

# PAUL

## A MAN OF GRACE AND GRIT

### STUDY TWENTY-TWO

## Shackled, Deserted, but Still Undaunted

*Selections from 2 Timothy*

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*Every time I open 2 Timothy, I think to myself, This is dungeon talk. It helps me understand why there is such passion and such tenderness in this letter. There is not a hint of self-pity. No blame. No bitterness. No regret. Paul writes straightforwardly to Timothy, the man who will carry the torch beyond Paul's years on earth.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**HEN popular entertainers end their careers, they often give one last concert to bid farewell to their fans. Their final song on stage is their “swan song,” and it is usually the song that made them famous. The familiar song pours from their heart as the music crescendos and the final note rings out in a thrilling finale. The fans leap to their feet cheering and applauding while the performers bow again and again receiving the people’s adulation until, finally, the aging entertainers exit the stage never to return.

Paul’s swan song comes to its close with far less fanfare. No bright lights surround him. No one cheers him on. He writes alone in a dungeon cell, but his words leave behind a far more meaningful and lasting impact than any entertainer’s song. His final lines of 2 Timothy ring out in praise of God, resonating his life’s theme: “May the Lord be with your spirit. And may *his grace* be with all of you” (2 Timothy 4:22, emphasis added).

Grace. “Even before I was born,” the apostle once acknowledged, “God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace” (Galatians 1:15). Grace marked Paul from his mother’s womb, and even now, at the end of his life, his signature tune plays on. Grace in the beginning. Grace every step of the way. Grace to the very end.



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### PREPARE YOUR HEART

For Paul, “knowing Christ Jesus” was life’s greatest treasure (Philippians 3:8). All his other accolades and achievements were worthless by comparison. Ask God to help you know Christ more intimately through your study.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The book of Acts ends with Paul still in Rome under house arrest. In AD 62, two years after arriving in Rome, Paul was finally released. Unfettered and undeterred, he resumed his missionary travels, visiting the churches he helped plant and mentoring his two protégés—Titus in Crete and Timothy in Ephesus. Paul passed along his pastoral wisdom to these men in two letters on church leadership: Titus and 1 Timothy.

In AD 64, violent thunderstorms of persecution began rolling across the Roman Empire. Emperor Nero ordered the death of prominent church leaders. Eventually, Paul was arrested in Troas and dragged in chains back to Rome. This time, Nero showed no mercy to Paul. He sent the aging apostle to the notorious Mamertine Prison where he remained until his execution in AD 68.

Read about these events in the online article, “[Historical Background of Paul’s Final Imprisonment](#),” at [insight.org](http://insight.org). Write down the facts you discover.

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Languishing in a cold, damp dungeon cell, Paul penned his final words in a letter to Timothy we know as 2 Timothy. His time short and his tone urgent, Paul braced Timothy for the days ahead. As you open 2 Timothy, feel the heartbeat of Paul's letter by reading these *key verses*: [2 Timothy 1:14](#); [2:3](#); [3:14](#); and [4:2](#). Identify a key phrase in each verse and write them below. What do you notice in your first brush with the passion of Paul's writing?



### **Observation: Paul's Final Words**

When observing a passage, it's helpful to put yourself into the scene.<sup>1</sup> Imagine joining Luke on one of his visits to Paul in prison. Follow the guard down steep steps through stone hallways blackened by soot and age. When your eyes adjust to torchlight, make out the rows of cells as you feel your way down a dark passage. Arriving at Paul's cell, you see a sixty-year-old man, gaunt and malnourished, crippled from past tortures, scarred from beatings, sitting alone on the stone floor. Dusty rays of light filter through a street-level iron grate above him. He is piecing together the final touches of his letter, and when he is finished, he will place the scroll into the hands of Luke to carry to Timothy.

Though his circumstances were dreadful, he expressed no remorse, only the satisfaction of a life well lived. What did he say about his life in [2 Timothy 4:6–8](#)? To what hope did he cling?

In the final section of the letter, Paul bore his soul to Timothy. Based on his requests and statements in [4:9–11](#), [13–14](#), [16](#), and [21](#), how would you describe Paul's condition and his emotions?

*We need the reminder that Paul was deserted. He was shackled. But he was undaunted. Here is a man who was strong to the very end. But he doesn't write without feelings—deep, deep feelings. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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## *Selections from 2 Timothy*

Read the following [overview](#) of 2 Timothy. A Bible chart is a “literary map” of a book’s main points and features. After studying the chart, write down any impressions that stand out. What would it have been like to receive this letter?

### 2 TIMOTHY OVERVIEW BIBLE CHART

	GUARD THE TRUTH!	ENDURE SUFFERING!	REMAIN FAITHFUL!	PREACH THE WORD!
	2 Timothy 1	2 Timothy 2	2 Timothy 3	2 Timothy 4
	Paul's greeting Timothy's life God's precious truth Our responsibility	Passing on the truth Suffering for the truth Illustrations (soldiers, athletes, farmers, worker, utensil, servant)	Last days Evil people Standing firm Spiritual examples Biblical basis	A solemn charge Reason for the charge Personal conclusion
PERSPECTIVE	The past	The present	The future	
TONE	Gratitude	Compassion	Warning	Command
THEME	Paul's passing of the ministry torch to Timothy and encouragement for him to stay faithful in the midst of hardship			
KEY VERSES	2 Timothy 1:14	2 Timothy 2:3	2 Timothy 3:14	2 Timothy 4:2
CHRIST IN 2 TIMOTHY	Jesus is the Judge of the living and the dead, who strengthens us in times of weakness and rescues us in times of danger ( <i>2 Tim. 3:11; 4:1, 17</i> ).			

