

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD
PREACH THROUGH THE BIBLE: II TIMOTHY
II Timothy 2:15

I. BACKGROUND

A. LATE PAULINE CHRONOLOGY

- To Rome—59 AD
 - Prison Epistles—early 60s
 - Colossians
 - Philemon
 - Ephesians
 - Philippians
- Release from prison?—62 AD?—began Fourth Missionary Journey?
 - Wrote I Timothy and Titus
- Second Roman Imprisonment—64 AD?
 - Wrote II Timothy
 - Martyrdom in Rome—64-68?

B. A FOURTH MISSIONARY JOURNEY?

1. EVIDENCE FOR FOURTH MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- a. Interval between Acts 28 and Paul's death
 - 1. Paul stayed 2 years in Rome (59/60-62)—Acts 28:30
 - 2. Paul martyred in Rome—after great Roman fire (64)—before Nero's death (68)
 - 3. Gap of at least 2 years in Paul's life—62-64 AD
- b. Paul intended to go to Spain—**Rom 15: 24, 28**
- c. Eusebius—implied release from Roman prison [*Ecclesiastical History* 2.22.2-3]
- d. Early Church documents said Paul went to Spain
 - Clement of Rome
 - Acts of Peter
 - Muratorian Canon

2. TRAVELING COMPANIONS

- Accompanied by Demas, Crescens, Titus, Luke, Tychicus, Erastus, Trophimus

3. POSSIBLE ITINERARY

❖ Based on stated intentions in Romans—and references in Pastoral Epistles

1. Release from Roman prison—62 AD
2. Spain—62-64 AD (Rom 15:24, 28)
3. Crete—64-65 AD (Titus 1:5)
 - Leaves Titus as pastor in Crete
4. Miletus—65 AD (II Tim 4:20)
5. Colossae—66 AD (Phlm 22)
6. Ephesus—66 AD (I Tim 1:3)
 - Leaves Timothy as pastor in Ephesus
7. Philippi—66 AD (Phil 2:23-24; I Tim 1:3)
8. Nicopolis—66-67 AD (Titus 3:12)
9. Rome—67 AD—martyrdom 67-68 AD

II. COMPOSITION

A. PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

1. ATTRIBUTED IN TEXT—**1:1**
2. MANY SCHOLARS SCEPTICAL ABOUT PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

B. DATE AND PLACE OF ORIGIN

1. DURING SECOND ROMAN IMPRISONMENT—64-68 AD?
2. POSSIBLY—JUST AFTER SECOND VISIT TO EPHEBUS (66 AD?)

C. LITERARY STYLE

1. HIGHLY PERSONAL
 - a. Encourages Timothy in personal spiritual formation
 - b. Focuses more personal pastoral leadership
 - While I Timothy deals more with institutional offices, structure and relationships
2. DIFFICULT TO OUTLINE—NO CONSISTENT ORDER THROUGHOUT
 - Pastoral advice—interspersed with personal comments—and doctrinal points

D. CIRCUMSTANCES

1. PAUL WAS A PRISONER—PROBABLY IN ROME
 - a. References to captivity
 - **1:8**—*His prisoner*
 - **1:16**—*my chains*
 - **2:9**—*imprisonment as a criminal*

- b. Visited by Onesiphorus—in Rome—**1:16-17**
 - Probably from Ephesus—**1:18**
- c. Paul had been abandoned by almost everyone—**4:16**
 - Only Luke is with Paul—**4:11**
 - Paul is sending Tychicus to Ephesus—**4:12**
- d. Austere conditions
 - First imprisonment—Paul lived in rented house—**Acts 28:30**
 - Now—in cold dungeon—**4:13**
 - Chained like a common criminal—**1:16; 2:9**
 - Hidden where friends could hardly find him—**1:17**
 - His life was near an end—**4:6-8**

2. PAUL TIMOTHY WAS STILL PASTOR IN EPHEBUS—**I Tim 1:3**

3. HERESY CONTINUED IN EPHEBUS—COMBINING 3 ELEMENTS

- Gnosticism—**I Tim 6:20**
- False Jewish teachings—**I Tim 1:3-7**
- False asceticism—**I Tim 4:1-5**

III. RECIPIENT—TIMOTHY

1. PAUL TOOK HIM ON 2nd MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- Timothy helped evangelize Macedonia and Achaia

