2 Timothy

Chapter 1

1:3. “ancestors.” This tells us that Paul came from a long line of devout Jews. By “my ancestors” he would mean his personal family line. As a whole, the nation of the Jews had not been particularly devout, as any study of Jewish history will show. It can be a great advantage to come from a truly godly family. Many important lessons can be learned and wonderful habits established while a youth.
1:6. “For this reason.” The Greek phrase, di ēn aitian (Δι’ ἐν αἰτίαν; the lemma: διὰ δές αἰτία) means “for this reason,” and encompasses everything in the long sentence that precedes it (Verses 3-5 are one sentence in the Greek). Because of Paul’s prayers, and because of the sincere faith that lives inside Timothy, the kind of faith that both his grandmother and mother had, Timothy should not let the gift of God, his ministry, go dormant, but rather should fan it into flames. Yes, Paul was in jail and about to be executed. Yes, the people in Asia (where Timothy was) had turned away from Paul (and thus Timothy also). Yes, times were tough and dangerous. Nevertheless, God gave us His holy spirit, and with it power, love, and self-control. Therefore Timothy should not be timid or cowardly, but should fan his gift into flames and do the work of an evangelist and see if anyone was still willing to hear and obey the message. This verse shows us that it is our responsibility, not God’s, to get ourselves excited about the things of God. The difficulties of life can cool us off concerning the Good News, but it is our responsibility to take those coals and fan them back into a burning flame for the Lord.
1:6. “that is in you through the laying on of my hands.” This verse is very easy to misunderstand, because many people think that it is referring to a gift ministry (charisma; #5486 χάρισμα) being somehow conferred by Paul laying on his hands. But in this case, it is not the gift that is being given, but it would be understood in the culture that it is the authority and recognition to publicly minister, along with a blessing, that is being given. This then subsequently led to the person being in charge of a church or churches.

The Bible makes it clear that each person has a gift from God (Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:7, 8). No one needs to have a person or a group to lay hands on him or her in order to confer a ministry. In fact, and ministry cannot be conferred that way; they are given by God, not conferred by people. The laying on of hands by the elders is a public recognition of a ministry in operation in the Body of Christ, and it is important for the proper order and continuation of the Church. The public ceremony of laying on of hands lets all the people know that a group of elders whom they trust and follow put their trust in this new and upcoming leader. William Mounce writes: “There is nothing in the context of these three passages [1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6] to suggest that we have here a sacramental act whereby ‘the grace of the office is transferred’…The Spirit showed that Timothy was equipped for ministry, and in accordance with custom this fact was publicly recognized by the leadership of the community. The predominant note is not one of authority
transferred or of the importation of an official status, but of a blessing given.” (Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles. Excursus: Prophecies about Timothy, p. 72).

At some point in his life, Timothy was ordained to ministry by Paul and other elders (1 Tim. 4:14), and Paul exhorted him to live his life and war his warfare according to his calling in the Body of Christ (1 Tim. 1:18).

1:7. “timidity.” The Greek is deilia, which means lack of mental or moral strength, cowardice, timidity. It is not the standard word for “fear,” which is phobos.

1:8. “do not be ashamed.” The aorist subjunctive verb shows us that this is an exhortation due to the difficulty of the times. Timothy has not become ashamed, as a few commentators suggest. Paul was simply speaking words of encouragement, as we are all inclined to do when in battle. One warrior shouts to another, “Keep fighting,” not because the other has given up, but simply as words of continued encouragement. Lenski has an excellent discussion on this; also see The Expositor’s Greek Testament by W. R. Nicoll.

“relying on.” The Greek preposition kata is best understood in this context as it is in the NRSV. “according to” makes it seem as if the power of God somehow dictated or controlled the suffering.

1:10. “brought life and immortality to light.” The Old Testament, particularly prophets such as Ezekiel and Daniel, contain some seemingly clear verses on the resurrection from the dead. Nevertheless, there was almost no clear understanding of it at the time of Christ (and very little today since there has been more than 1500 years of “orthodoxy” teaching the doctrinal error of “the immortal soul”). The teaching of Jesus Christ (and then his death and resurrection), brought “life” and immortality to light for all to see.

