

# *Off the Shelf*

## *Sunday School Lesson*

### *2 Timothy 1*

#### **Background**

This letter from Paul was written around 67AD while he was in prison, awaiting execution. It represents some of his final words of instruction. He must have sensed that these were his final days. The major themes of this letter are forward looking to his final days and the coming trials and persecutions of Christians.

#### **Introduction (1:1-2)**

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1. Paul was made an apostle through divine calling and revelation. He not only saw the risen Jesus Christ, but he was instructed by him after his conversion. His apostleship was confirmed by God in the miracles he performed while preaching the gospel. These are the credentials and evidence of being an apostle. (Acts 9:1-18,14:8-10; Gal 1:11-24)
2. God has promised forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Jesus. This is the only way to be made holy and have a relationship with God. What God has said, he will do. His words cannot be changed or revoked. (Ezek 12:28; Mt 24:35; Jn 14:6)
3. Grace is divine energy at work within born-again Christians. This energy comes from the Holy Spirit and it enables us to do his will and to become holy. Mercy is God's forgiveness, provided through faith in the blood sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Peace with the Father and his glory and pleasure come from the works of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. These works produce a holy race of redeemed humans. (1 Pet 2:9-10)

#### **Instructions for Timothy (1:3-18)**

*I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you,*

*so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.*

1. There was a deep and emotional bond of love and joy between Timothy and Paul. This bond came from the presence of the Holy Spirit within them. The love of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit surpass all understanding. (2 Cor 13:14) *Have you experienced this bond that connects believers of different age, sex, social and ethnic differences?*
2. Salvation through faith in Jesus was granted by God to Timothy's grandmother and mother, and then to Timothy. The gift of faith in Jesus that brings salvation is often given to succeeding generations of born-again Christians. This is why it is important to raise your children in the fear and knowledge of God, by teaching them the Bible. (Prov 22:6)
3. Paul says that God gives us grace to overcome our fears about sharing the gospel. Grace is energy, given by the Holy Spirit, to overcome forces that oppose the gospel. *What are some sources of opposition to the gospel? What causes Christians to be fearful and ashamed to share the gospel?*
4. Paul tells Timothy to continue to preach and teach what is in the Bible. This is the

pattern of sound teaching and doctrine. Words are important. It is important to faithfully teach the words of God in the Bible. Many people have drifted away from the truth, because they changed the meaning of the Bible, to suit their purposes. *Do you know some false teachers like this?*

5. God will reward Christians who obey his revealed will and act according to the power given them, by the Holy Spirit, to do good works. Good works that are motivated by self-interest or self-will, are not rewarded, if they conflict with what God wants. (1 Cor 3:12-15; Col 3:23-24; Heb 10:35-36; 1 Pet 1:17)

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### ***Sunday School Lesson***

### ***2 Timothy 2***

#### **Pastoral Advice (2:1-18)**

*You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself. Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.*

1. Paul tells Timothy to teach what he has learned from Paul. He is to find others who will continue to faithfully preach the gospel. Christian leaders must set an example by being dedicated to Jesus, who is Lord and who is like a commanding officer. Like a soldier who wishes to please his superior officer, this requires self-sacrifice and perseverance in the face of opposition. (Eph 6:12-17) *In what ways is the Christian engaged in warfare?*
2. Christian leaders must be like athletes. They must have self-control to follow the rules, in order to gain a trophy. This means they must know and teach only what is in the Bible. *How are Christian leaders like farmers who toil with the expectation of harvesting a crop in the future?*
3. Paul says that everything he does is for the benefit of God's elect. These are the people chosen by God and given faith to believe in Jesus. Therefore, Paul is seeking to reach the lost with the gospel and teach those who are born-again to grow to be more like Jesus. (Eph 2:1-10)
4. Like the apostle Peter, Christians may have times where they fail and deny Jesus. However, those who consistently deny Jesus are not born-again. Born-again Christians are joined to Jesus, through his sacrifice and he will never disown them, because to do so, he would have to disown himself. This is eternal security. (Jn 10:25-30; 1 Jn 2:18-27)
5. Christian leaders have quarreled about the meaning of the words of Jesus regarding the sacrament of communion. This has divided God's people. (Mk 14:22-25) *Can you think of other examples?* More serious are those who teach ideas not found in the Bible. These leaders spread lies, which is like an infection that corrupts believers. In Paul's time, Hymenaeus and Philetus, taught that the resurrection had already happened. *How would this ruin the faith of some Christians? What are some false teachings today that ruin the faith of Christians?*

