

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY IN THE SECOND BOOK OF TIMOTHY – PART ONE – INTRODUCTION AND QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER ONE

Paul's circumstances had changed dramatically in the two years since he wrote his first letter to Timothy. Last time he was a free man after his first imprisonment and trial in Rome.(II Tim.4:16) He had taken the opportunity to revisit Macedonia and Ephesus to encourage the Christians and help them build upon what had already been accomplished.(I Tim.1:3) He may have fulfilled his long time dream to visit Spain.(Rom.15:24) We have no idea why he had again been arrested and was back in prison in far harder circumstances than last time.(Acts 28:30; II Tim.1:16) According to history he was convicted this time and executed by beheading, probably in 64AD, although the Bible is silent on what happened. What is clear is that Paul himself knew that the end of his life and ministry were close.(II Tim.4:6-8) God often lets us know shortly before our time is up to help us finish well. Characteristically Paul was determined to make the most of every remaining day. This time he knew he could make no plans to visit Timothy but hoped that Timothy could come to see him one last time.(II Tim.4:9,13) and is hoping he will bring his cloak – a Roman jail in winter was a cold place – and some parchments.

Though his situation was substantially changed, Paul's love for Timothy, his son in Christ was as great as ever. He remained as convinced as always that the message of grace in which he and Timothy had so often shared was vitally important. He realised that very soon Timothy would be proclaiming this message without him. He wanted to be sure that Timothy was ready to receive the baton, run hard with it and eventually pass it on to other faithful men.(II Tim.2:2) Paul had some final encouragement and some last warnings.

Timothy had remained in Ephesus,(I Tim.1:3; II Tim.1:18) serving a church with a remarkable history. It had been planted first by Aquila and Priscilla,(Acts 18:19) built on by Apollos,(Acts 18:24-26 and then strengthened greatly by Paul's three years,(Acts 20:31) of teaching a group of students who reached out effectively to their whole province.(Acts 19:9,10) The opposition was intense because Ephesus was a city dedicated to the goddess Artemis, who also brought wealth to the businessmen through a flourishing tourist trade. The Christians of Ephesus lived on a spiritual volcano liable to burst into activity at any moment. They desperately needed wise leadership and solid teaching.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER ONE

1. How does Paul introduce himself in this letter? Why does he so often emphasise that he was an apostle *by the will of God*? How would this make a difference to his ministry? How does 'the promise of life in Christ Jesus' help when God gives us a task? How do the three five letter words in verse 2 answer the last question? Why are both the Father and Christ mentioned as the source of this promise?(1:1,2)
2. In what sense was Timothy Paul's son?(I Tim.1:2) How does Paul feel about Timothy? Is there anyone you feel that deeply about as a Christian? Does anyone care that deeply about you? Why did Paul always start his prayers with saying 'thank

you' rather than 'please'? What difference would it make to our prayers if we did the same?(1:3,4)

3. How had a Christian faith first been introduced into Timothy's family? Why had Paul circumcised Timothy before they began to travel together in the light of his resistance to the idea that circumcision was essential for new believers?(Acts 15:1,2; 16:1-3) Was he contradicting his earlier teaching?(1:5)
4. What picture has Paul used to describe how he led Timothy to Christ? Why is it such a helpful illustration?(I Pet.5:6) What had God done at that moment? What is the character of the Spirit who is given to us when we first believe? Why might Timothy have needed reminding at this point in his life? How can we 'kindle afresh' the Holy Spirit in us?(1:6,7)
5. Why might Timothy have been ashamed of his testimony and his friendship with Paul? Can we avoid suffering for being Christians? How does Paul here summarise the message for which he was suffering? How was it different from the teaching of those who persecuted him? What will be the outcome of believing Paul's message? What three aspects of his ministry does Paul describe in verse 11?(1:8-11)
6. How has Paul been able to endure persecution? What had God and Paul entrusted to each other? What does each one guard? In what two ways does Paul describe the responsibility he wants Timothy to take with what God has entrusted to him? What resources does Paul say God has given him to enable him to do this?(1:12-14)
7. Which two people does Paul mention who illustrate what he has just been saying about being ashamed of him and his gospel? How by contrast had Onesiphorus been so faithful? How would his whole household receive mercy as a result?(II Tim.4:19) Did the promise of mercy mean that they would not suffer because of their service?(1:15-18)