In this verse the word “life” is being used in its fuller sense. While it does refer to a fulfilled life now, that is its lesser meaning; the greater meaning is that “life” refers to “everlasting life.” [For “life,” meaning “everlasting life,” see commentary on Luke 10:28, and cp. Matt. 7:14; 18:8, 9; 19:17; Mark 9:43, 45; John 3:36; 5:40; 20:31; Acts 11:18; Rom. 5:18; Gal. 3:21; 2 Tim. 1:1; 1 John 3:14; 5:12]. [For more information on the soul and the phrase “immortal soul,” see Appendix 7, “Usages of ‘Soul’”].

1:12. “he is able to guard that which he has entrusted to me.” The Greek words parathēkē phulassō (παραθήκη φυλάσσω) occur in verse 14 and 1 Timothy 6:20 where they refer to something committed to someone, and Lenski convincingly argues that they should be taken the same way here. It was the Lord who entrusted to Paul a great deposit (1 Cor. 9:17), and now Paul was about to be executed (2 Tim. 4:6). Yet Paul was convinced that the Lord was able to guard that wonderful deposit and that it would not be lost. This interpretation also fits the context well, his appointment as a minister (v. 11) and why he told Timothy to hold to the pattern of sound words he had heard (v. 13) and guard the deposit entrusted to him (v. 14). Cp. The ESV translation, which is very good.

1:14. “The good deposit that was committed to you, guard through holy spirit which dwells in us.” This follows the literal reading of the Greek (see Young’s Literal Translation) very closely. This verse has been misunderstood by many translators, primarily because they do not understand the holy spirit field.

We understand the holy spirit to be the gift of God—the power of God sealed within each Christian. A Christian guards the treasure of the Word (2 Cor. 4:7: we have the “treasure,” the “knowledge” (v. 6), in earthen vessels) and the knowledge of the Truth within him by, among other things, operating the power of the holy spirit. The extent of that power is part of the Sacred Secret (Christ in you—Col. 1:27). If the holy spirit is the
third person of the Trinity as most translators believe, then the verse means something totally different—we have to enlist its help in guarding the treasure as per the NIV, ESV, NASB, etc. [For more information on the uses of “holy spirit”, see Appendix 6: “Usages of ‘Spirit’”].

1:18. “the Lord…of the Lord.” The commentators are divided about this phrase, as to whether it means “Jesus…Jesus,” “God…God,” “Jesus…God,” or “God…Jesus.” Since God and Jesus always work in harmony, the best choice seems to leave it “Lord…Lord.”

Chapter 2

2:2. “entrust.” The Greek is paratithēmi (#3908 παρατίθημι), and it means to place beside or near or set before, to set forth, to deposit, to entrust, to commit to one’s charge.

2:7. “all this.” The Greek adjective pasin without the definite article is all of something. The adjective should modify a noun, pronoun, etc. In this context, it would be “all” of “this,” i.e., the subject that Paul is referring to. It is not true that the Lord will give understanding in “everything” as many versions have, even though the Lord gives understanding in many things.

2:8. “out from among the dead.” See Romans 4:24. Wuest: “out from among the dead.”

2:10. “elect” or “chosen.” From the Greek adjective, eklektos (#1588 ἐκλεκτός). We chose God (through) Roman’s 10:9 then He chooses us and saves us. This verse is not saying that God chooses apart from our will as some teach. Quite the contrary. If God could choose us apart from our will, why would Paul have to endure anything at all? He could live a good life and God would choose who He willed. No, we must strive to reach out with the Good News so that people can hear and then choose God—and our striving may mean hardship.

“everlasting glory.” The term “glory” is described by the adjective aiōnios (#166 αἰώνιος), which most versions render “eternal.” See commentary on John 3:16. Aiōnios can mean “age” as in the messianic age, or it can have a strictly temporal meaning of “everlasting.” Here the meaning is probably both—it refers to the glory of the age to come, glory that is everlasting. We prefer to stay away from “eternal” in this verse. Technically, “eternal” is something with no beginning and no end, whereas “everlasting” refers to something that, once it starts, never ends. As English has become less precisely used over the years, the word “eternal” has very often been used when the actual meaning is “everlasting.” The loss of clarity can be confusing in some contexts. God is truly eternal, but the Kingdom is not.

