

Laying The Groundwork – 2 Tim 1:1-2

Starting a new series from 2 Tim

Ever noticed how last words are a big deal?

You know, the last thing people say before they leave or die, especially if they know they're dying?

Why is that? Why do we pay so much attention to them?

I think primarily it's b/c that's when people tend to coalesce their thoughts and express the things most important to them

Which is exactly what's going on in 2 Tim – these are Paul's last words

The gist of which is to **Keep On**

That's the overarching theme and thrust of what he has to say

And therefore the title of our series

Experiencing the fog of life? Keep on; Hardship? Keep on

Opposition? Keep on; False teaching? Keep on

That's undercurrent of everything he has to say

And he begins in v1-2 by laying some groundwork (**Laying The Groundwork**)

By way of introduction, Paul is reminding us that we can trust what he's saying

And cluing us in to the nature of what he's going to say

- Before we dig in, I want to give you some **background** on this book
Which is actually a letter, or an epistle, as it's sometimes called
Written to a person or group of people like a church

In the NT, 21 of the 27 books are epistles

This one is part of a subset called the Pastoral Epistles – 1&2 Timothy and Titus

Called such b/c they were written to pastors – people in positions of church leadership

So it's a letter, and it's written from prison in Rome

Probably a dungeon of sorts, as opposed to his earlier house arrest

We know that b/c 1:16-17 says . . .

And 2:9 says – *I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal.*

That's pretty straightforward

- The date he wrote it, the when, is a bit more obscure
But most likely it was sometime between 64-67AD

We know that b/c it was *after* he was released fr his first arrest, but *before* he was killed

And his first release, based on the events in Acts, took place around 63AD

And he was killed, according to Eusebius (a 3rd century historian), in 67AD by Nero

So after he was released from his first imprisonment at the end of the book of Acts, apparently he was re-arrested, jailed, and wrote 2 Tim just before he died

All of which coincides with Nero's intense persecution of Christians starting in 64AD, in order to blame them for the great fire in Rome

So based on all the evidence, Paul's imprisonment fr which he wrote must have taken place sometime between 64-67AD

And Paul wrote the letter to encourage Timothy to *keep on* in the face of difficulty

To keep doing the things he knew to be right

That's the what, where, when, and why of 2 Tim

But even more important, is the who – *who* wrote it

B/c that determines whether we can trust it or not

And the very first word says it all – *Paul*

Which means that when it comes to 2 Timothy, you can . . .

Be confident of authoritative authorship (v1a)

- Authoritative b/c it was written by *Paul* (1)

The same Paul who was converted in a personal encounter w/ Jesus on the road to Dam.

The same Paul who was educated by the best, had the perfect Jewish lineage, was a good Pharisee, and would have known the OT Scriptures inside and out

The same Paul who . . . Persecuted the church before his conversion

Confronted Peter on his duplicitous behavior toward the Gentiles

Spent 20 years of his life traveling around the Med to reach the Gentiles with the gospel

Was arrested, imprisoned, beaten, and eventually killed for preaching that gospel

Let's just say he'd been around the block a few times

He knew the Scriptures, knew what he was doing, and was in the thick of it fr the get-go

So if you're going to listen to anyone when it comes to the things of God – Paul s/b near the top of your list

- In addition to that, he was an *apostle* (1)

You can be confident of authoritative authorship b/c he was *an apostle of Christ Jesus*

Which is no small thing

Apostles, as we saw a few weeks back, were men . . .

Who followed Jesus, were familiar w/ his ministry, witnessed his resurrection, and responded to his personal call to spread the Word

That was Paul – he followed Jesus, though not right away

He was familiar with his ministry – initially from an adversarial perspective

He witnessed his resurrection – though from afar I imagine

And most importantly, he was personally commissioned by Jesus to spread the Word

- What's more, his apostleship was *by the will of God* (1)

We can be confident of authoritative authorship b/c – it's Paul, the apostle, *by the will of God*

Implying that Paul's authority was not *self*-determined, but God-determined

He wasn't some self-proclaimed apostle or preacher that you see these days . . .

