

PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Urgent Words from a Dungeon

2 Timothy 1:1–2, 13–14; 2:3–4; 3:12–15; 4:1–2, 21–22



LET'S BEGIN HERE

It is said that swans sing their most beautiful and mournful song just before they die. Like the graceful swan, Paul, the apostle of grace, knowing his life was nearing its end, “sang” his final song through his heartfelt second letter to Timothy.

Paul's swan song emerged not from a sunny glade but from a dank dungeon while he awaited execution. Violent storms of persecution had rolled across Rome threatening the life of every Christian. Second Timothy reflects the urgency of the dark times and the resolve in this martyr's heart. “It is Paul's last will and testament for Timothy, his great legacy for the rest of Timothy's life,” notes commentator R. C. H. Lenski. He continues,

This letter is personal throughout. Tender, yet with the tenderness of a strong, heroic heart. It is far from being sentimental. Timothy may have read and reread it with tears blurring his eyes, but every line braced him with the power to make him valiant to contend in the noble contest.¹

The heroic heart of Paul's letter still beats. Four poignant words capture the great apostle's passionate charge to young Timothy and to us: *guard*, *endure*, *remain*, and *preach*. Let's discover the power of Paul's last words in 2 Timothy.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Place your hand on the heart of Paul's letter by reading four *key verses*: 2 Timothy 1:14; 2:2; 3:14; and 4:2. Find the four words, *guard*, *endure*, *remain*, and *preach*, and underline these verses in your Bible. What do you notice in your first brush with the intensity of Paul's writing?

Quotable

Second Timothy is the last will and testament of a dying man, a brilliant theologian, a passionate martyr.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Now let's survey Paul's entire letter by examining a book chart of 2 Timothy.



Searching the Scriptures Study Tool

A book chart is a "literary map" that overviews the book's main points and features. Observe closely Chuck Swindoll's chart of 2 Timothy below.

WRITER: Paul
DATE: AD 67
(Shortly before Nero's death)
PURPOSE: To encourage, warn, and exhort

Paul's Swan Song

A Survey of Second Timothy

| | GUARD THE TREASURE! | ENDURE THE HARDSHIP! | CONTINUE THE JOURNEY! | PROCLAIM THE WORD! |
|-------------|---|---|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAUL'S PERSONAL GREETING • TIMOTHY'S PRIVATE LIFE • GOD'S SACRED TREASURE • OTHERS' VARIED REACTIONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PASSING ON THE TRUTH • ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE TRUTH <i>(soldier, athlete, farmer, workman, vessel, servant)</i> • SUFFERING FOR THE TRUTH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIFFICULT TIMES • DEPRAVED PEOPLE • PRESSING ON REGARDLESS • STANDING FIRM IN THE SCRIPTURES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A SOLEMN CHARGE • REASON FOR THE CHARGE • PERSONAL REFLECTIONS • URGENT REQUEST |
| | CHAPTER ONE | CHAPTER TWO | CHAPTER THREE | CHAPTER FOUR |
| PERSPECTIVE | THE PAST | THE PRESENT | THE FUTURE | |
| TONE | GRATITUDE | COMPASSION | WARNING | COMMAND |
| KEY VERSE | <i>Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you. (2 Timothy 1:14)</i> | <i>Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:3)</i> | <i>You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them. (2 Timothy 3:14)</i> | <i>Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. (2 Timothy 4:2)</i> |

RECIPIENT:
This intensely personal letter was written to young Timothy, Paul's "son in the faith." Shortly afterward, according to tradition, Paul was beheaded at an unknown place along the Ostian Way, west of the city of Rome.

- UNIQUENESSES:
- Only letter Paul wrote from a dungeon
 - Specific details regarding last-days apostasy (3:1-9; 4:3-4)
 - Clear, concise statement regarding the inspiration of the Scriptures (3:16)
 - Mention of the "crown of righteousness" (4:8)

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2 Timothy 1:1–2, 13–14; 2:3–4; 3:12–15; 4:1–2, 21–22

How to Create a Book Chart

A book chart is an important *Searching the Scriptures* method of overviewing an entire book. Using Chuck's chart of 2 Timothy as a guide, you can learn how to make a chart of any book of the Bible. It's simple, really! Just follow these steps:

1. On a sheet of paper turned sideways, *draw the lines of the chart*. The number of columns should match the main sections of the book. Chuck's chart has four columns to match the four chapters of 2 Timothy. Notice, also, that the top lines are angled and the bottom section is straight up and down. The number of rows on the bottom part can vary. In Chuck's chart, he includes three rows, titled, "Perspective," "Tone," and "Key Verse." You might include rows titled, "Main Theme," "Characteristics," "Background," "Issue," "People," "Emphasis," "Central Statement," or any other feature of the book that stands out as you observe the text. You can add rows as you go!
2. *Fill in the angled columns. Read 2 Timothy 1.* Note the paragraph breaks in your Bible. Summarize each paragraph with a brief phrase, and write it in the angled column for that chapter. For example, notice that the phrase, "Paul's Personal Greeting," in the first column correlates to 2 Timothy 1:1–2. The next phrases in the first angled column are these: "Timothy's Private Life," which correlates to 1:3–7; "God's Sacred Treasure," 1:8–14; and "Others' Varied Reactions," 1:15–18. Now **read chapters 2–4**. Can you see how Chuck summarizes sections of the chapter with phrases? Sometimes he summarizes paragraph-by-paragraph, and sometimes he ties together Paul's themes with brief phrases that he writes in the angled columns.
3. *Identify a key verse in each chapter.* As you read, look for a verse that carries the thought of the chapter, and write down each key verse on the chart as Chuck did in his chart. Underline in your Bible these verses for 2 Timothy.
4. *Label the columns with a main heading.* As you build your chart, you should work from the specifics to the general—from the paragraphs, to the summary phrases, to the key verses, to the main headings. This is the nature of *inductive* Bible study. Your main points should always emerge from the details of the text and work outward to the big picture. Chuck's main headings are these: "Guard the Treasure!" "Endure the Hardship!" "Continue the Journey!" and "Proclaim the Word!" Each one flows from the text.
5. *Finally, fill in the other features.* Chuck included "Writer," "Date," and "Purpose," in the upper left; "Recipient" and "Uniquenesses" at the bottom. He also noticed an interesting progression of "Perspective": "The Past" in chapter 1; "The Present" in chapter 2; and "The Future" in chapters 3–4. In addition, Chuck observed Paul's tone in each chapter: "Gratitude," "Compassion," "Warning," and "Command." You may observe additional features in your study. Let God speak to you as you uncover your own treasures in God's Word!



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2 Timothy 1:1–2, 13–14; 2:3–4; 3:12–15; 4:1–2, 21–22

With this aerial view of 2 Timothy in mind, let's explore other valuable information by answering some questions that every *Searching the Scriptures* student must ask when surveying a book of the Bible.

Who Wrote 2 Timothy and to Whom?

Paul is the writer, and Timothy is the recipient. Read the introductory section of a commentary on 2 Timothy or study Bible to add details about these men, such as their ages. Paul was about 67 years old, and Timothy was in his mid-to-late 30s. What else do we know about them? Let's dig!

Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, from the Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary series, includes a section on Paul and Timothy's history together (page 162). You can obtain a copy of this commentary through the Insight for Living Ministries online store. Or if you wish, read MacLaren's notes on 2 Timothy 1 at lumina.bible.org. Click the drop-down symbol next to "Constable's Notes" to find "MacLaren," and record your findings.

Where Was the Writer? When Was 2 Timothy Written?

We must rummage through the writings of first-century Roman historians to discover the answer to these questions. Chuck's commentary includes a quote by Tacitus in a section on the Christian persecution in Rome that was sparked by the great fire of AD 64 (pages 160–61). Also, read the online article, "Historical Background of Paul's Final Imprisonment," at insight.org. What did you find out?

Why Was Paul Passionate? What Was His Purpose?

Caught in the undertow of the swelling wave of persecution in Rome, many believers had deserted Paul and, perhaps, the faith—including friends "from the province of Asia" whom Timothy would have known (2 Timothy 1:15). At his first court appearance, Paul was completely alone. "No one came with me," he wrote sadly. "Everyone abandoned me" (4:16).



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Instead of dousing his flame, however, the persecution stoked the furnace of Paul's passion. Like a field commander rallying his beleaguered troops, Paul inspired Timothy and the other leaders to not "be afraid of suffering for the Lord" (2 Timothy 4:5), to "carry out the ministry God has given you" (4:5), and to fight the "good fight" (4:7) just as Paul had done.

Describe in a nutshell Paul's purpose as you see it.

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

- *Guard the treasure!* "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).
- *Endure the hardship!* "Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2:3).
- *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).
- *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).



Bring It Home

Have the trials of life caused you to falter? Which of these commands applies to your situation and encourages you to remain faithful through hardship?



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STUDY

Paul's swan song is not a mournful tune of resignation but a triumphant victory march. His resolve has inspired suffering Christians everywhere and in every era to finish the race and receive the prize that awaits: "the crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:7–8). Courage of this kind can be kindled only at the cross where our Savior endured His suffering with an eye to glory. Why did Paul's heart not waver? Because it beat in rhythm with the heart of Christ.

As you close this study, sit beside Paul at the cross and draw strength from Christ. Ask the Lord to show you His will through your study of 2 Timothy and to fill you with His Spirit of courage during this season of your life.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, fill me 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. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 739.



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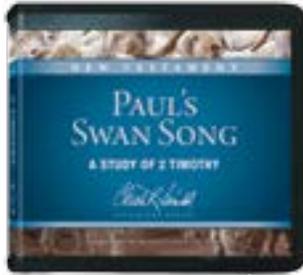
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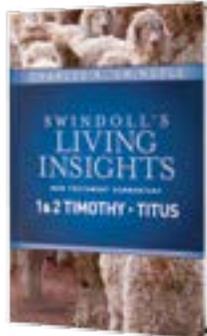
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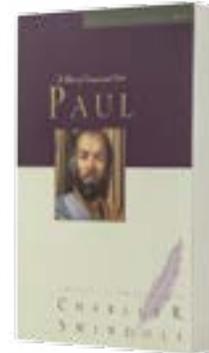
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A Study of 2 Timothy
by Charles R. Swindoll and
Insight for Living Ministries
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Insights on
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**Paul: A Man of Grace
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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Tender Words from a Mentor

2 Timothy 1:1–7



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Step back in time to AD 67 to the bustling pagan port city of Ephesus, and enter the home of Timothy, who was the pastor of a church that Paul had helped establish. At the door appears a courier who had journeyed for weeks across perilous seas to deliver a letter to Timothy from Paul—the letter preserved in the New Testament as 2 Timothy.

Imagine with Chuck Swindoll how this letter impacted Timothy:

A scroll bearing Paul's seal! Timothy surely felt a rush of excitement. He had known the apostle for nearly twenty years, traveling with him, binding his wounds after more than one stoning or beating, marveling at his miracles, memorizing the sermons he gave in each new city, and observing his leadership.

[Timothy] had no doubt heard of Paul's arrest. Certainly, the letter gave him an overwhelming sense of relief. Paul was alive and well enough to write—or at least dictate his thoughts to Luke. Timothy hastily broke the seal and stared silently at the first line.¹

Paulus, the first line began in Greek. To the Roman elite, the name belonged to a man who was a ringleader of a dangerous sect and an enemy of the state; but to Timothy, the name belonged to his spiritual father and mentor, a man he had known and loved since his youth.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Paul's relationship with Timothy goes back to Paul's earliest days as a missionary. Paul and Barnabas visited Timothy's hometown of Lystra on Paul's first journey around AD 47. Young Timothy may have become a Christian at that time. Using our *Searching the Scriptures* tools, let's put together a timeline of Paul and Timothy's relationship over the 20 years that followed.

Quotable

Pressure is not necessarily an enemy; it's a tool. If used correctly, it brings to light grace, mercy, and peace as it presses us nearer the heart of God.

— Charles R. Swindoll



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Tender Words from a Mentor

2 Timothy 1:1–7

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Searching the Scriptures Study Tool

One tool you can use to learn more about Paul and Timothy is a Bible dictionary, such as *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* by Merrill F. Unger. We also recommend Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, from the Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary series, as well as a set of Bible maps to follow Paul's journeys with Timothy. These and other Bible study resources can be obtained in the Insight for Living Ministries Web store.

Read the information in Chuck's commentary under the headings, "A True Child in the Faith" and "Remain on at Ephesus" on pages 8–11. For an online resource, go to <https://lumina.bible.org> and read Constable's Notes on 1 Timothy 1, the historical background section in the introduction. From what you learn in these sources, jot down some notes in the following blanks. Be certain to read the verses with each prompt and follow the exciting action on your Bible maps!

Paul began his mentoring relationship with Timothy in Lystra (Acts 16:1–3). Describe Timothy's spiritual heritage (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14–15) and his reputation among the believers at Lystra.

Timothy joined Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:3; 17:14–15; 18:1–5). Locate Macedonia on your Bible map, specifically, the cities of Thessalonica, Philippi, and Troas. Describe Timothy's key role in helping Paul and the churches in Macedonia, in particular, the church at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:1–6).

Timothy joined Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:21–22; 20:1–5). Timothy was with Paul in Ephesus when Paul sent him back to Macedonia. Where did Paul meet up with Timothy, and who else was with them? Timothy most likely had helped train these leaders.



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Tender Words from a Mentor

2 Timothy 1:1–7

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Timothy accompanied Paul in Rome during Paul's first imprisonment (Acts 28:30–31; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1). Timothy was with Paul in Rome during his two-year house arrest, AD 60–62. At some point, Paul sent Timothy to Philippi. Read Philippians 2:19–22. Describe Paul's high regard of Timothy during these years.

Paul assigned Timothy to be pastor at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). Released from his first imprisonment about AD 63, Paul spent two years touring the churches in Asia and Macedonia and handing off leadership to trusted pastors. He sent Titus to pastor the church in Crete (Titus 1:5) and Timothy to pastor the church at Ephesus—the most influential church in Asia. During this time, Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy, with valuable instructions on church leadership that we still follow today. What were some of the challenges Timothy faced as pastor in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3–4, 18–20; 4:1–2; 5:8; 6:3–5)?