2:11. “this statement is trustworthy.” See commentary on 1 Timothy 1:15.

“died with him…live with him.” 2 Timothy 2:11-13 is one of the great sections of Scripture that shows us the difference between “salvation” and “rewards.” It shows that when a person is born again, his salvation is assured—his salvation is never in doubt no matter what he does. We die with Christ when we take him as Lord (see commentary on Rom. 6:3, 8). However, even as children of God we still live in flesh bodies and make mistakes, sometimes horrible mistakes, including denying him. If we deny him in this life, then he will deny giving us rewards in his kingdom. However, even after saying he will deny us if we deny him, verse 13 says that he still remains faithful, and he cannot deny “himself.” Christians, whether model citizens or big sinners, are still part of the
Body of Christ and guaranteed salvation. Christ will never deny his own Body! [For the permanence of our salvation, see commentary on 1 Pet. 1:23. For rewards in the kingdom see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10].


2:13. “unfaithful.” The Greek word is ἀπιστεῖ (apisteo #569 ἀπιστέω), and it means to have no belief or trust, thus to disbelieve; to betray a trust, or to be unfaithful. In this context in which it is in juxtaposition to the Lord, who is “faithful,” it means “unfaithful.”

2:15. “Make a diligent effort.” The Greek is σπουδάζω (#4704 σπουδάζω) and it means to make a diligent effort, or be diligent at something. The NIV’s “do your best” is an attempt to bring out this meaning in an easily understood manner. The “study” of the KJV is a good example of how the meaning of words changes over the years. In 1611, only something like ten percent of the population could read, and the word “study” meant to make a diligent effort to learn something, almost the way we today use “understudy.” In 1611, a person “studying” to be a silversmith, for example, did not read anything at all, but rather went and worked for the silversmith. The student would start with the menial tasks, and then as the master smith saw him applying himself, would give him increased responsibility. Sadly, many modern readers see “study to show thyself approved” in the KJV and think that approval before God relates only to the mental activity of learning. Being approved before God requires us making a diligent effort in all that we do in our walk before Him.

“rightly handling.” The Greek word is ὀρθοτομεῖ (orthotoime #3718 ὀρθοτοµέω), and there has been no small amount of discussion about how to translate it. It is a composite verb and only found here in the NT. The well-known meaning “rightly divide” (cp. KJV) is built from the two base verbs, but it is well known in linguistics, including Greek, that compound verbs are often not closely related to the base verbs. The base verb temno means “to cut,” but “cutting” was such a fundamental part of ancient life that it became used for many things that were not literally cut. The common Hebrew expression for making a covenant was “to cut the covenant,” and that phrase continued even when nothing was cut, such as in a covenant of salt or a marriage covenant. Proverbs 11:5 (LXX) says that the righteousness of the person “cuts his way straight,” even though nothing is literally cut. The Greeks (and we today) speak of “cutting” a liquid, when we mean “dilute” it.

The context, both before and after 2 Timothy 2:15, is about unprofitable use of words and worldly chatter. In contrast to that, God’s people are to “rightly handle,” the Word and the words in it, and not wage useless word battles with them. Clearly implied in the meaning of orthotoime is that we can “rightly handle” the Bible in the way we understand it and explain it, and we can “rightly handle” it in the way we deal with it in relation to others. The Bible can be wrongly believed and taught, and it can also be wrongly used as a weapon against other people.

2:16. “lead to further ungodliness.” Disobeying and defying God only leads to more disobedience (cp. commentary on 2 Tim. 3:13).

2:19. “The Lord knows.” This is not a specific quotation from the Old Testament, but may be an allusion to Numbers 16:5. In any case, it would have been, and continues to be, a commonly expressed sentiment among believers.
“Everyone who names.” This is not a specific quotation from the Old Testament, but may be an allusion to Numbers 16:26. In any case, the admonition for the righteous to depart from evil is a very common biblical admonition.