He was ordained by God – chosen by an act of *his* will

Which sounds kind of convenient, right?

You know, appeal to God – how can anybody argue w/ that? “God told me”

And if that was the only source of authentication, it might be cause for concern

Like it is when people say it these days – it doesn't carry much weight b/c it can't be authenticated

But Paul's apostleship was

It was confirmed by the other apostles – who watched his ministry and eventually gave him the right hand of fellowship as one of them . . .

And it was confirmed by the early church

They heard what he taught; They resonated with it

They knew it matched the other apostolic teaching

They saw the miracles he performed

And consequently, accepted him for who he was – an apostle *by the will of God*

- Now, some people have tried to say otherwise – at least in the last 200 years
People like Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan as of late (Jesus Seminar)
Who reject orthodox Christianity and the God-inspired inerrancy of the Bible
And wrote a book to say that Paul didn't write many of the letters assigned to him
Rather, "a conservative conspiracy within the early church successfully changed Paul into a conservative himself." (Al Mohler blog, 4-13-09)
Which is fitting – if you don't like what something says, just say it's a fake

And though the evidence is weak for such a position re 2 Timothy . . .

I want you to understand the argument, and what's *wrong* with it . . .

B/c this is where the battle rages – the veracity of the Scriptures; the truth of God's Word
Always has been the issue, always will be

Satan is well aware that if he can get you to reject or even question the truth of God's word – he's gotcha

He can shape society however he wants, b/c there's no more authority on which to base our decisions and beliefs

There's no more right and wrong – it's whatever we think is best

So I want you to understand this argument that Paul didn't write 2 Timothy
So that when you run into it, or things like it, your faith won't be rocked . . .
And you'll be able to refute it with clarity and confidence

It goes something like this –

Since the language and verbiage Paul uses is somewhat different than his other writings (which is true) . . .

And since **pseudonymous** writing (writing as if you're someone else), was common in that day (which is also true) . . .

Then Paul must not have written this letter – it's a fake

Therefore it's not authoritative, it doesn't belong in the Bible, and it doesn't apply to us

- But neither of these facts *necessarily* lead to that conclusion of false authorship
In fact, to conclude as much, is to ignore 5 very important points

1. Paul's growth and maturity

Differences in style and vocabulary would've been *normal* as Paul matured/aged
Especially for someone who's growing in faith and knowledge

My writing and preaching have changed in as little as 5 years

So it's not unlikely that Paul's would have changed over 25 years

2. A different audience

Instead of writing primarily to a church, which is what he did most of the time . . .

He was writing to a friend; And a very close friend at that
So it's actually *likely* his style and verbiage would be different
If it wasn't, *that* might be cause for concern

3. Pseudonymous writing was *not* common in *personal* letters

Theological treatises, devotional writings, group letters – yes

But not personal letters like this one; Extra-biblical history bears that out

4. The practice of the early church

Pseudonymous writings were categorically rejected by the early church, as were the writers themselves, if they were exposed

Tertullian records an instance in the 2nd century where a church elder was found to have composed a false work in Paul's name, and was removed from his office for it
It was strongly frowned upon

5. The implications are problematic, to say the least

If 2 Tim wasn't written by Paul, then the meaning of what it says is completely up for grabs

Which is why you see such silly speculation about it
Like Onesiphorous representing a "model of discipleship"

Or Paul's *books* in ch4 representing "canons of consciousness" whatever that means

If Paul wasn't really writing it, they can't be real

So the author must have meant something symbolic by such references

None of which makes sense; And all of which borders on the ridiculous

Taken all together, internal and external evidence alike, we can be confident in the authoritative authorship of 2 Tim

Be assured of solid content (v1b)

According to – in conformity to . . .

The promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus – the salvation found through faith in Jesus

Paul is saying – that's what characterizes my every word as an apostle

That's what determines my every move – the gospel

That Jesus lived – as our example; That he died – for our sin

That he rose again – for our life

It defines me Paul is saying; I preach and teach according to that

It would be like me writing you a letter and saying – I'm your pastor *according to* the Word of God

IOW everything I say conforms to *that*

It's an assurance from the start, that we can be certain of rock-solid, biblical, God-breathed content in this letter

Something we take for granted now

But given Paul's imprisonment and lack of communication . . .