## **Traits of Faithful Leaders (2:19-26)**

*Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid*

***arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.***

1. The sure foundation of Christianity is based on the completed works and promises of God. God is sovereign and nothing happens without his knowledge. His plans and vision are beyond time and space. The work of the indwelling Holy Spirit guarantees that every born-again Christian will become more like Jesus and turn from evil. (Phil 1:6, 2:12-13)
2. The “large house” may refer to the church and the fact that there are both born-again people and those who claim to know Jesus but have not been born-again. In this view, born-again believers would be the vessels of silver and gold, fit for doing good works. Those who are not, would be the vessels of wood or clay.
3. God is the one who judges what are good works worthy of heavenly rewards. What makes good works “good” is that they are inspired, directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The same “good works” can be performed by those who are not believers. These will not merit heavenly rewards, because the motivation for doing them does not come from God. For example, people may do “good works” to enhance their reputation or with the hope for some future favors in return. (Mt 7:21-23)
4. Paul tells Timothy to flee from “the evil desires of youth.” *What are some youthful desires that can lead a person away from following Jesus?*
5. Timothy is told to associate with other Christians who are dedicated to serving the Lord Jesus. Christians are part of the body of Christ. We are to find our place within the community of faith and serve based on our spiritual gifts. *What are your spiritual gifts?* (1 Cor 12:1-20; 1 Pet 4:10)
6. Timothy is to avoid quarrels. He is to teach with kindness and with the hope that those who error in their thinking will repent and change. Being humble, gentle and yet firm in holding to teaching the truths of the Bible can be difficult. *Why is this?*

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***2 Timothy 3***

**Growing Corruption of Christians (3:1-9)**

***But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth—men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.***

1. The Bible refers to “the last days” as the time of the Church Age, the time of the tribulation and the time of the reign of Jesus on the earth. In this context, it most likely refers to the Church Age, because Paul describes how false Christians will corrupt the church. (Is 2:1-5; Ezek 38:16-23; Dan 89-25; Acts 2:15-21; Heb 1:1-2; 1 Pet 1:20)
2. False Christians claim to be religious, while they reject some parts of the Bible. They like to appear to be moral, but they live according to their selfish desires. This is the basis for human philosophies, like situation ethics, which teaches that there are no absolute standards of morality. It claims that moral behavior depends upon circumstances and not on what God has said in the Bible. *What are some popular ideas about morality that conflict with the Bible?*
3. Paul describes many ways that evil will continue to grow and influence people. The world, the flesh and the devil appeal to the human pride and the desire for power and pleasure. These evil forces try to focus people on self-love rather than on God. *What are some ways that the world, the flesh and the devil have changed your culture?*
4. False teachers make appealing arguments and may even use parts of the Bible. In this way, they mislead Christians into false ideas. This is why it is important to

study the Bible. Some Christian churches have been corrupted by false ideas, based on selecting some Bible verses and ignoring others. *Can you think of some examples?*

5. False teachers may be very intelligent and having great knowledge. They pride themselves on their academic credentials, professional experience and continuous learning. Paul says that these false teachers strive to be superior in knowledge. However, the accumulation of knowledge is futile if it is not based on the gospel. Jesus is the only way to God. His words revealed through the Bible are truth. This is the foundation of correct thinking and living. (Jn 1:9-13, 14:6)
6. Jannes and Jambres are believed to be Egyptian magicians, who tried to discredit Moses by imitating the transformation of their staffs into snakes. (Ex 7:8-12) Paul uses this as an example of false teachers, who may be persuasive speakers and appear to be good, but are evil and opposed to God. Paul says that eventually false teachers will become obvious to those who know and follow the Bible.