Paul was arrested and imprisoned in Rome to await his execution (2 Timothy 1:11–12; 4:6). While in prison, Paul penned his second letter to Timothy, his last words to his most trusted and loyal partner in ministry.

Reflect on what you've learned from this timeline of events; write down some of the reasons why you think Paul was so attached to Timothy and Timothy to Paul.



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Tender Words from a Mentor

2 Timothy 1:1–7

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Blessings of Grace, Mercy, and Peace

Paul and Timothy had fought side-by-side in the trenches of ministry for years, suffering and rejoicing together with each setback and success. As a father nearing the end of his life, Paul blessed his spiritual son of whom he was so proud:

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I have been sent out to tell others about *the life he has promised* through faith in Christ Jesus. I am writing to Timothy, my dear son. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you *grace, mercy, and peace*. (2 Timothy 1:1–2, emphasis added)

Grace. Mercy. Peace. These three blessings of the promised “life” in Christ sustained Paul in his imprisonment, and he passed them on to Timothy and to us. Chuck Swindoll elaborates their meaning:

When you're called of God by the will of God, your message isn't about yourself. It is about grace, God's gift to the worthless. It is about mercy, God's ministry to the helpless. It is about peace, God's love to the restless.

Application

What hardships are you experiencing? Don't view these pressures as your enemy but as means to press you close to the heart of God where you can draw upon His grace, mercy, and peace—grace to empower you, mercy to console you, and peace to give you rest. In what ways do these three blessings sustain you in your hardship today?

The Heart of a Mentor

God's grace, mercy, and peace generated what Paul needed to survive in prison—namely, the characteristics of *gratitude, worship, and a clear conscience*.

- “Timothy, I thank God for you . . .” (2 Timothy 1:3). Instead of weighing himself down with self-pity, Paul used the counterweight of *gratitude* to tip the scales of his *perspective* away from himself toward God and Timothy.



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Tender Words from a Mentor

2 Timothy 1:1–7

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- “. . . the God I serve . . .” (2 Timothy 1:3). *Serve* is a word used of priests worshiping in the temple. *Worship* lifted Paul’s *focus* beyond his prison walls to God’s heavenly sanctuary.
- “. . . with a clear conscience” (1:3). His perspective shifted and his focus lifted, Paul could encourage Timothy with a conscience clear of doubt or fear.

Application

God can generate these qualities in you as well. With which of these do you need the Lord’s help: gratitude, worship, or a clear conscience?

The Refreshing Power of Encouragement

As you read 2 Timothy 1:3–7, can you pick out the encouraging statements? Use your cursor or pen to highlight the ones you find.

Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again. I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:3–7)

Let’s focus on four statements. After each, write a guideline you can follow when you encourage and mentor another person.

“I constantly remember you in my prayers” (1:3).



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Tender Words from a Mentor

2 Timothy 1:1–7

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“I long to see you again” (1:4).

“I remember your genuine faith” (1:5).

“I know that same faith [of Lois and Eunice] continues strong in you” (1:5).

Only after Paul encourages Timothy does he exhort him: “Fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you” (1:6). And then, he encourages him again, reminding Timothy of God’s resources available to him: “power, love, and self-discipline” (1:7).



Bring It Home

Are you a mentor—perhaps as a parent, friend, employer, or coach? What principle from our study can you put into practice right away? If you’re a pastor who oversees associates, what things are you doing to encourage and develop your ministry team? What more could you do based on what you’ve discovered from this study?



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Tender Words from a Mentor

2 Timothy 1:1–7

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Are you in need of mentoring? Imagine Paul as your mentor. What encouragement or exhortation do you read most clearly in Paul's words?

Close in prayer with Paul's blessing ringing in your ear. May grace, mercy, and peace sustain you as the pressures of life press you nearer to the heart of God.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the tenderness of this aging apostle's words to Timothy and to me. May his attitude, perspective, and focus find their way into my life. Open doors for me to share what I've received, to encourage another person with the power of Paul's refreshing words. And may he or she truly experience the "promised life" of grace, mercy, and peace through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Endnote

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 165.



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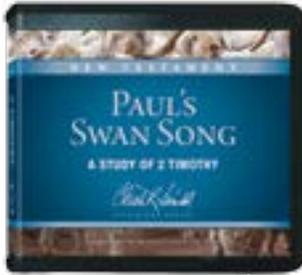
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2 Timothy 1:1–7

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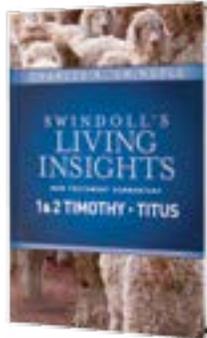
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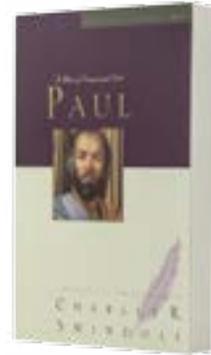
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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Straight Talk to the Timid and Reluctant

2 Timothy 1:8–12



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Second Timothy is a letter of encouragement from a seasoned pastor to his younger apprentice. Paul knew he would soon be executed, and perhaps he sensed that Timothy might feel fearful and unsure of his abilities. Paul wanted to embolden Timothy to press on without him.

In this section of the letter, Paul bolstered Timothy with a message that can be boiled down to three words: *stiffen your resolve*. He urged Timothy to press on because his source of strength was God and not himself.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7). What amazing gifts we have! God’s *power* enables us to do more than we are able on our own. God’s *love* enables us to serve with the heart of Christ. And God’s *self-discipline* enables us to keep going when we feel like giving up.

Like Timothy, you may be naturally timid about using your gifts in a ministry. If so, keep in mind that Paul didn’t try to change Timothy. He simply reminded the young pastor that the ministry wasn’t about him but about *the work of the Spirit through him*, and to move forward in courage and dependence on God.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

With this foundational principle in mind, begin your study by reading 2 Timothy 1:8–12 and making some initial observations.

Observing the Text: What Does It Say?

What do you see in 2 Timothy 1:8–12? Are there any repeated words? Did Paul use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing? Use the space below to record your observations and discoveries as you look closely

Quotable

God’s message through Paul to Timothy and through Timothy to all of us is the same. Hang in there. Tighten your belt. Stiffen your resolve.

— Charles R. Swindoll



at the text. Look for repeated words, commands, questions, emphatic statements, images, or figures of speech. Your notes can be specific and detailed as you examine the passage.

Now let's set the table for *interpretation*.

Interpreting the Text: What Does It Mean?

One helpful tool is Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, from the Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary series. Also, a handy study aid is a concordance that includes the meaning of Greek words, such as *The Strongest NASB Exhaustive Concordance*. These and other Bible study resources can be obtained in the Insight for Living Ministries Web store.

From Chuck's observations of 2 Timothy 1:8–12, he outlined *five action steps to stiffen our resolve*. These steps help us move forward in courage and depend on God to work through us. Let's examine what these steps are and what they mean.

Action step one: do not be ashamed of the name of Christ (2 Timothy 1:8).

Paul urges Timothy, "Never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord" (1:8). The Greek word translated "ashamed" is *epaischynomai*, which Chuck defines in his commentary on page 172. And the Greek word translated "tell others" in the New Living Translation (or "testimony" in the New American Standard Bible) is *martyrion*, which Chuck defines in his commentary on page 175. Read these pages if you have the commentary, and write down what you discover.

In a nutshell, Paul was telling Timothy to keep talking about Christ even when the message of His death and resurrection seems foolish to the world. *Don't be put to shame by the testimony of Jesus, but resolve to keep declaring it!*



Correlating the Text: How Does It Compare?

Correlation. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–24. What do you learn by comparing this passage with 2 Timothy 1:8?

Action step two: do not be ashamed of the people of God (2 Timothy 1:8).

Paul adds, “And don’t be ashamed of me, either, even though I’m in prison for him” (1:8). Not only does Paul warn Timothy about the public disgrace of telling others about Christ but also the “shame” of associating with him—a prisoner of Christ.

Recall in the first study, “Urgent Words from a Dungeon,” what we learned about Nero’s persecution of Christians. (If you need a refresher, read “The Historical Background of Paul’s Final Imprisonment” in Insight for Living Ministries’ online Article Library, in the category, “Church History.”) What potential dangers awaited Timothy for aligning himself with Paul?

“I’m in prison for him,” translates literally from the Greek “I’m his prisoner,” referring not to Nero the king but to Jesus the King of Kings. Paul isn’t in prison as a disgraced criminal of the state; rather, he’s a captive *of Christ*, which he considers a badge of honor! How might this perspective toward Paul’s imprisonment encourage Timothy?



Action step three: be willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8).

“With the strength God gives you,” Paul wrote, “be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News” (1:8). Later in 2 Timothy, Paul wrote that persecution was part and parcel of following Jesus:

Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (3:12)

The word is *will* suffer persecution, not *may*. A sobering statement of fact. What is it about the gospel that guarantees persecution?

Action step four: anchor your life in the Lord's sovereign grace (2 Timothy 1:9–11).

Paul anchors Timothy to the rock-solid truth of God's grace that “broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality” (1:10).

How does Paul describe God's sovereignty in 2 Timothy 1:9?

By referring to his own calling, what does Paul imply about Timothy's calling (1:11)?

Action step five: be convinced that God will vindicate your life (2 Timothy 1:12).

Paul ends this section with a resolution:

That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return. (1:12)



In this statement, Paul rings a bell of freedom from within his prison cell. Listen to his confident declaration: “I am not ashamed,” “I know,” “I am sure,” and “I have entrusted.”

How did these statements strengthen Timothy’s resolve, and how do they strengthen yours?

Applying the Text: What It Means to Me

Paul says in so many words, “Timothy, don’t let shame shift your focus from the person and work of Christ to yourself. Keep your eyes on Him. He died that you might live, and remembering that will make you determined to keep telling people about Him.”

In what way is Paul speaking to you through his message to Timothy?

How will you put this message into practice?

A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for Your Spirit that works through me to accomplish Your will in the world. You are the hand, and I am the glove. Do Your work through me. Reach out through me. Speak through me. Stand strong through me. Guard me from fears and worry. Give me the courage to depend on You as I declare the message of Christ unashamed. Amen.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Straight Talk to the Timid and Reluctant

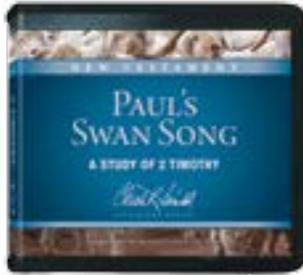
2 Timothy 1:8–12

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

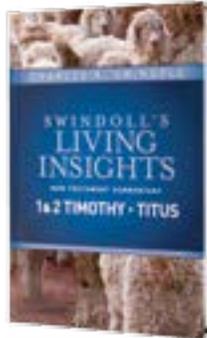
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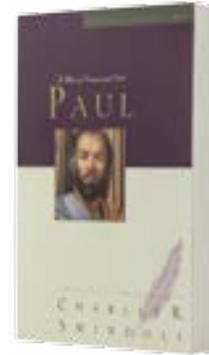
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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Two Eternal Investments

2 Timothy 1:13–18



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Retain the standard. Guard the treasure. These two phrases—the linchpin of Chuck Swindoll's message titled “Two Eternal Investments”—distill 2 Timothy 1:13–18 and capture Paul's priorities and the mantle of faith that he wished to pass on to his protégé, Timothy. What are the two eternal investments? The Word of God and people.

“The standard” to uphold is the instruction, teaching, and mentoring standard set by the apostle Paul—wholesome, healthy, orthodox. “The treasure” that needs to be guarded is the Word of God itself. This treasure should be taught with clarity, respect, accuracy, and passion. The Word should be unadulterated and undiluted.

When Paul lived out this twofold investment strategy, it didn't lead to earthly riches. Rather, he experienced a strong emotional reaction from the people he shepherded. Some—like Phygelus and Hermogenes—abandoned Paul. Thankfully, others—like Onesiphorus—sought after and refreshed the apostle during his imprisonment.

Today, let's spend some time on two reflection exercises: first, we will strategize creative ways to invest in the eternal. Next, we will take time to honor and pray for those who have set the spiritual standard for us and have refreshed us in our time of need. This is the work of *application*, the Bible study method where we allow God's Word to speak to, develop, or change areas of our lives or call us to action.



DIGGING DEEPER

Retain the Standard of Sound Words

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, someone in your life has “retained the standard” by passing on to you the eternal inheritance bought by the blood of Jesus and sealed for you through the Holy Spirit. In a day where people spend so much time chasing treasures they can't take with them, it is an extraordinary gift to be invited into the kingdom of God.

Quotable

*God's eternal truths
are claimed by
faith and modeled
in love.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Two Eternal Investments

2 Timothy 1:13–18

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

We are God's chosen invitations, sent to a world desperate to experience the love of God and the truth of His Word. We are tasked with the hospitality that invites and encourages and instructs fellow believers. For us to retain the standard of sound words, we must *speak*. This means two things: we can't live a walled-off, individualistic life, and we need to get comfortable with encouraging and mentoring other people

Searching the Scriptures Tip

Commentaries—good ones—are like pocket professors: they offer facets of knowledge to assist readers in magnifying aspects of the biblical text, including historical context, canonical principles, language helps, and the Protestant tradition of interpreting a given passage.

