived. The great fire of Rome was in July of AD 64, and it was at that point that Nero made Christianity illegal. Paul likely went to Rome to defend Christians, but was arrested and then executed, and that was likely in 66 or AD 67. Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:16-31) was a kind of house arrest. However, when Paul went back to Rome and was arrested, he was placed in a standard Roman prison and had a rough time (tradition says the Marmartine Prison, of which some remnants can be seen today). He wrote from prison and told Timothy not to be ashamed of his situation (2 Tim. 1:8) and that he was suffering (2 Tim. 1:8, 12). He must have been cold because he asked Timothy to bring him his cloak (2 Tim. 4:13), but that does not necessarily mean it would have been winter because Roman dungeons were damp and cold. We know some things about Paul’s death because Ignatius, who was the third Bishop of Antioch and would have possibly known Paul, wrote (about AD 110 ?) that Nero executed Paul in the mid-60s AD. Paul was a Roman citizen, so unlike many other Christians who were crucified (including Peter if we are to believe tradition) or died in the arena, Paul would have been beheaded.

The word “departure” is the translation of the Greek word *analusis* (#359 ἀνάλυσις), which literally refers to an unloosing, and hence it meant an unloosing, a dissolving or dissolution, or a departure. The meaning “departure” in the Greek language was a metaphor taken from sailing (the Greeks were a maritime nation), when the ropes that tied the ship to the dock were “loosed” and the ship departed and sailed away. However, Paul could well have had in mind the more Semitic meaning, referring to when the ropes that held a tent were unloosed and the tent was taken away. Paul referred to his body being a tent several times (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1).

2 Timothy 4:6-8 are noble words, powerful words, inspiring words. They are words of fact, surely, but so much more than that. They were written to inspire Timothy not to fear death, but to stand firmly for the Gospel in the face of death and until death. Now, some 20 centuries later, they inspire us to do the same. They are words of assurance; that those who are faithful to the Gospel will be richly rewarded.

2Tm 4:7

**“I have fought the good fight.”** Paul’s statement is powerful and assertive: “I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.” Paul writes, “I have...I have...I have.” There is no false humility here, like people who do notable things for the Lord often say, such as “It was not me, it was the Lord.” Throughout his Epistles, Paul urged people to stand for the Lord, witness for the Lord, walk in purity and obedience for the Lord. Paul understood that even though the Lord gives guidance and provides spiritual energy, it is still people who make up their mind to obey God and stand for the Good News, and on the Day of Judgment it will be people who will be rewarded for being committed and obeying God. Here in 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul boldly states what he has done, and in doing that he shows us that it is not wrong to take credit for the things we have done. Also, he encourages us to be resolved and committed to do what we can for the Lord so that we can say what he said at the end of his life.

The phrase, “I have fought the good fight” can also be translated as “I have contended in the noble contest,” since the words usually translated “fought…fight” can also be referring to an athletic contest, and evidence for that translation may be the second phrase, “I have finished the race.” But life is both a contest and a fight against evil, and both analogies apply.

**“I have kept the faith.”** The “faith” Paul is referring to is the Christian Faith that has been entrusted to him. Paul guarded and maintained the revelation that he received about what to believe and how to live as a Christian. Others twisted and perverted it, but Paul kept it as it was given to him, and he told Timothy to keep it also (2 Tim. 1:13).

2Tm 4:8

**“In the future there is stored up for me.”** In saying, “In the future there is stored up for me the crown of righteousness,” Paul shows us that we can trust that the simple statements in the Scripture are true. Many verses say that God will repay and thus reward faithful people for what they have done on earth. Paul knew what he had done for the Lord, and he knew that the Lord promised rewards to those who served him and were faithful to him. Paul knew he was one of those faithful servants, and so he speaks with confidence, saying that “there is stored up for me” a reward.

Faithful Christians should be as sure of their future rewards as Paul was. It is not difficult to be an obedient, faithful Christian, but it does take some resolve. But the rewards will be so grand and so magnificent that it is worth some sacrifice here on earth to get them. Every Christian should resolve themselves to live in such a way that they can say like Paul, that in the future there is stored up for me a reward for my work on earth. Many verses in the Bible teach that people will receive in the next life what they deserve based on what they have done in this life (e.g., Job 34:11, Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Ezek. 33:20; 44:10-16; Matt. 5:11-12, 19; 6:1; 10:41-42; 16:27; 18:1-4; 25:14-29; Rom. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 9:24-27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:23-25; 1 Thess. 4:6; Heb. 11:24-26; 2 John 1:8).