### **Persecution of Faithful Christians (3:10-17)**

*You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you have learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

1. Dedicated leaders are like Paul. The way he lived was consistent with his teachings. He was focused on preaching the gospel and helping Christians to grow in their faith, despite his having many hardships. *How do trials help Christians grow spiritually?*
2. Paul says that every dedicated Christian will be persecuted. Holy living draws criticism and opposition. *Why is this? Have you experienced persecution because of your faith and lifestyle?* If you are a Christian and have not experienced some form of persecution, you may be living too much like the world. Christians are called to grow in holiness, which will distinguish us from unbelievers. (Mt 5:13-

14; 1 Th 5:23-24)

3. If you tell a lie often, you will begin to believe it. Paul says that false teachers will become trapped in their own false teachings. This is why it is important to study the Bible and follow what it teaches. *What are some false teachings found in Christian churches that conflict with the Bible?*
4. Paul says that the Bible is inspired by God and so it represents the ideas and words of God. God speaks to us through the Bible and so it represents the will and authority of God. Christians are convicted of sin and learn to live moral lives by following its teachings. (1 Cor 2:13; 2 Pet 1:20-21)
5. There are some false teachers who reject parts of the Bible or say that parts are not relevant in modern culture. Jesus said that the words of God will never change and that everyone will be judged by them. (Mt 24:35; Rom 14:4-12)
6. Good works are inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit. *How does the Bible help us to do good works?*

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### ***Sunday School Lesson***

### ***2 Timothy 4***

#### **Conform to the Bible (4:1-5)**

***In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.***

1. Born-again Christians yearn for the coming of Jesus and his kingdom on earth. They also seek to serve Jesus as their king. Jesus will judge each person according to his obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. These beliefs are signs of being born-again. (Rom 8:22-23; 1 Pet 2:9-11, 4:11)

2. Paul stresses the importance of preaching and teaching the Bible, whether it is popular or not. This requires great patience, endurance and faithful commitment to not be swayed by novel ideas, that may seem appealing, but have no basis in the Bible. *Can you think of some popular ideas within some Christian churches that are not found in the Bible or that conflict with the Bible?*
3. People generally do not like to hear that they are sinners. Being punished by God for sins makes people uncomfortable. We would rather focus on the love of God. However, the Bible teaches about both the holiness of God, our sinfulness and the love of Jesus, in providing salvation through faith in his sacrifice. Some Christian leaders have become popular, by preaching a prosperity gospel that promises that Christians will be healthy and wealthy. This is the kind of preaching that Paul warns against.

### **Final Instructions (4:6-22)**

*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments. Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Greet Priscilla and Aquilla and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*

1. The crown of righteousness is one of the rewards that God gives to born-again Christians. Our righteousness comes from the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and so it is a symbol of God's grace. It is not from pride in self-effort. A crown is a symbol of authority and identity. (Heb 2:9; Jas 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4; Rev 2:10)

2. Demas is an example of a Christian who gave in to the pressures of society. What these pressures were are not clear. *What are some social pressures that Christians are feeling today?*
3. Paul says that his friends deserted him during his first testimony before public authorities. This is similar to what happened to Jesus on the night he was arrested. Paul and Jesus forgave their disciples for their lapse of boldness. Failures can either strengthen us or they can break us. The difference is the presence and power of God working within, through the work of the Holy Spirit. (Jn 18:15-27, 21:15-17; Acts 2)
4. Paul was confident that the Holy Spirit would continue to guide, instruct and protect him, so that he would faithfully proclaim the gospel. He expected evil attacks, and he believed that he would overcome them through God's grace. *What evil attacks have you experienced? How has God helped you to overcome them?*
5. At the close of Paul's life, he was thinking about his many dear friends in Christ. His desire was for Timothy to be with him as death drew near. There are many dear Christians in my life that have helped me to know and grow in my relationship with Jesus. Thinking of them brings back fond memories of the eternal bonds of love and fellowship that I will celebrate with them in heaven. *Who are the special Christians in your life? Are you a special Christian to someone who needs you to mentor them?*