I wonder if that's *exactly* what Timothy and the church in Ephesus needed to hear

I wonder if *they* wondered about Paul's mindset w/in the harsh prison environment

If so, with one statement, Paul's calms their fears
Basically saying – "it's all good; there's no change"
"I'm still every bit as much committed to the gospel, as when I started"
"You can be assured of solid content"

As we work our way through 2 Timothy, we can . . .

Be thankful for heartfelt instruction (v2a)

Which we get a glimpse of in v2 where Paul calls Timothy *my beloved child* (2a)
Obviously a term of endearment
And an indicator of the tender, heartfelt encouragement that's to come

To understand this connection to Timothy, you have to realize that –
Timothy traveled with Paul on 2 of his missionary journeys – totaling 7.5 years
Paul disciplined him like a son
In fact, in 1 Timothy he refers to him as *my true child in the faith*
And commissioned him as a pastor and church leader

They traveled together, suffered together, rejoiced together, and saw God work in
miraculous ways
You can imagine the link they had

And here's Paul, near the end of his life, passing along his last words to his protégé
Heartfelt instruction for the one he so loved in the Lord
For the one in whom he was so invested

- And the beauty of it is, we get to listen in
Not to some red-faced pulpit-pounder who yells at us
But to a tender-hearted pastor, speaking to one of his favorite disciples

That's something for which to be thankful
Not only the privilege of *hearing* the message, but the loving way in which it's delivered

Make sure you see that in his words – his terms of endearment
Make sure you sense it in your heart – put yourself in their shoes
And above all, make sure you apply his heartfelt instruction in your life

And then . . .

Be ready for God-given blessings (v2b)

The same blessings that Paul extends to Timothy (v2)

Grace – is a one-word summary for God's blessings toward us
His blessings of steadfast kindness and faithfulness and salvation
It's unmerited favor in its fullest, broadest sense

Mercy – is more than an emotion; we often just think of it as pity
But it also includes a provision for relief
So Paul's desire is for God to show Timothy pity, by providing him relief from hardship
in the days ahead

Peace – a sense of rest due to the closeness of God

All of which he says, *comes* from God
Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord
Implying that they come from the same source
And Paul is extending them to Timothy – almost like a prayer or desire

Like if I were to say – "Peace be with you"

Am I saying that *I'm* giving it to you? No

I'm saying that I want *God* to give it to you; I want God to extend *his* peace to you

And that's what Paul is doing here

Telling Timothy that his desire is for God to bless him with grace, mercy, and peace . . .
The implication being, that Timothy receive it

That he would so tune his heart, shape his mind, and order his life – as to be able to fully
receive, fully appreciate, and fully benefit from the blessings of God
That's what Paul alludes to, and that's what we're going to see as the letter unfolds

- The question is, have *you* done that?
I'm pretty sure Timothy had, but have you?
Have you tuned *your* heart, shaped *your* mind, and ordered *your* life so as to be able to
fully receive, fully appreciate, and fully benefit from the God-given blessings ahead?

If not, start now

Tune your heart now, to soak it up later
Open your Bible every day; Get on your knees in prayer; Worship as a way of life
That's how you get ready to receive God's blessings in your life

You have to tune your heart to the *things* of God . . .
And order your life around the *work* of God

Like making yourself aware of the things *he's* doing in the world, and not just the mess
And serving him sacrificially, instead of just doing the minimum
And giving of your tithe regularly/generously, instead of when it's convenient
And attending church faithfully, instead of whenever you feel like it

(Summary slide)

So many people miss out on God's blessings, b/c they're not about God's stuff
They're not about his *Kingdom; Church; People; Glory; Worship*
And they miss out

But tune your heart to the *things* of God . . . And order your life around the *work* of God . . .
And you'll more than be ready to receive the *blessings* of God
Even extending them to others like Paul did to Timothy