A great resource to augment your study of 2 Timothy is Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* from Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary. This book is packed with the theological depth and practical application you've come to expect from Chuck Swindoll. Here is an excerpt that offers a practical application for 2 Timothy 1:13–18:

. . . *invest yourself in Christian relationships*. All of Paul's letters begin and end with personal greetings. Taken all together, the names he counts among his friends and fellow-servants add up to a very long list. So, when it became dangerous to remain Paul's friend and many deserted him, he still had several men he could count on. Luke, Mark, Timothy, and Onesiphorus were unafraid to risk their lives to give him aid in person. . . . The truth is, nearly everything worthwhile involves a trade-off. And so it is with friendships. Cultivating meaningful Christian relationships requires a significant investment. So, what are you willing to do in order to cultivate a meaningful friendship? Start with a phone call—you probably know who—and have your calendar handy as you dial.¹

Read Matthew 28:18–20. Paraphrase, and describe in your own words what it means to “disciple” others.

Read John 15:4–5. In your own words, explain where the power to retain the standard comes from.



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Two Eternal Investments

2 Timothy 1:13–18

Read and paraphrase Hebrews 13:1–3.

Take time to pray and answer the question from Chuck's commentary: "what are you willing to do in order to cultivate a meaningful friendship?"

Some examples include:

- Calling to check in with a friend you have lost touch with
- Babysitting for a couple to give them a date night
- Scheduling a phone reminder to pray for individuals in your small group
- Hosting a monthly dinner party
- Mentoring a college student in your church community

List some of your ideas—make them specific and actionable.

Guard the Treasure

The Bible tells humanity the story of God's pursuing love, His awesome holiness, and His relentless faithfulness. It is an umbilical cord of sorts, a conduit of nourishment that sustains us, sourced straight from the Lord. The Word is our gateway to worship the living God, through Jesus Christ, empowered by the Spirit. While we sojourn in this fallen world, the Bible is our life map. And instead of X marking the spot to the treasure, the cross of Christ and the empty tomb mark the treasure of the gospel, offering eternal life. Oh, how priceless is this timeless, indestructible Spirit-guaranteed treasure! It's surely worth guarding.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Two Eternal Investments

2 Timothy 1:13–18

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Read Isaiah 40:7–8, and paraphrase it below.

Read Matthew 6:19–21. What's your response to this passage?

Read and describe what Paul's words mean in terms of guarding treasure.

Read Matthew 7:24–27. To what did Jesus compare His teaching, which we can also call the Word?

Read Paul's farewell to the Ephesian leaders in Acts 20:28–38. Afterward, compare it with the emotions and priorities of Paul in 2 Timothy 1:13–18.



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Two Eternal Investments

2 Timothy 1:13–18

List some ways that you can guard the treasure of the Word. Here are some examples:

- Take a week to meditate on portions of Psalm 119.
- Download a Bible verse memorization app.
- Join your church's Bible study.
- Take a free online class (Dallas Theological Seminary offers them [here](#)).

Those Who Refresh Us

When he heard that Paul was locked in the Mamertine dungeon, Onesiphorus wasn't afraid of public ridicule or of being arrested (2 Timothy 1:16). In fact, Onesiphorus traveled to Rome and, with extraordinary diligence, looked for his friend (1:17). Pastor R. Kent Hughes described the search:

There are many reasons why it was difficult for the Asian Onesiphorus to locate Paul. . . . Part of the city had been destroyed when Nero burned it. For some time the location of Paul's imprisonment had been kept from the Christians. Also, believers in Rome had been reduced in numbers due to persecution and flight, and not all were eager to reveal to a stranger that they had any doings with Paul.

But Onesiphorus "searched hard," treading the serpentine passages of Rome, knocking at doors, asking in his provincial accent about Paul. Doors slammed shut, disapproving eyes watched as he continued his search, but he refused to desist. He was asking dangerous questions. The lesser devoted would have made no search at all. Others would have cooled their consciences with minimal effort—"He simply couldn't be found!" But not this man.²

And when Onesiphorus found Paul, oh, the joy! (1:17). Returning day after day, Onesiphorus provided for Paul's needs. No wonder Paul prayed twice for his faithful friend: once for his family (1:16) and once for the man himself (1:18).

In his message, Chuck says, "Pause for a moment at this point of 'retaining the standard.' By God's grace, each one of us has known other individuals who have been our Pauls. . . . Every once in a while, it's nice just to pause from the pace of life and reflect back on that individual or those few individuals who invested the truth in you."



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Two Eternal Investments

2 Timothy 1:13–18

SEARCHING
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STUDY

Take time to remember now.

From whom did you first hear the gospel?

Who has been most instrumental in the development of your spiritual life? If you could, what would you say to that individual?

Can you think of a person who went out of his or her way to support you? Name that person, and describe that experience.

Take time to write a letter to someone in your life who acted as a Paul or an Onesiphorus to you. Encourage this person, thank him or her—and e-mail or, better yet, snail-mail your words of thanks to him or her!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, let me be the person who brings refreshment to the vulnerable and the tired. Empower me through Your Spirit to prioritize Your Word and Your people. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, Ill: Tyndale, 2014), 187, 188.
2. R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000), 188.



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Two Eternal Investments

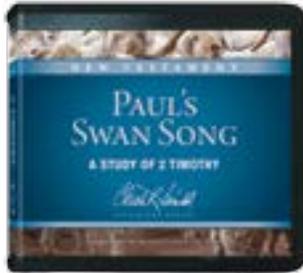
2 Timothy 1:13–18

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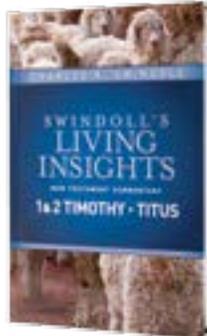
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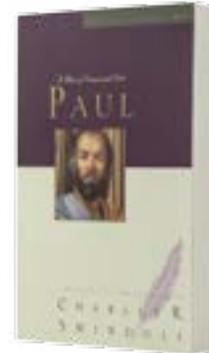
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S04
7



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The road to maturity as a Christian is not a flowered path of ease. According to Chuck Swindoll,

The road we travel from earth to heaven is filled with potholes and detours and sharp curves, dangerous drop-offs and numerous obstacles. It is neither easy nor simple. Never forget this: when you enter the Christian life, you enter a battleground, not a playground. . . . It is not God's desire to make us feel good; it is God's desire to grow us up. And the road that leads to maturity is rough and rugged.

We mature the most and learn the most valuable life lessons during periods of affliction, not comfort. The reason: affliction *forces* us to grow. The stronger the wind blows the branches, the deeper the roots sink into the soil to stabilize the tree. Similarly, the more treacherous the way, the more intensely we listen to the voice of our Guide, Jesus, and the tighter we cling to His hand. Suffering forces us to depend on God's grace—and there's no greater spiritual power to help us mature than grace.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Read 2 Timothy 2:1–13. Notice three sections in this passage about the road to maturity: preparing for the difficult journey (2:1–2), traveling the rough and rugged road (2:3–7, 9–10), and staying on the road when it seems unbearable (2:8, 11–13).



Searching the Scriptures Study Tool

To aid your Bible study, we recommend consulting a good Bible commentary such as Chuck Swindoll's volume, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, from the Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary series. Another handy study aid is a concordance that includes the meaning of Greek words, such as *The Strongest NASB Exhaustive Concordance*. These and other Bible study resources can be obtained in the Insight for Living Ministries Web store.

Quotable

*It is God's desire
to grow us up.
And the road that
leads to maturity
is a rough and
rugged road.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



Preparing for the Difficult Journey (2 Timothy 2:1–2)

To prepare Timothy for the difficult journey, Paul urged him to pack his bags full of grace to help him through hardship, pain, and sorrow.

Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus.
(2 Timothy 2:1)

Observation: What Do You See?

Let's observe 2 Timothy 2:1 by studying the phrase, "be strong," which in Greek is the word, *endynamōō*. Look up the word *strong* in your concordance, find 2 Timothy 2:1 in the list, and then note the Greek key number, in this case, 1743. Look up the number in the back of the concordance. What definition do you find?

You can also look up this Greek word's definition online at <https://lumina.bible.org>. Locate 2 Timothy 2:1, and then click "Greek" on the right panel. Slowly move your cursor over the words in the Greek text of this verse. An explanation of each word appears below in a box. Find the Greek word for "be strong" and its definition, which is "1) to be strong, endue with strength, strengthen 2) to receive strength, be strengthened, increase in strength."¹ The morphology is verb, imperative (a command), present tense (an ongoing process, "keep on"), and passive (we receive the action).

Interpretation: What Does the Verse Mean?

Chuck Swindoll puts all the pieces together in his interpretation of Paul's meaning of *endynamōō*:

So the command is best translated, "keep on being empowered." Theologians call this kind of passive verb a "divine passive," because it strongly implies divine agency. In other words, God does the empowering, so our responsibility is to submit to His work and to cooperate with it.²

Read again 2 Timothy 2:1, and imagine Paul writing this present, passive command to you. Replace Timothy's name with yours, and put the verse in your own words based on what you've learned so far. In your interpretive paraphrase, "grace" is the *means* of power and "in Christ Jesus" is the *source* of power.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Traveling a Rough and Rugged Road

2 Timothy 2:1–13

Correlation: How Do Other Verses Compare?

Paul himself modeled a life divinely empowered by God through grace. Read the following verses, and write down what you discover about the role of grace in Paul's life.

1 Corinthians 15:9–10

2 Corinthians 12:9–10

No wonder Paul is considered the “apostle of grace.” Praising God from the rooftops, he exclaimed, in so many words, that “God's grace . . .

- rescued me when I didn't deserve to be rescued,
- reached me when I wasn't even searching for it,
- empowered me when I faced challenges,
- enabled me when I could hardly go on,
- sustained me when I was weak, and
- kept me going during pain and sorrow.”

Application: What Does the Verse Mean to Me?

Paul wanted Timothy—and us—to experience the same grace that strengthened him through every trial on his rugged road to maturity. How can grace help you on your journey today?



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Traveling a Rough and Rugged Road

2 Timothy 2:1–13

Having taught Timothy the spiritual truths he needed for the journey, Paul then urged Timothy to “entrust these [lessons] to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2 NASB). And so through history, the baton of truth passed from teacher to teacher to us—preparing us to travel the rough and rugged road.

Traveling the Rough and Rugged Road

In this section, Paul highlights three metaphors and two models to communicate the characteristics needed to make it through the difficult journey. Read 2 Timothy 2:3–7, 9–10, and list these characteristics and how you can apply them to your situation.

| Metaphors and Models | Characteristics | Application |
|--|-----------------|-------------|
| Like a Soldier 2 Timothy 2:3–4 | | |
| Like an Athlete 2 Timothy 2:5 | | |
| Like a Farmer 2 Timothy 2:6 | | |
| Like Christ and Paul 2 Timothy 2:8–10 | | |

Paul’s descriptions warn Timothy of the hardships ahead and what will be required of him, so that he will stay on the road when the way seems unbearable.



Staying on the Road When It Seems Unbearable

Two principles emerge from 2 Timothy 2:7 and 2:11–13 to guard us against disillusionment:

- *Take time to reflect* (2:7)
- *Hold fast to the promises* (2:11–13)

Paul told Timothy, “Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things” (2:7). When suffering, *take time to reflect* on the Lord’s point of view. He will help you see your trials from a divine perspective, just as He helped Paul see his “thorn in my flesh” as an opportunity for Christ’s power to work through him (2 Corinthians 12:9–10).

Also, when a landslide of suffering causes you to slip, *hold fast to the promises* that Paul listed in 2 Timothy 2:11–13—promises that we will “live with Him” and “reign with Him” and that He “remains faithful” even when our faith weakens into doubt.

How might these promises have strengthened Paul’s resolve to endure to the end? How about you? How do they brace your faith?

Bring It Home

To wrap up, think back to Paul’s opening command: “be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1). Consider the examples Paul listed who are *being* strong: the soldier, athlete, farmer, Christ, and himself. Reflect on the promises to those who are enduring yet feeling their faith waver.

How does this passage instruct and encourage you to “be strong” on the rough and rugged road to maturity? What can you do to put this principle into practice and teach it to someone else?





A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the mystery of Your plan that includes life through death, reigning in heaven through hardship on earth, and Your faithfulness in response to my weakness and doubt. I come to the cross to find a Companion on the road of suffering—Your Son. Fill me with the hope of the empty tomb and the power of grace to lead me to my journey's end. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Lumina.org, <https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Timothy+2>, accessed Aug. 7, 2017.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 11, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 190.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Traveling a Rough and Rugged Road

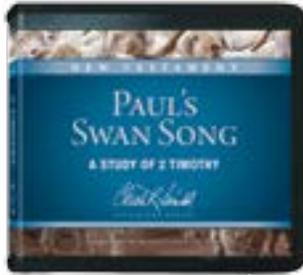
2 Timothy 2:1–13

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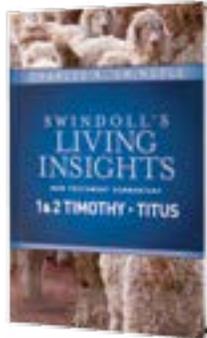
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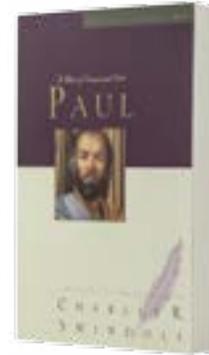
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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Accurately Handling the Word

2 Timothy 2:14–19

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

In 1787, John Rippon published what would become one of the most theologically sound and encouragement-filled hymns of his century—and ours. The hymn was “How Firm a Foundation.” Just read the first stanza:

*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?*

This little stanza echoes the inspired truth penned by the apostle Paul almost two millennia ago, when he wrote:

Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

and . . .

But God's truth stands firm like a foundation stone with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and “All who belong to the Lord must turn away from evil.” (2:19)



DIGGING DEEPER

Searching the Scriptures Tip

Commentaries—good ones—offer facets of knowledge to assist readers in magnifying aspects of the biblical text, including historical context, canonical principles, language helps, and the protestant tradition of interpreting a given passage.