“the name of the Lord.” The textual evidence for “the Lord” is early and overwhelming. Even the majority text family, which often favors the reading of the Byzantine text family that is reflected in the King James Version, has the reading “Lord” and not “Christ” (Hodges and Farstad, The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text). The note in the Expositors Greek Testament says that the reading “Christ” is in a few cursive manuscripts. It is possible that a scribe made a note in the margin of his manuscript that he thought the word “Lord” referred to Christ, and that a later scribe then copied “Christ” into his manuscript.

“must depart.” In Greek the imperative mood can be an invitation “Let everyone,” or a command (Everyone must!). In this case the context calls for the word “must.” God never forces anyone to use the name of the Lord, but anyone who does “name the name of the Lord,” that is, use it for personal identification (“I am the Lord’s”) and for power (“In the name of Jesus Christ…”) must depart from unrighteous behavior. It does great harm to Christianity when professing Christians act like unbelievers and participate in evil and ungodly behavior. Christians who act like that will suffer consequences (see commentary on 2 Corinthians 5:10).

2:21. “master.” The Greek is despotēs (#1203 δέσποτης) means master, lord, or owner, and it refers to someone who has legal control and authority over others, such as subjects or slaves (cp. 1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:9), or over things. It is used both as a title for God (Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24), and a title for Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:4). See commentary on Luke 2:29.

2:22. “call on the Lord.” This is a prayer formula, and refers to prayer to Jesus Christ (see commentary on 1 Corinthians 1:2).

2:25. “get to give.” The Greek verb “give” is didomi (#1325 δίδωμι) in the aorist tense, which in this case means “get to give,” not just “give.” The verse, and certainly not the scope of Scripture, does not ever portray God withholding forgiveness or people’s repentance. Quite the contrary! Like the forgiving father in the “Parable of the Prodigal Son” (Luke 15), The Father is watching and waiting for anyone to come to repentance, and when someone does, there is “more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:7).

“full knowledge.” This word, epignōsis (#1922 ἐπίγνωσις), is the usual term for “knowledge” with the prefix epi added as an intensifier. It thus becomes full knowledge, an intense experiential knowing of the truth as the result of their repentance. We hold that it is ultimately up to the person’s free will to decide to repent or not; God does not give repentance in this sense. Rather, it is hoped that God will grant the man’s repentance to result in full knowledge of the truth. The pressure in this verse is upon God’s giving the result of the repentance, not the repentance itself. Further, the context of this verse is not salvation but controversies and quarrels over words—it is not eternal salvation that is needed to be granted here, but a fuller knowledge of the truth.

2:26. “return to clear-thinking.” This means that these people had once thought properly and now they must return to clear-thinking. The Greek word is ananēphō (#366 ἀνανῆφω), to “come to one’s senses again” (BDAG). This verse is very enlightening, for it connects the devil’s snare with muddled thinking. Satan captures us to do his will by
confusing our thinking. Like he did with Eve, he mixes in lies with truth to confuse us and cause us to not think clearly. When our thoughts are off track we will behave in the wrongheaded fashion he wants us to.

“the Slanderer.” This is “the Devil.” The Greek is diabolos (#1228 διάβολος). The Greek word diabolos means “slanderer,” the one who slanders others, and that is a primary characteristic of the Devil. He has no regard for a person’s reputation or the illicit means he uses to discredit and destroy people. Slander is a primary tactic of the Devil. [For information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 14: “Names of the Slanderer”].
experienced. There are versions that say, “fully known,” and although that is true, it is because Timothy closely followed Paul that he knew all about Paul.

“teaching.” The Greek word is didaskalia (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it was a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse we felt bringing didaskalia into English as “teaching” was better than “doctrine,” because the wording of the English with “teaching” implies both the way Paul taught and the subject matter that Paul taught. [For more on didaskalia see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13].