**“crown of righteousness.”** The “crowns” are special rewards that will be given out in the future Messianic Kingdom, and the New Testament mentions five crowns that God will give to those people who deserve them. The crown of righteousness is given to those who “have longed for his appearing.” Some Christians are so well-adjusted to this world that it really does not make much difference to them when Christ comes back. They are usually healthy and have comfortable lives, and they do not see how the Lord coming back would really help them. There are also Christians who do not have a strong desire to live a godly and obedient lifestyle, perhaps because doing so will bring them persecution (“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”—2 Tim. 3:12). Many of these Christians do not want Christ to return because they do not want to quit their sin or face Christ on the Day of Judgment. However, there are Christians who try hard to obey God and do His work on earth, and these Christians are usually persecuted in some way and upset about the ungodliness of this world. Those Christians “long for” Christ to return from heaven and set up his kingdom, and they will be rewarded with the crown of righteousness.

[For a summary of all the crowns and more information on the incorruptible crown see commentary on 1 Cor. 9:25. For information on the crown of boasting see commentary on 1 Thess. 2:19. For information on the crown of life see commentary on James 1:12. For information on the crown of glory see commentary on 1 Pet. 5:4. For more information on rewards and punishments in the future kingdom, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.” For more information about Christ’s future kingdom on earth, which is when the blessings of most of the rewards and crowns will be clearly seen, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“on that day.”** The Day of Judgment.

**“have loved.”** The Greek is *agapaō* (#25 ἀγαπάω), and in this case, it carries the sense of “have longed for.” However, it is not just an emotional longing or “love.” The Greek verb *agapaō* refers to a love or longing that is anchored in trust and obedience to God. Jesus said, “If you love me you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). The person who “loves” Jesus’ appearing demonstrates that love by being obedient to God. The verb *agapaō* is in the past tense as though it is referring to an event that has already occurred. But Paul is clearly pointing to the future return of Christ. The reason for the past tense is that Paul is addressing the reality that when Christ returns it will be those who loved his appearing who will receive the same crown as he will. Thus, Paul is writing from the viewpoint of the day Christ returns and those who will be receiving the crown at that time.

2Tm 4:11

**“Only Luke is with me.”** Luke must have just recently arrived, because when Paul had his first trial no one was there to support him, and if Luke was there he would have supported Paul (2 Tim. 4:16).

2Tm 4:13

**“and *also* the scrolls, especially the parchments.”** The nature of these books and parchments, and why Paul would want them, has been discussed for centuries without any certain conclusion. Some commentators say that Paul would have wanted to spend his last days reading and meditating on the Word of God, and that is entirely possible. Others have said that Paul might have wanted them to help with his trial, to show that what he had written and what the other scrolls of the Bible said was not subversive to the Roman government. However, that argument seems less likely because the Roman government was deeply steeped in idolatry and sexual immorality, and Paul had certainly written against those things, so they would not have helped at his trial.

One possibility that most commentators do not mention is that Paul knew he was going to die (2 Tim. 4:6-7), and was deeply concerned about the Word of God living on (2 Tim. 2:2). This was especially the case since Christianity was illegal in the Roman world (Nero made it illegal in AD 64 after the Great Fire of Rome), and much of Paul’s own work had been rejected by many believers, especially Jewish believers (cf. 2 Tim. 1:15; Acts 21:24; Gal. 5:7-12). Therefore it seems that Paul would be very interested in promoting his writings, and placing them in the proper order in the canon of Scripture (which presumably is the order in which they appear in our Bibles today). Even though Paul was in a Roman dungeon, he still had faithful followers who supported and helped him, and who would have continued his work (2 Tim. 1:16; 4:11, 21). They would have passed down what he taught about his writings and how they fit into the “big picture” of the Bible.

It is a common misconception among non-believers that the Bible is in some way incomplete, i.e., that it has books missing. The 66 books that compose the modern Bible are known as the “canon,” a theological word that basically means, “the books of the Bible officially accepted as Holy Scripture.” Some people who doubt the Bible think that in the centuries after Jesus Christ, church councils built the canon of the Bible by arbitrarily choosing the books they thought should be included, and excluding the books they did not like or that did not fit their theology. Furthermore, these Bible-doubters usually go on to assert there are many other books that should be in the Bible, and they sometimes refer to these books as the “lost books” of the Bible.