Quotable

*In spite of what
you're dealing with,
no matter where
the government is
going—no matter
how difficult the
economy and whatever
the scuttlebutt may be
in your neighborhood
or around the office
or in the school
where you attend—
nevertheless,
God's foundation
stands firm. The
Lord knows those
who are His.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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You can augment your study of 2 Timothy with Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* from the Swindoll's *Living Insights New Testament Commentary* series. This approachable commentary is packed with the theological depth and practical application you've come to expect from Chuck.

 **It's All Greek to Me: New Testament Word Study**

During the course of Chuck's message, he touches on the meaning of the Greek word, *orthotomeō*. "See the words 'accurately handling'? It is rendered in the King James, 'rightly dividing,' but the Greek term . . . literally means 'to cut straight.'" How did Chuck derive this definition—was it from comparing several Bible versions or from his knowledge of Koine Greek or from something else? In Chuck's *Insights* commentary, he digs deeper and reveals his word-study process.

Let's take a look at how he conducts a word study.

EXCURSUS: THE MEANING OF *ORTHOTOMEŌ* IN 2 TIMOTHY 2:15

For as long as I can remember, expositors have taken 2 Timothy 2:15 as their mandate to study the Scriptures in order to discern their precise meaning, and then to preach them accordingly. But that may not have been all that the apostle had in mind with this verse. Don't misunderstand; expository preaching—the diligent study, accurate interpretation, and effective communication of God's Word—lies at the heart of pastoral ministry. There can be no substitute. However, Paul may have been driving toward a deeper aspect of pastoral ministry: personal integrity.

The Greek verb translated "accurately handling" is *orthotomeō*, which literally means "to cut straight" but can have one of two possible metaphorical uses. The first, which most translations of 2 Timothy 2:15 prefer, is "to expertly and correctly handle." By application, this would mean "understanding the word of truth correctly and then preaching it properly." But the evidence for this interpretation is virtually nonexistent.

The evidence is much stronger in support of another figurative meaning: "to put into practice" or "to make what is theoretical a practical reality." Interestingly, the verb *orthotomeō* cannot be found anywhere else in any kind of Greek literature except two verses in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (italicized in the following excerpts):

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will *make* your paths *straight*. (Prov. 3:6)

Continued on next page



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Accurately Handling the Word

2 Timothy 2:14–19

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Continued from previous page

The righteousness of the blameless will *smooth* his way, but the wicked will fall by his own wickedness. (Prov. 11:5)

Either the Jewish scholars translating these Hebrew proverbs into Greek decided to coin a term, or the Greek term was used orally within the Jewish community. In both proverbs, the verb takes as the direct object *hodos*, “road” or “way,” thus drawing upon the imagery of clearing debris and then leveling out hills and valleys. In this sense, a construction crew can be said to “cut a straight path” from one place to another. Metaphorically, the expression carries the idea of transforming a desire into a practical possibility. So, Proverbs 11:5 declares that righteous behavior clears a road through life, allowing the righteous one to get where he wants to go.

Paul could have chosen any number of words or expressions when exhorting Timothy with respect to “the word of truth,” but he chose a verb unique to two proverbs urging obedience as a means of journeying through life. Therefore, given the context of Paul’s argument in this segment (2 Tim. 2:14–19), it would appear a better way of understanding *orthotomeō* in 2:15 would be, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, *cutting a straight path with the word of truth*” (my edits italicized). Factoring in the metaphor, I would render the verse: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, *practically living out the word of truth.*”

Adapted from *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary by Charles R. Swindoll, copyright © 2014 by Charles R. Swindoll Inc.

Name one word-study technique that you can adapt from what you’ve read:

Word studies are an essential part of the process of interpretation—which is simply defined as coming to an understanding of what the Bible *means*. Here’s what Chuck writes about the science and art of interpretation in his book *Searching the Scriptures: Finding the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*:

As you dig in and discover biblical truths on your own, you will realize that interpretation is both a science and an art. It’s a science because it’s guided by rules that form a system. When



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you know and follow those rules, you'll begin to interpret Scripture accurately. You'll guard against error, and you'll gain discernment. You'll be able to spot false messages, whether written or spoken. You'll become more stable in your faith; you'll be able to stand on your own as you master the science of interpretation. But interpretation is also an art, in that it requires Spirit-directed skill to follow these rules as you interpret the Bible.²

Words matter. Paul's words were inspired—God-breathed—and written in a specific time and place in a specific language. Koine Greek was the lingua franca of Paul's era. Interestingly, though, Paul was cosmopolitan in that he knew several languages (Acts 21:37–40) and Jewish scholarship informed his Greek-written letters.

In the original Greek, the command, “Remind them of these things” (2 Timothy 2:14 NASB), doesn't include the direct object “them.” Literally, it reads: “Remind of these things.” The pronoun is implied and refers to the Ephesian church. But what was Timothy to remind them of? From the context, we can conclude that the church was to remember the true theology of Jesus' resurrection and messiahship (2:8) as well as the divine promises found in verses 11–13.

Timothy's public ministry required more than just reminding the Ephesian church of their theology, though; he was also to “solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words” (2:14 NASB). In other words, Timothy was to call upon God as a witness to the fact that Timothy's teaching, in contrast to that of the charlatans, was the same as God's teaching. And since God doesn't engage in *logomacheo* (1 Timothy 6:4)—literally, “battles about words” or “word-fights”—neither must His church. The point: cease quarreling about trivial matters or God will hold word-warriors accountable.

“Word-wars” were a concern for Paul. He addressed it in 1 Timothy 6:4; 2 Timothy 2:14; 2:23; and Titus 3:9. Why do you think Paul was so concerned about it?



DIY WORD STUDY

Now it's your turn to conduct your own word study. You'll need a concordance, several commentaries, and a source that conducts an independent translation of the word or passage. (You can find this in your library or



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online. Also, an abundance of textual notes can be found in the Lumina Bible at lumina.bible.org.) While it is a significant advantage to know the biblical languages before conducting a word study, we have incredibly rich and accurate resources at our disposal in the English language. Don't be intimidated: you can do this!

Which word from 2 Timothy 2:14–19 will you examine for a word study? Why did you choose it? (If you need some suggestions, try *diamarturomai*, meaning “command” from 2:14.)

How many times does your word appear in your New Testament? (You can use a concordance for this, and an interlinear Bible is extra-helpful for obtaining the Greek lexical—or dictionary—form of the word. You can find a great interlinear and interactive text at blueletterbible.com.)

How is the word translated in other Bible versions?

Does the apostle Paul use this word more than once in this epistle?



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG
Accurately Handling the Word
2 Timothy 2:14–19

Does the apostle Paul use this word in his other epistles?

How does the word function in the text? Is it a noun, verb, adverb, etc.?

Does the word appear in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament, also referred to as the LXX)?

Are there any instances of the word appearing in extra-biblical Greek texts?

Based on the context of your word's biblical and extra-biblical appearances, does the word tend to have the same meaning or a range of meaning depending on the text?

What do commentaries say about the meaning of the word, if they mention it?



How do commentaries explain the larger passage in which the word is a part?

Based on your research, define your word as it appears in 2 Timothy 2. How has the word study enhanced your reading of the text?



A FINAL PRAYER

Holy Spirit, guide me away from idle chatter and toward the excellence of the firm foundation of the Word. Create in me an all-consuming desire to know, love, and serve the Lord. Use me to winsomely turn others from the cancerous evil of false teaching and toward the gospel and abundant life found only in Jesus Christ. In His name I pray, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 11 (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale, 2014), 203.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Finding the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale, 2016), 110.



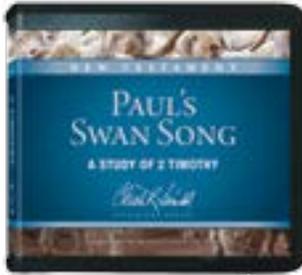
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Accurately Handling the Word
2 Timothy 2:14–19

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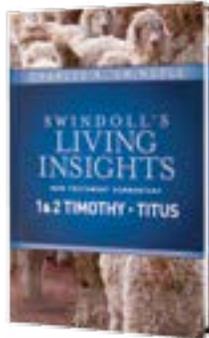
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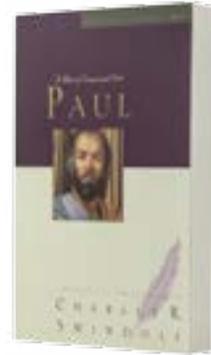
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LET'S BEGIN HERE

Let's begin with a brief review. Recall in chapter 1 that Paul focused on the *past*, as he reminded Timothy of his spiritual heritage, urging him, “guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you” (2 Timothy 1:14). Paul's perspective shifted to the *present* in chapter 2. He encouraged Timothy in his current pastoral ministry to “be strong” (2:1), “endure suffering” (2:3), and “work hard” (2:15).

The passage we'll study in a moment, 2 Timothy 2:20–26, ends the first half of Paul's letter like the scene of a play just before intermission. After chapter 2, the curtain will open to begin the second half of the letter as Paul looks to the *future* in chapters 3 and 4.

In this final scene of the first half of Paul's letter, Paul displays the high moral character required of Christian leaders. Our modern-day culture minimizes the role of character and, rather, champions competency in leaders, claiming that as long as leaders perform well, their private lives and the way they treat others and especially those closest to them doesn't matter. It's not surprising that scandals and legal battles often embroil leaders. Character is no longer king.

Scripture, however, champions character. If we wish to lead in a Christian manner, we must put character ahead of competency. Our ability—what we *do* in public—is important. But our character—who we *are* in private—is crucial. That's Paul's message to Timothy and to us in the last seven verses of 2 Timothy 2.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Read 2 Timothy 2:20–26 using the *Searching the Scriptures* method of *observation*. Chuck Swindoll writes that observation is “the process of seeing what the Bible actually says. You're not answering questions at this point. You're not adding something through your imagination. You're simply reading the words on the page.”¹

Quotable

*When it comes
to Christian
leadership,
character reigns
supreme.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



What do you see in 2 Timothy 2:20–26? Are there any repeated words or “if-then” conditional phrases? Do you notice any word pictures or analogies? Do any questions come to mind as you read? For example, what is the “wealthy home” in 2:20? What other questions and observations does the text prompt?

This passage sparks lots of questions! In this study, we will tackle three central questions (2:20–22), understand Paul’s positive and negative commands (2:23–24), and then examine Paul’s instructions to leaders about correcting and repenting (2:25–26).



Searching the Scriptures Study Tool

To aid your Bible study, we recommend consulting a good commentary such as Chuck Swindoll’s *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* from the Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary series. Also, we recommend reading more than one Bible translation. In this study, we’ll use the New Living Translation and the New American Standard Bible. These and other Bible study resources can be obtained in the Insight for Living Ministries Web store.

Vessels in a Large House (2 Timothy 2:20–22)

Paul’s analogy of “vessels” in a “large house” (2 Timothy 2:20 NASB) prompts three central questions. Use the *Searching the Scriptures* method of *correlation* to compare 2 Timothy 2:20–22 with other verses to shed light on Paul’s meaning.

Correlation is the *Searching the Scriptures* study tool that compares Bible passages to aid our understanding. In this way, we let the Bible explain itself. “You very rarely have to go outside of the Bible to explain anything in the Bible,” observed Bible-teacher Donald Grey Barnhouse.²

Question one: What is the large house?

What is the “foundation stone” of the house (2 Timothy 2:19)?



What does the “household of God” refer to in 1 Timothy 3:14–15?

From these verses, what can you conclude is the large house in 2 Timothy 2:20?

Question two: What are the vessels?

Let’s discover the meaning of the “vessels” (2 Timothy 2:20 NASB). Use the following chart as a guide to understand Paul’s fascinating analogy.

| | Vessels of “Honor” (2 Timothy 2:20 NASB) | Vessels of “Dishonor” (2 Timothy 2:20 NASB) |
|--|---|--|
| Of what material are the vessels made? | | |
| For what purpose are the vessels used? (The New Living Translation of 2:20 gives a helpful description.) | | |

Let’s use the context of this passage to dig out its meaning. Remember, a *text* is best understood in its *context*. A few verses earlier in the chapter, Paul mentioned the names of two men who were examples of leaders with low character—vessels of “dishonor” (2:20 NASB).



Read 2 Timothy 2:16–18. What were their names, and what were the consequences of their dishonorable character?

Question three: How can we become vessels of honor?

How can we become vessels of “honor” (2:20 NASB)? Find the answer by reading 2 Timothy 2:21 in the New American Standard Bible. Here you can clearly identify the “if-then” structure. Do you see one condition and the four results? *If* “anyone cleanses himself from these things,” *then* “he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work” (2:21 NASB).

Put this verse in personal terms (use “I” statements). What is Paul telling you to do, and from what “things” do you think Paul is telling you to cleanse?

Contrast Paul’s statement here with his statement in Titus 3:3–7. Who does the cleansing in 2 Timothy 2:21, and who does the cleansing in Titus 3:3–7? What is the purpose of each cleansing?

God cleanses us for salvation through faith. We cleanse ourselves for service through obedience. For a discussion of the difference between these cleansings, read Chuck Swindoll’s commentary, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, page 214.



How do we obey Paul's command to "keep yourself pure" (2 Timothy 2:21)? The answer is "run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts" (2:22), which can include all sorts of sins that trap immature leaders. Imagine the characteristics of an immature leader, such as impatience or self-promotion (Matthew 20:20–28), and list the pitfalls that you might include under the category of "youthful lusts."

In contrast, what did Paul say to "pursue" (2 Timothy 2:22)?

- _____: doing what's right toward others
- _____: trusting the living God
- _____: seeking the highest good
- _____: cultivating a spirit of rest

When these "gold and silver" qualities shine in human vessels, the Master puts these human vessels to good use in His house—the church. They each have earned the title, "servant of the Lord."

Servants of the Lord (2 Timothy 2:23–26)

The quality inner life of the leader produces quality behaviors, which Paul describes in 2 Timothy 2:23–26.

Positive and Negative Commands

First, Paul listed them in positive and negative terms—dos and don'ts. List the dos and don'ts that you find in 2 Timothy 2:23–24.