2. ON 3rd MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- With Paul during much of his ministry in Ephesus
- From Ephesus to Macedonia
- To Corinth and back to Macedonia
- To Asia Minor—Miletus

3. PROBABLY TO JERUSALEM

4. THEN IN ROME—DURING FIRST IMPRISONMENT

5. ON 4th MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- Remained in Ephesus—while Paul went to Macedonia

6. PAUL SENDS FOR HIM AT THE VERY END—IN ROME—**II Tim 4: 9, 21**

IV. PURPOSES AND MAIN THEME

A. PURPOSES

- URGES TIMOTHY TO REMAIN STEADFAST IN CHARACTER AND DOCTRINE
- TELLS TIMOTHY TO PASS ON TEACHING TO FAITHFUL MINISTERS
- GIVES CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE TEACHING AND GOOD CHARACTER
- ASKS TIMOTHY TO JOIN HIM IN ROME

B. MAIN THEME—PERSEVERANCE

1. UNLIKE THOSE WHO HAVE ABANDONED PAUL

- Phygelus and Hermogenes—**1:15**
- Demas deserted him—to Thessalonica—**4:9**
- Crescens and Titus have left—[uncertain whether they ‘deserted’]—**4:9**

2. PERSECUTION IS COMING—3:10-12

3. PAUL’S EXAMPLE OF PERSEVERANCE

- Suffered—but not ashamed—**4:7**
- Endured persecution—**3:10-11**
- Completed his ministry—**4:7**

4. EXHORTATIONS—SUGGESTING PERSEVERANCE

- Re-ignite the gift of God that is in you—**1:6**
- Do not be ashamed—but join me in suffering—**1:8**
- Be strong in grace—**2:1**
- Endure hardship—**2:3; 4:5**
- Continue in sound doctrine—**2:14-26**
- Continue in what you have learned—**3:14**
- Be prepared in season and out of season—**4:2**
- Discharge all the duties of your ministry—**4:5**

VI. OUTLINE/ORGANIZATION

Greeting—1:1-2

Thanksgiving for Timothy and His Heritage—1:3-5

Encouragement to Timothy—1:6-14

Based on God’s Gift—vv 6-10

Based on Paul’s Testimony—vv 11-12

Charge to Timothy—vv 13-14

Unfaithful and Faithful Disciples—1:15-18

Directions to Timothy—2:1-26

Be Strong in Grace—2:1

Paul as an Example—2:2

- Three Metaphors of Faithful Service—[2:3-7](#)
- Endurance for Christ’s Sake—[2:8-10](#)
- Christian Hymn—[2:11-13](#)
- Teach the Word of Truth—[2:14-19](#)
- Serve with Honor—[2:20-22](#)
- Teach with Patience and Gentleness—[2:23-26](#)
- Warning about Last Days—Chapter 3
 - Characteristics: Unholiness, Immorality, False Teachers—[vv 1-9](#)
 - Exhortation: Oppose this with Faithfulness, Endurance, and God’s Word—[vv 10-17](#)
- Departing Comments—[4:1-8](#)
 - Charge: Preach the Word—[vv 1-5](#)
 - Paul’s Anticipation of Victory—[vv 6-8](#)
- Final Requests, Warnings, and Directions—[4:9-18](#)
- Closing greetings—[4:19-22](#)

VI. BIBLICAL TEXT—II Tim 2:15

NASB—*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*

KJV—*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

NIV—*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

VII. EXPOSITION

A. CONTEXT

1. SOME ARE TEACHING FALSE DOCTRINE—[vv 14-18](#)

a. Specifically—Hymenaeus and Philetus—[vv 17-18](#)

1. They *have gone astray from the truth*

2. Saying the resurrection has already taken place

a. Not referring to Christ’s resurrection—but the believer’s resurrection

b. Probably reducing it to a metaphor

✓ Spiritual rebirth at baptism

✓ But not a bodily resurrection after death

c. Based on wrong understanding of concepts such as **Rom 6**

Rom 6:4-5—*Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the*

Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.