Before addressing the issue of whether or not any God-breathed books were left out of the Bible, I would like to make a personal observation. I have had the opportunity to personally speak with people who subscribe to the theory that there are lost books of the Bible, and I have noticed that those people who criticize the Bible by claiming it is incomplete do not conduct their lives according to the books that *are* included in the Bible. This is hypocritical because if the Bible *is* missing books, then the parts we do have become especially valuable. If pirates have most of a treasure map, they do not throw it out because it is missing a piece. Instead, the part they have becomes even more valuable and they study it with great intensity so they can find the treasure. Critics of the canon do not live by the books that are included in Scripture. Almost without exception, they use the theory of the “missing books” to ignore what the Bible says about how to live. It seems clear they are not trying to restore a faulty document but instead are looking for an excuse to ignore the Bible, and they find that excuse by questioning the canon.

The Church did not “create” the canon as the critics assert; rather, they *recognized* it. Godly men and women have always recognized that God speaks to people, and God gave the Scripture to people so they would know Him and obey Him. That is why the Bible is said to be “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16). But from the time God first spoke His Word to people and told them to write it down, there have been other writings that were not “God-breathed.” So, for example, enough books were circulating in the ancient world that Ecclesiastes, which was written more than 900 years before Christ, says, “Of making many books there is no end” (Eccl. 12:12). Some of the books that existed in biblical times contained material substantiating Scripture. A few of these are mentioned in the Bible, including, “the Annotations of the prophet Iddo” (2 Chron. 13:22), “the Book of the Annals of Solomon” (1 Kings 11:41), and “the annals of Jehu” (2 Chron. 20:34). Even though these books are mentioned in the Bible and supported it, they are still not “God-breathed,” and are left out of the canon. They are lost to us today precisely because the people of the time knew they were not “God-breathed,” so they did not carefully preserve them and pass them down from generation to generation as they did with what they recognized to be the God-breathed Word.

Before “books” were invented, Scripture was kept on scrolls. Scrolls existed thousands of years before the common book format we are used to today. Book format came into use around the time of the writing of the New Testament. Since the pages of a “book” could be written on both sides, paper was conserved, and furthermore, books were easier to read and carry than scrolls. Before the book format was invented, the larger individual writings in the Bible (such as Genesis, Joshua, Isaiah, and Jeremiah) were usually kept on individual scrolls, while it was customary to write several of the smaller books, such as Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, on one scroll.

People who criticize the canon try to make it seem as if all the scrolls of the Bible, as well as dozens of other scrolls, were just “floating around the Christian world” until some church committee, hundreds of years after Christ, decided to put some of them together and make one official book. That is not what happened. By the time the individual books of the Bible were bound together as one book, they had been read, revered, loved, preserved, and recognized by generations of believers as truly being “the words of God.” This is clear in the Bible itself. The religious authorities, the people, and Jesus Christ recognized the Law, the Prophets, and the Scripture or holy writings (Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 21:42; 22:40; 26:54; Mark 14:49; Luke 24:27, 44; John 1:45; 5:39; 7:38; 19:24; Acts 13:15; 17:11; 18:28; 24:14). In other words, the Jews, and then the Christians, made a distinction between writings that were the Word of God and writings that were not, and those that were from God were referred to as the Scripture. In contrast to the God-breathed Word, the non-canonical books were known by the community of believers to not be from the mouth of God, so they were not referred to as Scripture and were not included in the canon.

God had the whole Bible in mind when He first told Moses to write His words on a scroll, translated “book” in most versions (Exod. 17:14). The writings of Moses were known as “the Book of the Law of Moses” (Josh. 8:31). The fact that the Law of Moses was recognized to be “the words of God” throughout Israel’s history, including the time of Christ, shows that the books which were recognized by the people were carefully preserved and handed down, not just as history or nice prose, but as the Word of God. The same was true for the psalms of David, the proverbs of Solomon, the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, etc. By the time Church councils undertook the task of compiling all the loose books into a single volume, the books that were, and had been for years, considered as “the Word of God” were well-known and loved in the Christian community despite the fact that there were, as there always have been, naysayers, doubters, and detractors.

There are reliable tests that have been used to determine whether or not a book is a part of the canon, such as:

1. Was the book originally written by a confirmed prophet of God?

2. Was it accepted by the people of God? Those alive at the time the book was written were the best qualified to know and preserve it and pass it down.

3. Does the message fit into the “big picture” of Scripture?

4. Is it prophetic?

5. Does it have in it the power of God to change a person’s life?

There is a very good reason why Christians do not include the “lost books” in the Bible—they are not Holy Scripture. The people who wrote them were not accepted as “holy men of God” in their own generations, like people such as Moses, Samuel, Peter, and Paul were. Furthermore, reading and studying the non-canonical books shows they are not “God-breathed.” They were not accepted as the Word of God at the time they were written. They are full of historical inaccuracies, fanciful stories, outright falsehoods, and they almost always contradict other parts of Scripture. But, since most Christians do not have a good grasp of the contents of the Holy Bible, and furthermore have only likely heard of the “lost books” of the Bible but have never actually read them, it is easy for them to think that some council thousands of years ago left out a book or two of the Bible.