Instructions about Correcting and Repentance

Paul also listed a leader's behaviors with regard to correcting those who oppose the truth.

Read 2 Timothy 2:25–26. What did Paul say the leader should do? And what is the best possible outcome in the person who needs correcting?

Paul closed chapter 2 with a rousing symphony of hope: *God changes hearts when people learn the truth!* Hear the soaring strings lift praises to God as the curtain falls on the first half of Paul's letter. Paul led Timothy from his past to his present responsibilities in order to prepare him to step into the future with confidence.

 **Bring It Home**

As we take an intermission and mingle in the lobby, let's reflect on three questions that emerge from this passage before moving to the next. Am I a vessel of honor or dishonor? Do I stop quarrels or start them? Will I model gentleness or harshness?

If any of these questions hit home, take a few moments for silent prayer asking the Lord to change your heart and prepare you for the future He has planned for you.

 **A FINAL PRAYER**

Father, thank You for Your leadership in our lives. You are always trustworthy, always reliable, always acting with integrity. Guide me as I journey from earth to heaven to become a person who is loving, warm, discerning, strong of heart, and gentle as I lead people to the truth. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2016), 71.
2. Donald Grey Barnhouse, as quoted by Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2016), 141.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Christian Leadership 101

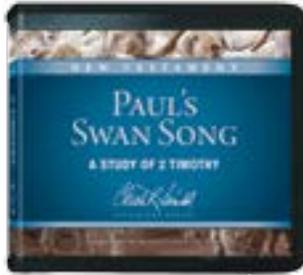
2 Timothy 2:20–26

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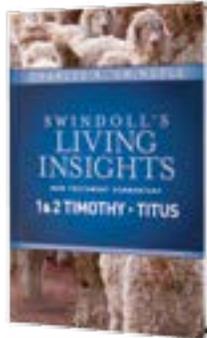
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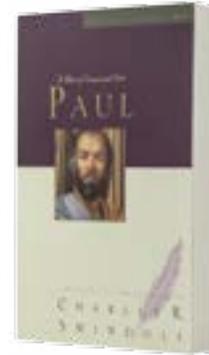
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LET'S BEGIN HERE

Paul concluded the first half of 2 Timothy ringing a spiritual liberty bell. When godly leaders “gently instruct those who oppose the truth,” they may repent (2 Timothy 2:25). And if they do, “God will change those people’s hearts” (2:25) and *free* them from “the devil’s trap” (2:26). Their chains will fall off, their eyes will be opened, and they will follow the light of Christ.

Paul opens the second half of 2 Timothy tolling a warning bell. Although some who oppose the truth will turn to Christ, many will *not* repent. The devil’s bonds will not be broken but will hold fast. These people will enslave themselves to their own desires and sink deeper into a pit of sin—turning *against* Christ and His church.

Paul’s description of a future steeped in evil is realistic and raw. He removes our blinders and shows the destructive impact of sin. Why would Paul put depravity on parade? He must have reasons . . . and he does. Let’s look for the answers as we dig into the opening verses of 2 Timothy 3.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Paul’s first words sound the warning:

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. (2 Timothy 3:1)

Using our *Searching the Scriptures* method, let’s study this verse in three segments: “you should know,” “last days,” and “difficult times.”

Quotable

*The whole point
is this:
evil has a short
shelf-life. . . .
In the end,
God wins!*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Searching the Scriptures Study Tool

Throughout this study, we'll refer to Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* from the Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary series. Also, we recommend a concordance that includes the meaning of Greek words, such as *The Strongest NASB Exhaustive Concordance*. These resources can be obtained in the Insight for Living Ministries Web store. Online tools include www.biblegateway.com, which features multiple translations of the Bible, and <https://lumina.bible.org>, which features a study tool for Hebrew and Greek.

A Harsh Reality We Must Realize

The phrase “you should know” in Greek communicates urgency, as if Paul were poking us in the sternum with his quill, insisting we pay attention. “The verb *ginoskō* [1097] appears in the present tense, imperative mood, which is literally translated, ‘You, keep on knowing this!’”¹

Last days refers to the times in which we live—“the time between the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem and His return in Jerusalem to set up His kingdom.”² And the meaning of *difficult times* in Greek flashes a red light signaling danger ahead.

The Greek term *chalepos* [5467], translated “difficult,” is used only one other time in the New Testament, to describe the two demonized men living among the tombs near Gadara (Matt. 8:28). Empowered by evil, they broke the chains that bound them and terrorized the region with their “extreme violence.” To say that they were “difficult” is an understatement! The term means “harsh,” “hard to bear,” “vicious,” “dangerous,” or “menacing.”³

Look up for yourself the definition of *chalepos* at <https://lumina.bible.org>. Go to 2 Timothy 3:1, and then select “Greek” in the opposite panel to reveal the Greek text. Click the final Greek word in the verse, which reveals *chalepos* in the box on the lower part of the screen. In the space below, write down the definition of the word.



Now pull together the insights you discovered in your study of the Greek words, and write down in your own words what this verse is saying. Try to capture Paul's urgency and intensity.

An Unvarnished Exposé of “Last Days” Depravity

As a commander bracing his troops for battle, Paul spoke of the struggle ahead. The Enemy will take captive the hearts of men and women whom the Lord loves and turn them against Him and all that is good. They will be “lovers of self” (2 Timothy 3:2 NASB) “rather than lovers of God” (3:4 NASB). Loving self over God capsulizes the core problem in people's hearts and lays the seedbed from which all other sins grow.⁴

Including these two descriptors that are like bookends, Paul lines up 19 adjectives and descriptive phrases to characterize human depravity. The impact of these sins can be grouped under three headings: the breakdown of relationships, the disintegration of families, and the destruction of communities.

In the following charts, fill in the definitions of Paul's descriptors and the impact to relationships. Look for definitions in Chuck's commentary, a concordance, or even an English dictionary. For online help, go back to the Greek section at <https://lumina.bible.org>, and select each Greek word to find the definition. Draw from your own experience to describe the impact.



The Breakdown of Relationships

| Descriptor from 2 Timothy | Definition | Impact to Relationships |
|--|------------|-------------------------|
| Love . . . Their Money (<i>philarguros</i>) 3:2 | | |
| Boastful (<i>alazon</i>) 3:2 | | |
| Proud (<i>huperephanos</i>) 3:2 | | |
| Scoffing at God (and Others) (<i>blasphemia</i>) 3:2 | | |

The Disintegration of Families

| Descriptor from 2 Timothy | Definition | Impact to Families |
|---|------------|--------------------|
| Disobedient to Parents (<i>goneuso apeitho</i>) 3:2 | | |
| Ungrateful (<i>acharistos</i>) 3:2 | | |
| Consider Nothing Sacred (<i>anosios</i>) 3:2 | | |
| Unloving (<i>astorgos</i>) 3:3 | | |
| Unforgiving (<i>aspondos</i>) 3:3 | | |



Destruction of Communities

| Descriptor from 2 Timothy | Definition | Impact to Communities, Schools, Workplaces, Churches |
|--|------------|--|
| Slander Others (<i>diabolos</i>) 3:3 | | |
| No Self-Control (<i>akrates</i>) 3:3 | | |
| Cruel (<i>anemos</i>) 3:3 | | |
| Hate What Is Good (<i>aphilagathos</i>) 3:3 | | |
| Betray Their Friends (<i>prodotes</i>) 3:4 | | |
| Reckless (<i>propetes</i>) 3:4 | | |
| Puffed Up with Pride (<i>tetuphomenos</i>) 3:4 | | |
| Love Pleasure (<i>philhedonos</i>) 3:4 | | |

As if this dark onslaught of sin wasn't shocking enough, Paul dropped the next bombshell: *the army of the depraved will infiltrate the church's ranks*. Indeed, they were among Timothy's congregation, and some were leaders!



Read 2 Timothy 3:5–7, and answer the following questions.

- How do these undercover agents act? _____
- What do they reject? _____
- On whom do they prey? _____
- What does Paul instruct Timothy to do? _____

A Biblical Example of Opposition

Having described the overwhelming odds facing them, commander Paul concluded his speech to the troops with a story from Israel's past. He compared "these teachers [who] oppose the truth" (3:8) to the Egyptian magicians in Pharaoh's court who opposed Moses (Exodus 7:11; 9:11).⁵ Their trickery worked for the moment but *failed in the end*.

What's his point? Just like the evil sorcerers in Moses' day, the deceivers in our day "won't get away with [their sin] for long. Someday everyone will recognize what fools they are" (2 Timothy 3:9).

An Encouraging Promise of Reassurance

Let's go back to our original question: Why did Paul put depravity on parade and warn Timothy of future evils? What possible answers can you think of?

Although Paul's list is disturbing and his forecast is bleak, his purpose is not to discourage us. His desire is to point us to the light beyond the dark clouds—to our triumphant God who specializes in overcoming overwhelming odds. Hate and cruelty may flourish in the moment, but *in the end, God wins*. Paul reassured Timothy, "Someday everyone will recognize what fools they are" (2 Timothy 3:9). Jesus' promise of victory will not be denied: "I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it" (Matthew 16:18).





Bring It Home

Are you discouraged by the evil you see in the world? Disillusioned by the deceivers in the church? Chuck Swindoll offers four points of application to inspire your courage:

1. *Difficult times will come as evil tries to destroy good. Accept this truth.* A positive attitude requires realistic expectations.
2. *Deceivers will present themselves as genuine ministers of the gospel. Reject false teachers.* If a teacher denies God's Word and leads others astray, confront this person and, if necessary, remove him or her from the church.
3. *Evil sometimes occupies positions of power that cannot be overthrown. Endure persecution.* We know it won't last forever, so we can persevere.
4. *The primary weapon of evil is deception. Reveal the truth.* Never be afraid of shining the light of truth in dark places. Even the darkest evil will flee from the light of Christ!

Which of these points of application encourages you the most? Write down your reflections and the steps to put into action these application points.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I sometimes lose hope in the face of evil's overwhelming odds. Thank You for Jesus, who never lost sight of Your power to overcome the worst evils, even death. Remind me that You win in the end. Help me to be gracious toward people who are captives of the evil one. Steady me with the confidence that You are faithful, that even in dark times, Your light shines through. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 11 (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 224.
2. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 224.
3. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 225.
4. Misplaced affection is the root of all sin. From the beginning, the Enemy's strategy has been to lure people away from God's love into the sanctuary of self-love where people "love only themselves and their money" (2 Timothy 3:2) and "love pleasure" (3:4). Narcissism. Materialism. Hedonism. The unholy trinity of our modern age.
5. The names Jannes and Jambres—which mean "the rebel" and "the opponent"—do not appear in Scripture. Jewish folklore assigned these names to the sorcerers Pharaoh summoned to oppose Moses and attempt to mimic Moses' miracles.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Depravity on Parade

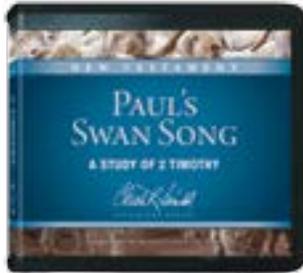
2 Timothy 3:1–9

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

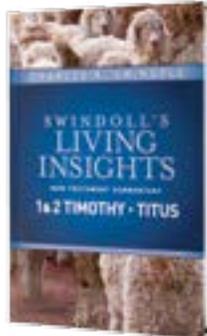
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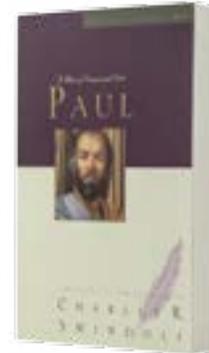
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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Making a Lasting Difference

2 Timothy 3:10–14



LET'S BEGIN HERE

One person can make a lasting difference. Moses led the obstinate Israelites to freedom from Egypt's yoke. Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the Wittenberg door and catalyzed the Protestant Reformation. Rosa Parks refused to be treated as anything other than a child of God, as she sat in a Montgomery bus and started a two-year bus boycott.

One person's conduct, passion, and determination blazed a fire of change, and his or her actions impact our present.

We can be tempted to think that lasting differences can only be accomplished by a few famous people. Not so. Every day, we also have opportunities to make lasting differences in the lives of those around us—our parents, siblings, and friends; our spouses and children; our peers at school and at work. We may not recognize this because pain and loss are integrated into our everyday experiences. Consider John the Baptist as he languished in a cell, or the apostle Paul as he wrote Timothy from prison.

As Chuck Swindoll says in his message: "You may feel your life is [in vain]. What you don't know is the lives who are watching you, who are being changed by your example."



HELPFUL HINTS

- Reading different Bible versions can help you to read the same passage with fresh perspective. If you don't have different versions handy, there are plenty of Web sites that can help you, such as BibleGateway.com.
- Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to 2 Timothy 3:10–14, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did Paul use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Write down your observations and discoveries.

Quotable

To make a lasting difference be ready for whatever may occur, regardless of how dark everything appears.

To make a lasting difference we must hold to the truth, stand on our convictions, and refuse to be fearful.

— Charles R. Swindoll





YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Using 2 Timothy 3:10–14, apply the primary approaches to studying the Scriptures—*observation*, *interpretation*, *correlation*, and *application*. Take some time first, however, to read any material you find in your commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and online tools that covers this section of 2 Timothy 3. *Pray* for the Holy Spirit's guidance. As you go, jot notes in the margins of your Bible or on a separate sheet of paper.

Observation: What Do You See?

Use the space below to record your findings as you look closely at 2 Timothy 3:10–14. Remember: Look for repeated words, commands, questions, emphatic statements, and images or figures of speech. Your notes can be specific and detailed as you examine the passage.

Interpretation: What Does It Mean?

In 2 Timothy 3:11, Paul mentioned three locations where he had endured persecution during his first missionary journey. Read the following passages, and jot down what happened to Paul in each city.

Antioch (Acts 13:50)

Iconium (Acts 14:5–6)



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Making a Lasting Difference

2 Timothy 3:10–14

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Lystra (Acts 14:19)

Second Corinthians 11:25 is a “resumé” of Paul’s suffering. What else did he endure for the sake of the gospel?