- b. General nature—of their teaching—**vv 14 and 16**
 - Useless wrangling about ‘words’
 - Worldly and empty chatter
- c. Heretical teaching—in Ephesus
 1. Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus for this purpose
 - **I Tim 1:3**—*instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines*
 2. Paul warned against—anyone who *advocates a different doctrine*—**I Tim 6:3**
 3. **ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω**—to teach otherwise—differently
 - Heterodoxy—to deviate from the truth
 - Contrasted with—orthodoxy

2. HERESY IDENTIFIED—GNOSTICISM

a. Gnostic **Principles**

- Dualism: matter is evil—spirit is good
- Matter is eternal—God used it to make the cosmos
- Emanations—creation
- Ladder of ascent to God—access gained by ‘gnosis’
- Speculative theology
- Intellectual elitism
- Allegorical interpretation—plus focus on ‘words’, myths, and genealogies
- Anti-Jewish—opposed Jehovah—and Old Testament
- Doceticism

b. **I & II Timothy** challenged those beliefs

1. Speculative intellectualism
 - a. **II Tim 2:23**—raised foolish and unlearned questions
 - ✓ Questions = **ζητησις** = speculative discussion
 - b. **II Tim 4:3**—will want their ears tickled—itching ears
2. Intellectual elitism and pride
 - a. Exaggerated later with Manichaeans—two tiers of followers [elect and auditors]
 - b. **I Tim 6:3-4**—proud—but knows nothing—advocating a ‘different doctrine’

- c. Pastoral epistles stress *all* persons
 - ✓ God's desires that *all* men should be saved—**II Tim 2:4**
- 3. Dualism—two opposing tendencies—asceticism and immorality
 - a. **Asceticism**
 - ✓ Because the flesh is bad it must be mortified
 - ✓ Self-denial
 - ✓ Special food laws—**I Tim 4:4-5**
 - b. **Immorality**
 - 1. Because only the spirit matters—one can do anything to the body with impunity
 - 2. Self-indulgence
 - 3. Examples
 - ✧ Invaded private houses—led away weak women—in evil lusts—**II Tim 3:6**
 - ✧ Characterized by lust—**II Tim 4:3**
 - ✧ Gain is godliness—**I Tim 6:5**
- 4. Used many 'words', tales, genealogies
 - Vain babbling and useless controversies—**I Tim 6:20**
 - Endless genealogies—**I Tim 1:4**
 - Produced myths and fables—**I Tim 1:4**
- 5. Denied resurrection of body
 - Paul criticized their opposition to the [bodily] resurrection—**II Tim 2:18**
- 6. Emanations
 - There is only one mediator between God and humans—**I Tim 2:5**
- 7. Rejection of OT scripture
 - *All* Scripture is inspired by God—**II Tim 3:16-17**

B. PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY

1. A REMINDER—TO OPPOSE THOSE WHO TEACH HETERODOXY

I Tim 1:3—*instruct certain men not to teach 'strange doctrines'*

2. SIGNIFICANCE

- a. To **prevent**—the upsetting of people's faith—**1:18**
- b. To **prepare** church—to stand against false teachers/doctrines/practices—**3:1-9; 4:3-4**

- c. Gives the key—exactly *how*—to fulfill his basic mission—**4:2**

4:2—*preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction*

3. OVERVIEW OF CHARGE

- **Attitude**—urgently focus on the following goal
- **Goal**—to be approved by God
- **Proof**—of approval = you need not be ashamed
- **Action**—leading to approval—accurately handling the Word

C. ATTITUDE

NASB—*Be diligent to present yourself . . . to God*

KJV—*Study to shew thyself . . . unto God*

NIV—*Do your best to present yourself to God*

1. SENSE OF URGENCY

- **σπουδάζω** = hurry—exert self—be diligent

2. TRANSPARENCY

- **παρίστημι** = [openly] to present/show—bring near—put at one’s disposal

3. SUBMISSION TO USEFULNESS

- **παρίστημι** = also suggests—to place at one’s disposal

4. CONFIDENCE

- a. Awesome prospect—of coming under God’s judgment

- **Heb 10:31**—*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*

- b. Not hiding—but coming forth—openly—for full scrutiny!