The “lost books” are also known for containing accounts of miracles that have no godly purpose or redeeming value. The non-canonical books have “fatal flaws” that reveal they are not the Word of God. As stated previously, there is a reason the “lost books” are not included in the canon of Scripture: generations of Christians and Christian scholars have read them and realized they did not come from God.

Another way God has kept His Word pure is by intertwining and cross-referencing the books of the Bible and the biblical characters. With the exception of the book of Esther, every single book of the Old Testament is either quoted or referred to in the New Testament. The phrase “It is written,” followed by a quotation or reference to the Old Testament occurs more than 60 times in the New Testament, and there are many other quotations that are not so specifically referenced. Also, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament many of the writers knew of each other and even referred to each other. Daniel and Ezra both mention Jeremiah; Ezra refers to Haggai and Zechariah; Nehemiah wrote about Ezra; The books of Kings and Chronicles mention many of the prophets; Moses, Joshua, and Samuel are mentioned in many of the books; Job is mentioned in Ezekiel and James; Noah is mentioned in ten books besides Genesis; Peter wrote about Paul; Paul mentions Peter, Mark, and Luke; the book of Acts (written by Luke) mentions the apostles and Paul, and on and on. In contrast to this extensive cross-referencing system showing that the people of God knew of, loved, and respected each other, the non-canonical books are not cross-referenced in this way.

It is easy for the critic to say the Bible is an arbitrary collection of books. However, anyone who actually reads and studies the canon of Scripture will be able to conclude what thousands of scholars who are concerned about the purity of the Bible and the validity of the canon have discovered and rediscovered: the canon found in the modern protestant versions of the Bible, with 66 books from Genesis to Revelation, can be confidently trusted as “the Word of God.” Montague R. James correctly concludes: “…there is no question of any one’s having excluded them [the apocryphal books] from the New Testament, they have done that for themselves”[[14]](#footnote-22016)

One point we should keep in mind is that as long as “Scripture” was a collection of scrolls, there did not have to be a “proper order” for them to be kept in. There was a general sense of their chronology, but they were stored as individual scrolls. Also, local leaders were more able to keep scrolls that were not strictly Scripture but were supportive of Scripture or even just well-liked, in the scroll depository in the Synagogue or Church without causing much problem. That all changed with the invention of the “book” (technically called a “codex”) around the end of the first century. Now a proper order for the books had to be decided upon (a subject which is actually still debated), and books that were simply well-liked could not be bound together with the God-breathed books and would have to be excluded. This process certainly caused some debates, but the overall outcome—the creation of the modern canon—has been confirmed and reconfirmed by hundreds of years of godly Christian scholars who, like other good Christians, want to separate books that are “God-breathed” from those that are not.

2Tm 4:14

**“Alexander the coppersmith.”** The name Alexander was common, and this description does not fit any other Alexander mentioned in the New Testament. The man is unknown to us but was known to Timothy.

**“the Lord will repay him according to his works.”** This is not a threat or a curse. It is a sobering statement of fact. Also, this is not referring to being repaid in this life. Paul was about to be executed by Rome, and that certainly was not the Lord “repaying” Paul for his godly works. Every human will be repaid for the works they have done on the day when they are judged by the Lord. People who have done godly things will be rewarded, while people who have done ungodly things will be punished.

[For more on people being rewarded or punished, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil” and also see commentary on Rom. 2:5.]

2Tm 4:17

**“and so that all the Gentiles could hear.”** Paul was called to bring the Word to the Gentiles, and he did until his last days.

**“and I was rescued out of the mouth of the lion.”** This is likely very literal, and Paul survived his first trial and was not thrown to the lions in the arena.

2Tm 4:18

**“The Lord will rescue me from every evil work.”** Paul did not think he would escape death (2 Tim. 4:6), and he did not escape it. He was executed by Nero, apparently a short time after writing 2 Timothy. What Paul means by the sentence “The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will save me for his heavenly kingdom” is that Paul will experience the ultimate “rescue” and salvation: he will die and will receive everlasting life. When the Lord comes to rescue and save believers, the living believers will be changed and the dead believers will be raised (1 Thess. 4:15-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-52), and believers will be given new, everlasting bodies (Phil. 3:21) and the Lord Jesus will rule the earth, so in that way we will indeed be “rescued” from every evil work and saved. That “rescued” and “saved” in 2 Timothy 4:18 both refer to the ultimate “rescue” and salvation is the consensus of modern conservative scholars (cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles*; Robert Yarbrough, The Pillar New Testament Commentary: *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*; George W. Knight III, the New International Greek Testament Commentary: *The Pastoral Epistles*; William D. Mounce, Word Biblical Commentary: *Pastoral Epistles*; and the list could be greatly expanded).