How do these passages shape your definition of persecution?

Correlation: How Does It Compare?

Read the following passages, and write a note or two on how they help confirm the concept of suffering in 2 Timothy 3:10–14.

Matthew 5:10–11

Matthew 24:9



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2 Timothy 3:10–14

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John 15:18–20

Acts 14:21–22

Romans 12:14

Philippians 1:29

1 Thessalonians 3:2–3



Application: What Difference Does It Make?

Despite external opposition . . . despite discomfort . . . despite a culture rife with deceptive theology and lascivious practice, Paul urged Timothy to persevere. Paul challenged Timothy to make a difference where he lived, in Ephesus—a city filled with every conceivable falsehood. Paul's letter was, however, inspired by God and preserved for us. We, too, can be encouraged to make a lasting difference by holding fast to the truth, standing strong on our convictions, and refusing to be fearful.



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2 Timothy 3:10–14

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What convictions do you want to pass on? List them here:



A FINAL PRAYER

Lord, help us to pursue the values and disciplines that will propel us toward making a lasting difference in the lives of others. Let us pursue this, not for selfish gain but for Your glory. Amen.



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Making a Lasting Difference

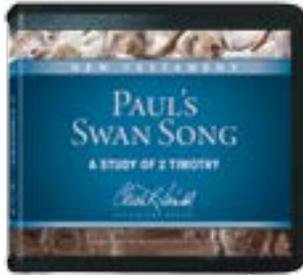
2 Timothy 3:10–14

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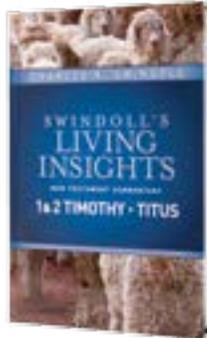
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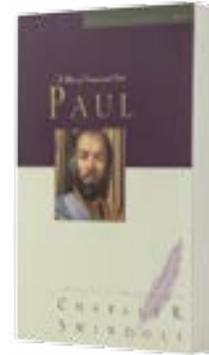
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LET'S BEGIN HERE

Who are you? What do you believe? How does your life bear out those beliefs? In his final letter to Timothy, Paul wasted no time in adjuring him to steadfastly continue in the faith and, in so doing, finish well. As Paul stared down the end of his journey, he was satisfied that he had run well (2 Timothy 4:6–7), and he desired the same result for his protégé.

Paul's charge doesn't stop at Timothy, though. You, me, and the rest of the body of Christ are charged with the same imperative: *finish well*. We don't consider this charge only in our twilight years; we begin right where we are, right now.



DIGGING DEEPER

In his message, Chuck Swindoll says, "Let's do something for a change. Rather than leaving this in Timothy's court, let's leave it in our court. These are words to you and me. Let's take Paul's words as counsel from the Lord God to us personally. Let's ask the question and answer it four different times and fill in the blanks, if you will."

In today's *Searching the Scriptures* study, we will fill in those blanks. Chuck breaks down the answer to the question, "How can I finish well?" by providing four answers:

- Continuing in what you have learned
- Becoming convinced of what you know
- Placing value on what God has revealed
- Allowing the truth to change your life

Let's develop where 2 Timothy 3:14–17 fits into *our* story.

Quotable

*What air is to
our lungs, what
nutrition is to our
bodies, the truth
of the Scriptures
is to life.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Searching the Scriptures: Learning Where We Fit in the Story

Answer #1: Continuing in What You Have Learned (2 Timothy 3:14)

Paul contrasted the evil impostors of 2 Timothy 3:13 with the trustworthy people of 3:14. The trustworthy people—in this case, Timothy's mother and grandmother (1:5)—are not deemed so because of their worldly success (the evil impostors are described as flourishing in 3:13, while Paul guaranteed the godly would suffer persecution in 3:12) but because of their knowledge and teaching of the holy Scriptures.

From whom did you consistently learn about the Bible?

What were some of the most important biblical truths that were shared with you?

If you could write a thank-you letter to one spiritual mentor, to whom would you write? If he or she is still living, why not pray for him or her now? Write a short prayer thanking God for this person.

How, specifically, are you continuing in what you have learned from your own spiritual mentors?



Answer #2: *Becoming Convinced of What You Know (2 Timothy 3:15)*

Ezekiel 18:20 says: “The person who sins is the one who will die. The child will not be punished for the parent’s sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child’s sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.” We cannot inherit either punishment or faith from our parents—and that’s a good thing! God has no grandchildren.

There are two specific ways that Chuck outlines from the text how to become convinced of what we know.

- **By cultivating our own convictions**

What does it mean to cultivate one’s own convictions? We cannot inherit our faith in God or knowledge of His Word. Timothy had an incredible spiritual heritage in his mother and grandmother; however, Timothy’s heart, soul, and mind were his alone to yield to Jesus. Paul could only offer his experience and wisdom, but it was up to Timothy to integrate Paul’s advice into his own life.

What are five convictions that you live by, based on your relationship with God and understanding of His Word?

- **By gleaning wisdom through our own faith**

We cultivate faith through our immersion and reliance upon the holy Scriptures. The guidance of the Holy Spirit works powerfully through the Word. After all, how can you know where the Lord is leading if you aren’t accustomed to His voice?

Recall an experience you had where God strengthened your faith in Him through His Word.



How do you make the Word of God a part of your daily life?

Answer #3: Placing Value on What God Has Revealed (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Bible comes from God; the Bible is God's words about Himself (2 Timothy 3:16). While there are certainly other amazing qualities to Scripture, inspiration alone gives each of those words true and lasting significance. Why? Inspiration sets the Bible apart from *every* other book known to humanity. The Bible's divine origin imbues it with qualities that other books simply cannot match.

Among the most significant of those qualities is the fact that the Bible is true. Scholars in modern times call this doctrine *inerrancy*, meaning that the Bible is completely true in its original writings. Christians throughout history have held to the truthfulness of the Bible. In other words, the Bible is a reliable and trustworthy revelation of God.

For Christians, what are the implications of a God-breathed, true book? Two huge issues rise to the surface.

First, Christians who believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible can place their confidence in its teaching. In a world that grows more confusing every day, having a place to go for reliable guidance on life's biggest questions can encourage even the most confused among us.

Second, Christians who believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible can affirm its authority and sufficiency. Because the Bible comes from God, it carries with it His authority. And the proper response to authority is obedience. Furthermore, the Bible's origins in God mean it is sufficient to make clear the message of salvation and the life of good works for those who follow Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15, 17). Affirming the inspiration of Scripture, therefore, implies our willingness to obey its commands and our confidence that it will help us understand the way toward salvation and good works.

Reading the Bible, therefore, is not a mere spectator sport. We read, meditate upon, and obey. Chuck underscores the Bible's spiritual purposes: teaching, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness.

"Teaching" (*didaskalia*) refers both to the content that is taught and the way it is taught. Timothy was to teach gently (2:24–25), just as Scripture does (Romans 15:4).



“Reproof” (*elegmos*) makes us conscious of sin in our lives and motivates us to rid it from our lives. Scripture is perfect for this task, for it convinces and convicts us of sin (Hebrews 4:12).

“Correction” (*epanorthosis*) is the positive side of reproof. Its goal is recovery and restoration; it “straightens us out” (2 Timothy 3:16 TLB). Time spent in Scripture ensures straight doctrine and deeds.

“Training” (*paideia*) in the Greco-Roman culture involved cultivating the minds and morals of children. Training points out wrongs, but it also points to right ways of living—“in righteousness” (3:16). There is no better guide to living right than Scripture.

Answer #4: Allowing the Truth to Change Your Life (3:17)

The Lord gave Timothy—and gives us—everything we need to finish well; this is what the word “equip” means in the context of 2 Timothy 3:17. God gives us the gear we need: spiritual mentors, His work in our lives, and, most important, His inerrant Word.

Timothy finished well. And he did so as a man of God who was first and foremost a man of the Word of God. This is a lesson to take to heart. For we can only finish well if we take seriously our commitment to Scripture—to know it, believe it, treasure it, and *live it*.

How has the Word of God equipped you for a particular challenge you faced this month?

Are you facing a crisis or a problem today? Search an online concordance or the concordance in your Bible for key words related to that problem. Jot down passages that speak to those needs. Afterward, take the next seven days to meditate upon these passages, and write down what God is teaching you.



Conclusion

To finish well, the man or woman of God ought to be committed to knowing and applying the Bible daily. We will never find more strength or gain more insight from any other source on earth than God's Word. Take time. Go to the trouble. Each day of your life invest in its truths.



A FINAL PRAYER

From Psalm 119:4–8:

*You have charged us
to keep your commandments carefully.*

*Oh, that my actions would consistently
reflect your decrees!*

*Then I will not be ashamed
when I compare my life with your commands.*

*As I learn your righteous regulations,
I will thank you by living as I should!*

*I will obey your decrees.
Please don't give up on me!*

Amen.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

God-Breathed Truth

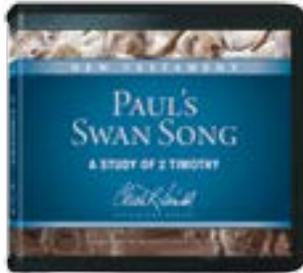
2 Timothy 3:14–17

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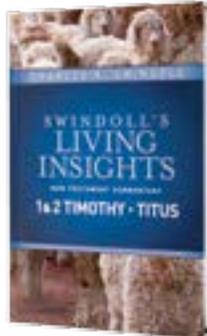
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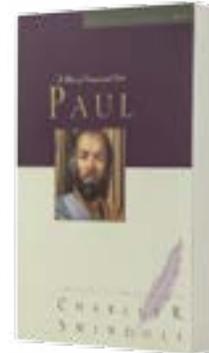
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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Every Pastor's Job Profile

2 Timothy 4:1–5

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STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

For Paul, the sun was setting on the battles of ministry: the shipwrecks, the infighting of church members, the beatings, the turncoat friends, the hours spent laboring over a sermon, the knees swollen from prayer, the sandals worn out from itinerant preaching, and the scars from shackles. But for Timothy, his ministry struggles lay just on the horizon.

Paul realized what was at stake. He knew Timothy would face temptation to “wing it” through a sermon rather than do the hard work of preparation, to tickle ears with stories rather than transform hearts with Scripture. He could foresee longtime friends abandoning Timothy. Perhaps even Timothy himself would think, “You know, it’s not worth it. I’m quitting.”

In this section of 2 Timothy, Paul pressed the sacredness and solemnity of Timothy’s calling. He delivered his message to Timothy as if it came from the throne room of the King of Kings. And, indeed, it did!



DIGGING DEEPER

Paul’s opening line reads like a preamble of a royal decree: “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 4:1 NASB). Paul could not have been more serious in delivering his charge to Timothy. What followed was the most important message Timothy would ever read.



Searching the Scriptures Study Method

Let’s study Paul’s charge to Timothy as Chuck Swindoll would study this passage during a week of sermon preparation using his *Searching the Scriptures* method. Use his weekly routine as a guide for your study today.

Sunday Evening

Sunday evening, after lunch and a long afternoon nap (often in front of a football game!), I cannot resist the urge to read the next passage [for Sunday’s sermon].¹

Quotable

*God isn’t looking
for perfect vessels;
He’s looking for
available vessels
He can fill.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Every Pastor's Job Profile

2 Timothy 4:1–5

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Let's do just that (napping in front of a football game is optional)! Read 2 Timothy 4:1–5 slowly, taking in the message as if you were Timothy reading it for the first time.

I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom: Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching. For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths. But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you. (2 Timothy 4:1–5)

Monday

I'll devote some time during the day to reading the passage—always out loud—and to drafting a very rough outline.²

Read the passage aloud, and try dividing the verses into sections. Do you see any natural breaks? In this passage, you'll find Paul's preamble followed by a series of imperatives, a change to future tense, and then another series of imperatives. How would you outline these verses?

Tuesday

I begin with observation in the original language. . . . I pay attention to key terms and take note of the syntax.³

Modern Bible study tools make it easier to dig into the Greek. We've picked out some key terms in the chart below along with their Greek root words. You can find definitions of the words on pages 247–248 of Chuck's book, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, from the Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary series.



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Every Pastor's Job Profile

2 Timothy 4:1-5

An online source is <https://lumina.bible.org>. Find 2 Timothy 4 on the left panel, and select "Greek" on the right panel. Click each of the Greek words to reveal the definitions of the words in the box at the bottom of the screen. Double-click the word to select "Strong's Search," and see how the word is translated elsewhere in Scripture. Write down the most relevant definitions in the chart below.

| Key Term | Definition |
|--|------------|
| "Solemnly urge" (<i>diamarturomai</i>) 2 Timothy 4:1 | |
| "Preach" (<i>kēryssō</i>) 4:2 | |
| "Be prepared" (<i>ephistēmi</i>) 4:2 | |
| "Patiently correct" (<i>elegchō</i>) 4:2 | |
| "Rebuke" (<i>epitimaō</i>) 4:2 | |
| "Encourage" (<i>parakaleō</i>) 4:2 | |

Tuesday (continued)

After I have observed the passage thoroughly, I begin the work of interpretation. What does the human author mean to communicate and for what purpose?⁴

Knowing the historical and biblical context of a passage helps illumine meaning. In previous studies, we examined Paul's situation on death row, Timothy's role as pastor, Nero's threats to extinguish Christianity's flame, and the false teachers' internal corruption of the church.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Every Pastor's Job Profile

2 Timothy 4:1–5

So often, we see Scripture through the lens of our own experiences, which can blur the true meaning. Instead, look at the passage from Paul's point of view. Seek to know Paul's meaning and how Timothy and other leaders would have understood his message.

Switch on your interpreter's headlamp, and explore the passage again looking for Paul's *original intent*. Whom might *Paul* have intended Timothy to "rebuke" (2 Timothy 4:2)? Why might *Paul* have been particularly concerned that people would "reject the truth and chase after myths" (4:4)? What might *Paul* have had in mind when he urged Timothy not to "be afraid of suffering for the Lord" (4:5)?