- c. Based on a **clear conscience**—in all we do

- **II Cor 1:12**—*For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of god, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you*

D. GOAL

NASB—*approved to God*

KJV—*approved unto God*

NIV—*to God as one approved*

1. APPROVED

a. **δόκιμος** = accepted—pleasing—genuine/honorable

b. **Example—ancient coinage**

- Metal coins—edges were smoothed after minting in molds
- Dishonest money-changers shaved them too closely
- In Athens—in one century—80 laws were passed—against whittling down coins
- Money-changers of integrity—circulated only money of full weight
- They were known as **δόκιμος**

c. The real thing—with full weight

2. APPROVED—BY GOD

a. Final test of performance

1. Not our own **self**-measurement

➤ **II Cor 10:18**—*For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.*

2. Not commendation by other humans

➤ **Gal 1:10**—*If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.*

➤ **I Th 2:4**—*But just as we have been **approved** by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak not as **pleasing men**, but God who examines our hearts.*

a. This makes **two** points

b. Not only must we please God—instead of men

c. But we must accomplish the mission **God** has **approved** [**δοκιμάζω**] for us

d. Not fulfilling selfish agendas

b. Final test of conscience

▪ Not just self-examination—but God’s affirmation

▪ Paul’s testimony—**I Cor 4:4**—*For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.*

E. PROOF

NASB—*as a workman who does not need to be ashamed*

KJV—*a workman that needeth not to be ashamed*

NIV—*a worker who does not need to be ashamed*

1. WORKMAN

a. **ἐργάτης** = laborer—one who expends energy towards a purpose

- b. Actually **engaged**—in the Lord’s work—not just talk—but **action**

Jas 1:22—*But be doers [ποιητησ] of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*

- c. **ἐργάτης**—usage

1. Used two other places in NT—both negatively

2. Related to missionary [apostolic] activity

➤ **II Cor 11:13**—deceitful workers—disguising themselves as apostles of Christ

➤ **Ph 3:2**—evil workers—legalists who teach the ‘false circumcision’

- d. Application

1. It is not enough to listen and talk—we must act!

2. But we must be careful—to act properly—do the right work

3. This passage shows what a true Christian worker does!

2. WHO DOES NOT NEED TO BE ASHAMED

- a. **ἀνεπαίσχυντος** = having no reason to feel shame—disfigured—dishonored—embarrassed

- b. **Examples**

1. The ‘Unrighteous Steward’—when called to account by his master

➤ **Lk 16:3**—*What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from Me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am **ashamed** to beg.*

2. Whoever is ‘ashamed’ of Christ and His words—in this sinful/adulterous generation

➤ **Mk 8:38**—*the Son of Man will be **ashamed** of him when He comes in His Father’s glory with the holy angels.*

3. Paul was not ‘**ashamed**’ of the gospel of Christ—**Rom 1:16**

4. Paul’s earnest desire—not to be put to **shame**—but for Christ to be exalted in his body

- c. Key idea in **II Timothy**

▪ **1:8**—*do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me*

▪ **1:12**—[though suffering] *I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed*

▪ **1:16**—Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul’s chains

F. ACTION

NASB—*accurately handling the word of truth.*

KJV—*rightly dividing the word of truth.*

NIV—*who correctly handles the word of truth.*

1. ACCURATELY HANDLING

a. ὀρθοτομέω = ‘cut straight’

1. Only NT usage
2. Found in Septuagint—2 places

➤ **Pr 3:6**—*In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight*

➤ **Pr 11:5**—*The righteousness of the blameless will smooth his way*

3. Metaphors

- Farmer—plow a straight furrow
- Engineer—cut a straight road
- Ship captain—hold to a true course
- Mason—squaring and cutting stone—to fit in proper place

b. Two possible applications

1. Maybe—**outcome**—accurate analysis of God’s word

- a. ‘Orthodox’—right doctrine—correct understanding
- b. Contrasted with ‘heterodoxy’—that Timothy was fighting—**I Tim 1:3**

2. More probably—**approach** and **method**

- a. Straightforward exegesis
 - ✓ Scrupulously clear and transparent dealing with God’s word
- b. Contrasted with—crooked methods of false teachers
 - ✓ Who bend the word—to fit their own desired meaning
- c. Contrasted with—convoluted allegory—of Gnostics

2. THE WORD OF TRUTH

a. Used twice elsewhere by Paul

- **Eph 1:13**—*In Him, you also, after listening to the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.*
- **Col 1:5**—*the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel.*

b. The word of truth = the gospel of salvation

c. Application

1. We are **compelled** to teach the gospel truth
2. In preparing to do so—we must handle God’s word with **integrity**—honestly
3. Don’t make the Bible say what people want to hear—**itching ears**—but what God **actually** says
4. Don’t use the ‘gospel’ to further human agendas—but to accomplish its purpose—**salvation**