**“will save me for.”** Jesus Christ will save those who believe in him. The translation “save” is from the Greek verb, *sōzō* (#4982 σῴζω), “rescue, save.” Paul will be fully saved at the same time he is rescued; when the Lord Jesus comes back.

**“for his heavenly kingdom.”** Unfortunately, the phrase “his heavenly kingdom” has been misunderstood to mean “his kingdom in heaven,” as if heaven is the location of the kingdom. But the kingdom of Christ will be on earth. Jesus Christ will come from heaven with his army and conquer the earth (Rev. 19:11-21). Then he will rule the earth (cf. Ps. 2:8; 72:8-11; Dan. 2:35; 7:14; Mic. 5:4; Zech. 9:9-10). That is why the meek will inherit the earth and reign on it (Matt. 5:5; Rev. 5:10). The fact that God gives Christ the authority to rule along with all the heavenly qualities of the kingdom, such as no hunger, no disease, no war, and no ungodly leadership, will make Christ’s kingdom heavenly indeed.

[For more on Christ’s kingdom on earth, see appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

2Tm 4:19

**“Greet Prisca and Aquila.”** This is good evidence that 2 Timothy was written to Timothy when he was still in Ephesus, as he was in Ephesus when he received the Epistle 1 Timothy (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3), and there is no evidence he left there. Prisca (also called “Priscilla”) and Aquila met Paul when he came to Corinth, where they were living (Acts 18:1-3). They moved to Ephesus when Paul traveled there (Acts 18:18-19), but later moved back to Rome, their original home (1 Cor. 16:19; Acts 18:2). It seems clear that when Nero started the persecution of Christians in Rome in AD 64, they moved back to a place with which they were familiar, Ephesus, and so Paul sent greetings to them via Timothy (2 Tim. 4:19).

2Tm 4:21

**“Claudia, and all the brothers and sisters.”** The Greek text is “brothers,” but that often includes men and women, so we added “and sisters” for clarity. This is one of the verses in the Bible that clearly shows that the Greek word “brothers” can, in some contexts, refer to a mixed group of men and women. In this case, it refers to the believers in Rome. Here in 2 Timothy 4:21, “Claudia,” a woman, is named along with Eubulus, Pudens, and Linus, and the four of them were people of great standing in the Church. In fact, tradition says that Pudens became the bishop of Rome. It would not make sense to name a mixed group of male and female leaders in the Church and then add “all the brothers” if the “brothers” excluded women.

[For more on brothers and sisters, see Word Study: “Adelphos.” For more on women’s involvement in the early church, see Appendix 11: “The Role of Women in the Church.”]

2Tm 4:22

**“your spirit...you all.”** In the Greek text, the first “your” is singular, referring to Timothy, while the second “you” is plural, all the believers in Ephesus, where Timothy was.

1. W. Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, “Excursus: Prophecies about Timothy” [WBC], 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-24036)
2. R. C. H. Lenski, St. Paul’s Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, 756-59; also see W. R. Nicoll, The Expositor’s Greek Testament, 4:155-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-31566)
3. BDAG, s.v. “ἐνδυναμόω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15120)
4. Cf. Lenski, The Interpretation of Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, 777-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-29691)
5. Cf. Wuest, New Testament, “out from among the dead,” 502. [↑](#footnote-ref-19888)
6. BDAG, s.v. “ἀρνέομαι” [↑](#footnote-ref-22524)
7. Hodges and Farstad, The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text. [↑](#footnote-ref-23861)
8. Nicoll, Expositor’s Greek Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-25950)
9. BDAG, s.v. “ἀνανήφω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21205)
10. Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus [NICNT]. [↑](#footnote-ref-31687)
11. Towner, Letters to Timothy and Titus [NICNT], 565-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-10198)
12. BDAG, s.v. “παρακολουθέω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-12336)
13. Cf. Friberg, Analytical Lexicon, s.v. “καιρός.” [↑](#footnote-ref-31627)
14. M. R. James, The Apocryphal New Testament, xi-xii. [↑](#footnote-ref-22016)