Record Paul's intended meaning of the passage. A helpful technique is to put the verses into your own words, as if you were Paul writing to Timothy.

Tuesday (continued)

I also want to do the work of correlation, which examines how the passage fits within the context of the book itself and within the Bible as a whole—especially in light of other passages that speak to the same issues.⁵

How do Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 1:3–7 add to the meaning of his commands and warnings in this passage?

Wednesday

Almost without exception, the application has solidified in my mind. . . . I will devote most of Wednesday to crafting [the introduction] very carefully. . . . I will complete the outline as it will appear in the worship folder for Sunday.⁶



Chuck's outline of 2 Timothy 4:1–5 includes an introduction and four main points.

Introduction: The Minister's Call

I. A Passionate Charge (4:1)

II. Five Urgent Commands (4:2)

III. A Relevant Prediction (4:3–4)

IV. Some Essential Reminders (4:5)

How would you craft an outline based on your study?

Thursday through Saturday

I think of the applications in terms of how they relate to other people's lives, though sometimes my own. Illustrations often come from my own experiences, but I try to think of what individuals in the congregation need.⁷

We've followed Chuck through the process of observation, interpretation, and correlation. Let's take the final step of bringing our study home to where we live—application.

Bring It Home

Begin by writing at least three principles that emerge from your study. A principle is a universal statement of truth that applies at all times. One of Chuck's principles is this: *pastors must faithfully and consistently preach the Word of God*. What other principles can you find?



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Every Pastor's Job Profile

2 Timothy 4:1–5

SEARCHING
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STUDY

You may not be a pastor like Timothy receiving a sacred and solemn charge from Paul, but still you can draw applications from our passage.

How has God gifted you? What ministry may God have called you to?

Think through Paul's list: be prepared, patiently correct, rebuke, encourage. Keep a clear mind, don't be afraid, work at telling others the Good News, and carry out the ministry God has given you. Which of Paul's commands and warnings apply the most to you, and how can you act on what you've learned?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the good news You've given me to share in response to Your calling on my life. I believe in Jesus as my Savior, and I am willing to suffer for His sake if that is what You require. I stand on Your truth. I declare it to those who need to hear. May You be glorified as a result of my study and application of Your Word. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 11 (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 208.
2. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 208.
3. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 208.
4. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 208.
5. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 209.
6. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 209.
7. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 210.



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Every Pastor's Job Profile

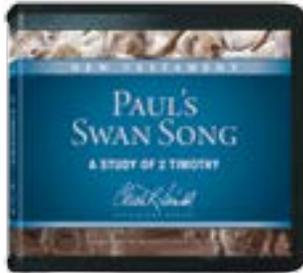
2 Timothy 4:1–5

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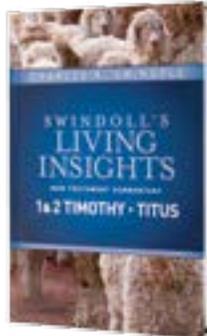
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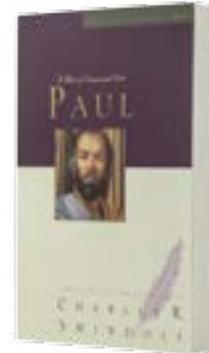
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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Looking Back—No Regrets

2 Timothy 4:6–8



LET'S BEGIN HERE

At the close of his second letter to Timothy, Paul had no illusions about his life. He knew it would come to an unnatural end, and soon. Yet he did not display a spirit of fear but of victory and satisfaction. Paul was a “dead man walking”—with no regrets. Like a libation flowing from a chalice, Paul poured everything he had—his education, privilege, body, talents, skills . . . *everything*—at the Lord's feet as an act of worship.

LET'S TRY SOME OBSERVATION

Read through 2 Timothy 4:6–8. As you do, make notes about what you observe. What images did Paul use to communicate his message? List the metaphors Paul enlisted to drive home the urgency of his words to Timothy. Use the space below to record your observations.



DIGGING DEEPER

NOW LET'S CORRELATE—Comparing Scriptures

Death is coming for every one of us, as long as Jesus delays His return. We can choose to ignore the certainty of death or we can live with sober awareness of death's inevitability. Paul had no illusions about death. On the contrary, his succinct summary of the theology of death was, “to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21 NASB).

Quotable

God plans all the courses and puts together all the journeys. We run them. We are, according to Hebrews 12:1, to “run . . . the race that is set before us.” Folks, let me tell you: it is not your prerogative to set your course. It's your prerogative to run it.

— Charles R. Swindoll



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Looking Back—No Regrets

2 Timothy 4:6–8

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How do Paul's words in Philippians 1:21 relate to his testimony recorded in 2 Timothy 4:6–8?

In Paul's day, people washed and wrapped the bodies of their deceased loved ones (John 19:39–40). Paul himself held the dead body of Eutychus and, by the Spirit's power, restored the youth to life (Acts 20:9–12). Burial preparation was not outsourced to morticians but was an intimate family duty. Those who were dying were not hidden but rather were displayed for public view (Matthew 27:35–40).

In contrast, many of us live in contexts where death is sanitized. Our meat, fish, and fowl are skinned, fileted, and wrapped in cellophane. We don't have to kill, skin, scale, or butcher—we just cook and eat! We employ funeral homes to care for the bodies of our deceased loved ones. We even surround them with flowers to cloak the stark, grim picture of mortality.

At the same time we have been removed from the tactile proximity of death, we also have been desensitized to death itself. Social media spreads videos of people being beaten, shot, or committing suicide—in real time. Video games make sport of mass murder. Movies show graphic and even stylized images depicting death. As a result, our regard for human life has been compromised and our regard for human death has diminished.

How does your social context shape your thoughts about death?



Personal Inventory: Past, Present, and Future

What was Paul's conclusion about sin and living with regrets, according to Romans 8:1?



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Looking Back—No Regrets

2 Timothy 4:6–8

LET'S DO SOME INTERPRETATION—What Does This Mean?

Looking Ahead

Paul had completed his course; all that was left was the confirmation, celebration, and consummation of victory. In the text, we first see the confirmation of victory: “In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8 NASB). Paul mixed two themes together in this statement—the athletic and religious. The garland or laurel crown was awarded to those who displayed outstanding performances in the games (1 Corinthians 9:25). In terms of living the life of faith, the crown is a “righteous” one. Such righteousness can be viewed in two ways (and both are probably applicable here):

1. Righteousness is something believers receive in full at the second coming of Christ (Galatians 5:5). In this sense, righteousness is a gift of God symbolized by the crown, something akin to glorification.
2. Righteousness is also the characterization of how believers ought to live on this earth, in holiness. The crown of righteousness then awaits all those who live lives of holiness.

We see next the celebration of victory: “which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day” (4:8 NASB). The idea of awarding here is very much like bestowing payment for deeds; it's a confirmation of having met the requirement for righteous living. Such payment will come at the end of days when the righteous Judge, Jesus, will reward “the living and the dead” (4:1). It's ironic that before Paul could appear before the righteous Judge and be crowned with life, he first had to appear before an unrighteous judge and be condemned to death.

Finally, we see the consummation of victory: “and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8 NASB). Paul could have concluded this section of his letter with verses one through seven—with the challenge and encouragement for Timothy to complete his commission. But instead, Paul went on to address all believers who long for Christ's second epiphany. Those who live their lives with determination and expectation, faithfully looking forward to Christ's return, will receive righteous crowns at the consummation of Christ's victory.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:10–15, and answer the following questions:

What is the foundation?



PAUL'S SWAN SONG
Looking Back—No Regrets
2 Timothy 4:6–8

What do you think it means to “build” on the foundation?

What do you think “gold, silver, and jewels” and “wood, hay, and straw” represent?

On what basis is a person’s “work” judged?

What two possible outcomes does this passage describe?

The New Testament specifically mentions five rewards believers will receive. Mark which one(s) you might receive when you stand before Jesus. (We’re using the NLT version for this exercise.)

| Crown | Reference | Meaning | You? |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------|
| Eternal | 1 Corinthians 9:25 | Self-discipline over the flesh | |
| Rejoicing | 1 Thessalonians 2:19 | Evangelism/Discipleship | |
| Righteousness | 2 Timothy 4:8 | Longing to see Christ | |
| Life | James 1:12 | Faithfully endure suffering | |
| Glory | 1 Peter 5:1–4 | Faithful as an elder or pastor | |



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Looking Back—No Regrets

2 Timothy 4:6–8

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NOW LET'S MAKE SOME APPLICATION

Looking Back

Are you harboring resentment, anger, or vengeful thoughts against another person for past experiences?

Take time to think: Is there someone from your past to whom you need to apologize? Someone you wish you had a chance to reconcile with?

Have you been living with the weight of regret?

If your regrets stem from sinful behavior, read Romans 7:15–25. How did Paul describe his struggle with sin and regret?

Looking at Your “Now”

How would you describe your spiritual life? Would your loved ones agree with your assessment? (You may want to ask a couple of people whom you trust to answer this for you.)



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG
Looking Back—No Regrets
2 Timothy 4:6–8

In what ways does your life uniquely reflect a commitment to Jesus Christ?

Is there anything hindering you from running your race well? Record it here, along with a prayer to God to shed that encumbrance.

Are there times when you'd like to give up on the Christian life? Explain.

How can 2 Timothy 4:7 encourage you to finish your race?

If death came today, would you be satisfied with how you had lived? Explain.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I am grateful for the cross, where I find forgiveness, strength to go on, and the ability to recover. Help me to walk in the strength of the Lord Jesus and in the power of His might. Help me to fight the good fight and finish the course, not simply run it. And all the while, may I keep the faith. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Looking Back—No Regrets

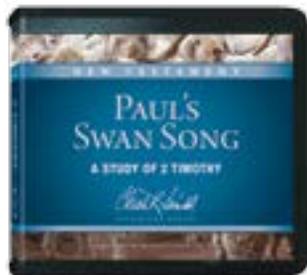
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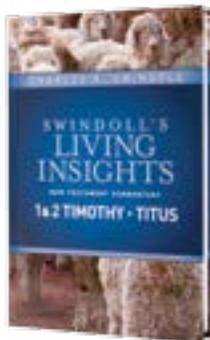
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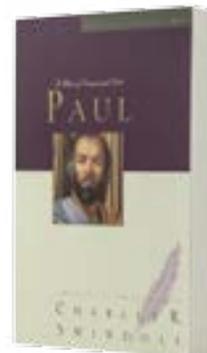
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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

A Circle of Honor and Dishonor

2 Timothy 4:9–15



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Spiritual leaders often must bear their burden alone. When people close their ears to the truth, leaders must be like prophets at times, speaking as lone voices in the wilderness. Like Moses, they sometimes journey solo through storms of dissension as they lead a congregation of grumblers. How Joshua must have longed for a companion to watch his back while he conquered the land. Samuel, David, Esther, Daniel—all the great men and women of the Bible—spent time as solitary figures on the narrow mountain trail of leadership.

For years Paul had plodded leadership's lonely path, and now as he sat in prison alone, his shoulders slumped under the emotional strain. He longed for the warmth of friendship to brace him against the cold of his dungeon isolation. He was still the clear-thinking professor, rugged missionary, and powerful preacher . . . he was *Paul*, the brightest theological mind of his day. And yet, he was human. Just like us in times of trouble, he needed his friends.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Paul's pen put to paper the ache in his soul: "Timothy, please come as soon as you can" (2 Timothy 4:9), adding a postscript: "Do your best to get here before winter" (4:21). Let's join Paul in his lonesome cell and look closer at his urgent plea to Timothy.



Searching the Scriptures Study Tip

A technique in the *Searching the Scriptures* method is to use your imagination to enter a biblical scene. Take a moment to put yourself in Paul's place, physically and emotionally. Soon, Paul would appear in court to face his final judgment with no one to stand by him. The judge would set the date of execution and, with the bang of the gavel, the countdown of Paul's remaining time on earth would begin.

Quotable

*Leadership and
loneliness go
hand in hand.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

A Circle of Honor and Dishonor

2 Timothy 4:9–15

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STUDY

Use your imagination to describe Paul's feelings and his deep longing for Timothy to be with him during the apostle's eleventh hour.

In the verses between Paul's request to Timothy to "come as soon as you can" (2 Timothy 4:9) and his urgent addendum, "come before winter" (4:21 NASB), Paul listed seven men—five of whom he wrote about positively and two negatively.

Read 2 Timothy 4:9–15. What do you observe, specifically regarding the names Paul listed in verses 10–15? Note whether Paul's comments were positive or negative, and observe the order. Which names "bookend" the others? From your first impressions of the passage, can you come up with a possible reason Paul may have listed the names this way?

Using our *Searching the Scriptures* method of *correlation*, let's compare Scriptures to discover who were these men. Their stories shed further light on Paul's emotional state and reveal four insightful principles about what to do when we're *lonely*, *hurt by enemies*, *loved by friends*, and *needy*.

Two Painful Memories

The two men who multiplied Paul's pain, prompting his appeal to Timothy, were Demas and Alexander.

Demas the Deserter

Demas has deserted me because he loves the things of this life and has gone to Thessalonica.
(2 Timothy 4:10)

Until this point, Scripture painted Demas in a positive light. With whom did Paul list Demas in Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24, and how did Paul describe him?



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

A Circle of Honor and Dishonor

2 Timothy 4:9–15

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STUDY

What lured this former coworker to abandon Paul when he needed him most? Apparently, a love for “this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10 NASB) won over Demas’ heart. Chuck Swindoll explains how this may have happened.

Demas has experienced an inner erosion. He’s cooled off to spiritual things. The dynamic for Christ has somewhere slipped. Perhaps afraid of the dangers and risks of following Christ when Nero’s finger would one day point in his direction and he, too, would find his place in a cell. Perhaps he by now misses the comforts of home and desires the safety of anonymity. We don’t know. It’s possible that Demas never really counted the cost, and suddenly when the cost became great, Demas fled.