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Chart taken from *The Swindoll Study Bible*. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers.

Though addressed to a first-century pastor, the letter’s four chapters reveal how all of us can finish this life well. Let’s take a closer look.

### Guard the Truth—2 Timothy 1

Read [2 Timothy 1:1–18](#), and write down the words and phrases that stand out to you. What was the essence of this seasoned pastor’s message to the younger pastor?

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*The word, entrusted, is a banking term. Paul was saying, “The treasure that I have spent years depositing in you, oh, Timothy, guard it. Retain the standard and guard the treasure.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Endure Suffering—2 Timothy 2

In [2 Timothy 2:1–26](#), Paul spoke as a coach to his star player. Write down Paul’s list of essentials for running a good race as a follower of Christ.

*Talk about a checklist for living faithfully! Be strong in grace, be faithful, be brave like a soldier, be disciplined like an athlete, be diligent like a worker, and be gentle like a servant. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Remain Faithful—2 Timothy 3

In [2 Timothy 3:1–17](#), Paul donned a prophet’s mantle and warned what was to come. What spiritual wisdom did Paul give Timothy on how to live in a dark and dying culture?

*The apostle warned Timothy that there will be an erosion of the standard. There will be departure from the truth. There will be living in compromise. There will be hypocrisy and duplicity and lies and deception . . . and it will only get worse. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Preach the Word—2 Timothy 4

Then, in [2 Timothy 4:1–22](#), Paul spoke as a father giving his last words to his eldest son. What charge did Paul give Timothy? What requests did he make? What blessing did he give?

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“There will be very difficult times,” Paul warned (2 Timothy 3:1). Persecution would test the resolve of every Christian, and Timothy must “be strong” (2:1). He must fulfill his calling, preach the Word, and stay faithful to the end—just like Paul did.



### **Interpretation: The Crown of Righteousness**

With each tick of the clock, death’s shadow crept closer and closer to Paul. “The time of my death is near,” Paul wrote (2 Timothy 4:6). He was a month, a day, maybe *an hour* from placing his neck on the executioner’s block. But did Paul fear death? No! His heart burst with anticipation! Paul longed to feel Christ’s embrace and receive his reward.

*Now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing. (4:8)*

What is the “crown of righteousness”? For what Christian virtue is this reward given? Consult your Bible study resources or the online commentary like [Constable’s Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#) to find possible answers.

Paul saw Christ as the returning King who would “someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom” (4:1). How did the hope of Christ’s coming and rewarding His faithful followers encourage Paul and help him face death? How does it encourage and help you?

*Things you’re convinced of are things you will die for. They are convictions. They are the very pillars of your life. And you would not bend if you had to face a firing squad. You’d die for that truth. How are your convictions coming along? You pick up beliefs from a sermon, but you don’t pick up convictions until you digest them and make them your own. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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### **Correlation: Setting Our Hearts on Things Above**

Whether in prison or set free, Paul lived with his feet on the ground but his eyes lifted to heaven. What did Paul teach about living with an eternal point of view in *Colossians 3:1–4*?

According to *3:12–15*, in what positive ways can an eternal perspective impact your relationships? What happens in your spirit when Christ rules in your heart?



### **Application: The Final Journey**

Wrap up your study of Paul's life by reading again the four key verses with Paul's rally cry ringing in your ears:

1. *Guard the truth!* "Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you" (2 Timothy 1:14).
2. *Endure the suffering!* "Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2:3).
3. *Continue the journey!* "But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you" (3:14).
4. *Proclaim the Word!* "Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching" (4:2).

How does his example inspire you in your current circumstance?

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As you close this study, sit beside Paul at the cross and draw strength from our Savior. In the space below, ask the Lord to show you His will through your study of Paul's life and to fill you with His Spirit of courage during this season of your life.

We've followed Paul from the streets of Tarsus down to Jerusalem and up the Damascus Road. We've trailed him into the desert of Arabia, to cities across Asia and Europe, over the seas of the Mediterranean, and into the dungeon where he spent his final days on earth. Paul's journey, however, didn't conclude in a prison cell. With the flash of the executioner's blade, this man of grace and grit was set free from his earthly bonds. His spirit soared into the heavens to be "at home with the Lord" forever (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Paul's swan song is not a mournful dirge but a victory march! His resolve has inspired suffering Christians everywhere to finish the race and receive the prize that awaits in heaven. What a glorious home that will be for all who call Christ their Lord!



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Father, thank You for Paul, who helps us think deeper and stand more confidently for You. Thank You for his courage to the end and his submission to Your plan. Thank You for his quiet resolve, which he learned from Jesus. Fill me like You filled Paul with the resolve of Your Son, who endured the cross with patience and joy because He anticipated the glory to come. May I take the torch of ministry. May I run hard and well. May I be found faithful, passionate, committed, and engaged for the cause of Christ until He returns. Amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2001, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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