Even so, regardless of the pressures, Demas would have stayed true to Paul if he had stayed true to Christ. Unfortunately, the siren’s song of the world and its immediate pleasures seduced Demas away from Jesus and His kingdom’s future rewards. What insight do the following verses offer about the power of the world to capture our hearts?

Mark 4:14, 18–19

Romans 12:1–2

2 Corinthians 4:4

1 John 2:15–17



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

A Circle of Honor and Dishonor

2 Timothy 4:9–15

The present age has a strong, magnetic appeal that can grow stronger over time and draw us away from those who need us most. The desertion of Demas broke Paul's heart . . . but the opposition of Alexander shoved a knife in his back.

Alexander the Antagonist

Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm, but the Lord will judge him for what he has done. Be careful of him, for he fought against everything we said. (2 Timothy 4:14–15)

The New Testament lists several men with the name Alexander. This Alexander may have been the same blasphemer in Timothy's church in Ephesus whom Paul disciplined by throwing him out and handing him "over to Satan" (1 Timothy 1:20). If so, Alexander retaliated with a two-pronged assault. Alexander slandered Paul—"did me much harm" (2 Timothy 4:14)—and impugned Paul's words—"he fought against everything we said" (4:15).

Compare these two forms of opposition by filling in the following chart. For additional insight, consult a commentary and look up the key Greek words in your concordance or online at <https://lumina.bible.org>.

| | "Alexander . . . did me much harm" ¹ (4:14) (<i>endeiknumi</i> , 1731] | [Alexander] . . . fought against everything we said" (4:15) (<i>anthistēmi</i> , 436) |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Method of opposition | | |
| Target of opposition | | |
| Goal of opposition | | |
| Paul's response to opposition | | |



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

A Circle of Honor and Dishonor

2 Timothy 4:9–15

SEARCHING
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Application

What principles can you glean from Paul's response to Alexander to help you respond to those who oppose you?

Five Faithful Friends

Unlike Demas (who left Paul) and Alexander (who Paul *wished* would leave him), five friends in Paul's circle of honor remained faithful to the end: Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, and Tychicus (2 Timothy 4:10–12).

Luke, Paul's "beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14 NASB), stands center stage in this list as the only friend who was physically present with Paul. Luke most likely brought him daily rations of food and doses of medicine. **Read 2 Timothy 4:10–12.** Where had Crescens, Titus, and Tychicus gone? Locate these regions on your maps in the back of your Bible or in an atlas.

Crescens is not mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament, but you can discover more about Titus in these verses: 2 Corinthians 7:13–14; 8:6; Galatians 2:1–3; Titus 1:5. Record what you learn.

Tychicus served Paul as a courier, delivering his letters to Ephesus (Ephesians 6:21), Colossae (Colossians 4:7), and probably Philemon (Colossians 4:9). Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus to relieve Timothy and allow him to come right away to see Paul.

Paul asked Timothy to bring Mark, adding, "he will be helpful to me in my ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). Read Mark's story of failure and second chance in Acts 13:13 and 15:36–39. What is the significance of Paul's end-of-life endorsement of Mark—the defector who found his courage? Note: Mark would later write the first account of Jesus' life, the gospel of Mark.



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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

A Circle of Honor and Dishonor

2 Timothy 4:9–15

Some Timeless Reminders

To wrap up our study, let's identify some key principles. Based on Paul's example of expressing his pain and his need for Timothy, how might you complete these sentences:

When I'm lonely, I need to _____.

When I'm hurt by enemies, I need to _____.

When I'm loved by friends, I need to _____.

When I'm needy, I can request _____.

Bring It Home

Have you been wounded by a “Demas” who deserted you in your hour of need? Or an “Alexander” who spreads false information about you and attacks what you say? What encouragement and advice might Paul give you?

Who are the people in your circle of honor—people like Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, Tychicus, and Timothy? If you've been trying to make it on your own, perhaps it's time to reach out to them in your time of need. What can you do to reach out to your friends in the days ahead?



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

A Circle of Honor and Dishonor

2 Timothy 4:9–15

SEARCHING
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STUDY

Whether or not you are in a leadership position, you may journey alone at times. Don't hesitate to ask your "Timothy" to come to you before winter falls. We all need friends to walk the perilous trail of life together.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for meeting my needs when there was no one else to do that. Thank You for being my Friend, my Advocate, and the One who has loved me all the way to the end. How grateful I am for You. May I learn to say "I love you" to the friends You have given me. May I admit my need without any pride or self-sufficiency. And may I, Father, live with vulnerability and openness before a watching world that continues to look for authenticity and hope. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. The little word *did* in Greek is *endeiknumi*, from which we get the word *indictment*. It means "1) to point out 1a) to show, demonstrate, prove, whether by arguments or by acts 2) to manifest, display, put forth," as an informant does when smearing a person's reputation with a false testimony. See lumina.bible.org, note on 2 Tim. 4:14, <https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Timothy+4>, accessed Sept. 6, 2017.



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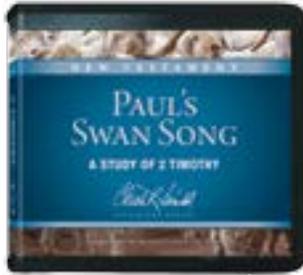
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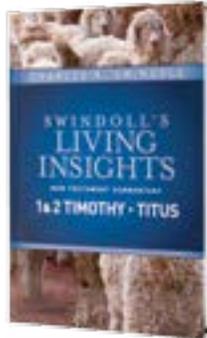
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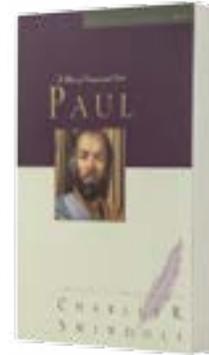
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PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Grace to the Very End

2 Timothy 4:16–22



LET'S BEGIN HERE

When 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 hearts 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 came to its climactic close with far less fanfare. No bright lights surrounded him in his dungeon cell. No one cheered him on. He wrote alone, but his words left behind far *more* meaning and lasting impact than any entertainer’s song. His final lines of 2 Timothy rang 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 at the end of his life his signature tune played on. Grace in the beginning. Grace every step of the way. Grace to the very end.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As we examine 2 Timothy 4:16–22, we’ll notice six variations of Paul’s theme of grace in his final words. Begin by reading these verses, and note the natural division at the end of verse 18. What titles would you give the two sections, verses 16–18 and 19–22?

Quotable

*Begin preparing
now for your
inevitable final
hours, and choose
grace as your
life’s credo.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Grace to the Very End

2 Timothy 4:16–22

Although the word *grace* appears once in these verses, the melody of grace permeates every line. Let's tune our ears to hear it as we dig deeper into the text.



Searching the Scriptures Study Tip

Observation is the first step in the *Searching the Scriptures* method toward unlocking the meaning of a text and applying its principles to your life.

Observing the Text: What Does It Say?

You've already observed the two main sections; now look closer at the words. If you prefer not to mark your Bible, print the passage on a separate piece of paper and mark the text as you do the following exercises.

Do you see repeated words? Specifically, find the phrase, "the Lord," and circle each one. Also, circle any reference to God.

Underline the action words in the text that stand out to you. In the chart below, write down these words that describe what happened to Paul, what Paul did, and what God did and will do.

| Key Actions in 2 Timothy 4:16–22 | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| What happened to Paul? | |
| What did Paul do? | |
| What did God do? What will He do? | |



Summarize your observations in the space below. Note who is the focus of the passage and any hints of grace that you find.

Now let's take the next *Searching the Scriptures* step of interpretation.

Interpreting the Text: What Does It Mean?

Based on our observations, let's draw out six grace-related themes to enhance our understanding of the passage.

Grace theme one: Paul asked the Lord not to hold others' offenses against them (2 Timothy 4:16).

Heartache accompanied Paul's first notes of grace: "The first time I was brought before the judge, no one came with me. Everyone abandoned me" (2 Timothy 4:16).

To learn more about Paul's first trial and the reason it was so vital for supporters to be present, read the article, "The Injustice of Roman Justice," on the Insight for Living Ministries Web site. See the "Articles" tab under the Additional resources heading at this link: <http://insight.org/broadcasts/current-series>. Write down your findings.

Paul's first hearing, the *prima actio*, was the first-century Roman version of today's arraignment hearing, in which a judge determines probable cause and decides whether or not to order a trial. This hearing represented Paul's best chance for acquittal, since maniacal Nero, officiating Paul's second trial, would most certainly sentence him to death. Yet no one testified to defend Paul's innocence and counter his accusers. The judge probably had no choice but to order Paul to stand trial at the imperial court.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Grace to the Very End

2 Timothy 4:16–22

On the heels of a great disappointment in which “everyone [had] abandoned” him, Paul expressed great grace, “May it not be counted against them” (2 Timothy 4:16)—echoing Christ’s words of grace from the cross: “‘Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing’” (Luke 23:34).

Application

Have others let you down? Even betrayed you? Write down what happened. Reflect on Paul’s response of grace, and ask the Lord for the strength to act likewise toward those who have offended you.

Paul could have reacted with bitterness (“I’m innocent! This is unfair!”), bearing a grudge (“I’ll never forgive my friends!”), or with self-pity (“This is what I get for helping people.”). Yet by keeping his focus on his Lord, he responded with grace. Let’s look closer at Paul’s faith in Christ and breathe in the fragrance of gratitude that infused Paul’s spirit.

Grace theme two: Paul displayed an attitude of enormous gratitude (2 Timothy 4:17).

Paul mentioned “the Lord” three times in the passage (4:17; 4:18; and 4:22). He centered his thoughts on his Savior and trusted in Him, not on his own abilities or on a possible rescue from prison by his friends. His vertical focus guarded him against the fear and bitterness that would have imprisoned his heart behind walls thicker than Rome’s Mamertine prison. Instead, gratitude to the Lord gave him a positive, hopeful attitude that no prison bars could restrain.

What truths gave Paul the spiritual resources to respond with grace and gratitude (4:17)?

Application

On what truths about your Savior can you focus your mind to set you free from fear and bitterness?



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Grace to the Very End

2 Timothy 4:16–22

Grace theme three: Paul maintained a confident expectation (4:18).

Paul's next line exudes confident expectation: "Yes, and the Lord will deliver me from every evil attack" (4:18). How could a man on death row be so confident in his deliverance?

Correlation

To find the answer, correlate this passage with Paul's expression of confidence in his letter to the Philippians. Read Philippians 1:20–23. What was Paul's attitude toward life and death? What did "deliverance" mean to Paul? And how did this mind-set boost his confidence and hope?

Application

Has the heat of hardship melted your confidence and hope? How can Paul's mind-set help you in your situation?

Grace theme four: Paul claimed a secure home in heaven (4:18).

Paul's concluding thought in verse 18 reveals the secret to his confidence: "Yes, and the Lord will . . . bring me safely into his heavenly Kingdom. All glory to God forever and ever! Amen!"

No amount of darkness that closed around Paul could dim the dawning light on his horizon—the shining face of Jesus welcoming him to his eternal home. This is the hope of the gospel!

Application

How can the hope of the gospel encourage you today?



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Grace to the Very End

2 Timothy 4:16–22

Grace theme five: Paul delighted in the benefits others receive (2 Timothy 4:19–21).

Read Paul's final farewell in 2 Timothy 4:19–21, and note his positive regard toward his friends, some of whom lived in Rome and may have been among those who abandoned him in his hour of need. What do Paul's words of blessing tell you about grace?

Application

Our capacity to delight in the blessings of others while we're struggling is a true test of our ability to show grace. In what specific situation in your life does Paul's example of grace toward others give you a model to follow?

Grace theme six: Paul released others from his expectations (4:22).

Paul concluded his swan song with a stirring finale: "May the Lord be with your spirit. And may his grace be with all of you" (4:22). He expressed his anthem of grace with a final flourish of ink on parchment and then set down his quill, never to pick it up again.

Paul's heart was free from guilt and full of hope—and his words released his friends to enjoy a guilt-free, hope-filled life with God as well. He laid on them no burden of expectation, no sharp jab of blame because he's in prison and they walk free. Grace doesn't second-guess decisions or dwell on petty offenses. It releases people into God's care to walk with Him as He leads them.

Application

How can you show grace to others by releasing them from your expectations?





Bring It Home

As you close your study of 2 Timothy, linger over the theme of grace. Recall Paul's explanation of the gospel back in 2 Timothy 1:

For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. (1:9–10)

Let the grace of Christ fill your heart as it did Paul's heart, and let it spill over into your relationships, just as it did in Paul's life. How can you demonstrate grace today toward those to whom you are closest?

Can you hear, ringing in your heart, Paul's signature tune of grace in his swan song of 2 Timothy? If so, let the melody ring out through you today and every day!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You prepared Paul for his final moments by filling his heart with grace and hope. Now prepare me as well. May grace be my life's credo, and when my time comes may my heart be filled with grace to the very end. Amen.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Grace to the Very End

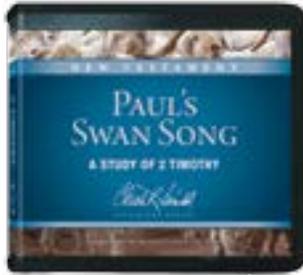
2 Timothy 4:16–22

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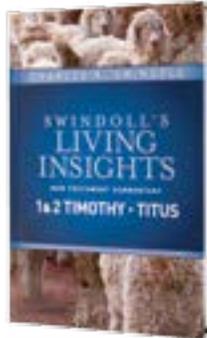
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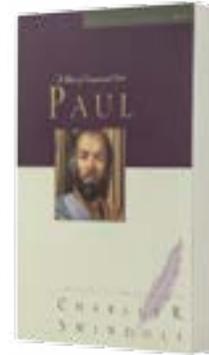
Tools for Digging Deeper



Paul's Swan Song:
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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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