3:13. “from bad to worse.” Evil thoughts and deeds originate in the heart (Mark 7:20-23), and the posture of the heart is always changing. As we obey God and believe our hearts become more and more pure, but if we disobey and defy God, our hearts become darker and darker (Matt. 13:15; Eph. 4:17-19; 1 Tim. 4:1, 2). It is clearly in Scripture, and has been seen in the world over and over again with all kinds of sin—sexual, drug related, abuse, murder, etc.—that the sins a person commits become worse over time. This is clearly set forth in many verses of Scripture (cp. 2 Tim. 2:16; Rom. 6:16, 19; Jude 1:13).

3:15. “wisdom for salvation.” This is not just “being saved,” because Timothy was already saved. First, it is a general statement about the Scripture, that it is able to make a person wise eis sotēria (εἰς σωτηρία) “unto salvation.” Often the preposition eis introduces a result, thus, “wisdom leading to salvation.” In this case the “wisdom for salvation” is a broad phrase that can apply in many senses. As pertaining to Timothy himself, the “salvation” would not be referring to his receiving everlasting life, because he already had everlasting life through faith in Christ, so rather it would be referring to the depth of understanding about salvation and the full outworking of salvation in his life. However the broad way the statement is worded opens the door for Timothy to have wisdom for everlasting life salvation as it would apply to and help others.

“faith in Christ Jesus.” The text reads, “The faith, the one in Christ Jesus.” This is a Greek way of speaking that emphasizes the word faith and shows that the faith is to be in Christ. This idiom comes across poorly in terms of English readability, however. We have left out the article (“the one”) and preserved the base meaning of the Greek, that the faith is to be “in Christ Jesus.”

3:16. “All Scripture.” The context defines this as “the sacred writings” (verse 15), so it includes both the Old and New Testament (although the New Testament was not completed by this time). We know the Old Testament is included because it was all that was available when Timothy was a baby and being taught by his mother and grandmother. It is a testimony to the good parenting that Timothy had that his mother had taught him the sacred writings from the time he was a baby. By the time Paul was writing 2 Timothy, “all Scripture” included the New Testament books that had been written by that point.

“God-breathed.” The Greek word translated “God-breathed” is theopneustos (#2315 θεόπνευστος), a compound word from theos (God) and pneuō (to breath). Therefore, as Friberg’s Greek-English lexicon says, strictly it means “God-breathed,” but what does that mean? We believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, meaning the original text was actually given by God to the person who wrote it down. This is logical and fits the facts.
That God gave the text of the Bible to the people who wrote it agrees with the testimony in the Scripture itself. For example, dozens of verses say God spoke to the prophets to tell them what to write or what to say (cp. Exod. 6:29; 34:27; Isa. 8:1; Jer. 22:30; 36:1, 2, 27, 28; Hab. 2.2, etc.). Similarly, Paul said that what he taught he got by revelation from Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12), and Jesus also told the Apostle John what to write (Rev. 1:10, 11). Also, there are verses such as 2 Peter 1:21 that tell us that the Bible came from God: “for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (NASB). If the Bible was not given by God to the person who wrote it down, then all the verses that say it is are wrong, and the Bible’s testimony of itself is wrong.

The prophecies in the Bible show that it was authored by God. Man does not have the ability to tell the future, but God does, and He says that His telling the future is proof that He is God. In Isaiah 41:22, 23, and 48:3-5, God points out that idols cannot tell the future, but He is God and He can. The dozens of fulfilled historically verifiable prophecies in the Bible are substantial proof that God authored it.

The historical accuracy of the Bible is another piece of evidence that God authored the Bible. The historical accuracy of the names of people and places, and the accuracy of the events recorded, is far beyond the level of accuracy that people in the ancient world could attain simply by passing information down by word of mouth. The accuracy of the Bible is possible only because it was authored by an “eyewitness” who was present at every event recorded in it, and that eyewitness is God.

Of course there are passages of the Scripture that are quotations from other writings, but we believe God could have told the writer to use those too, not just that the writer “thought it was a good idea” to include them. [For more on the trustworthiness of the Bible; John Schoenheit, The Bible: You Can Believe It].

“teaching.” The Greek word is didaskalia (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it was a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse we felt bringing didaskalia into English as “teaching” was better than “doctrine,” because the wording of the English with “teaching” implies both the fact that “all Scripture” is beneficial to use in teaching, and also that it is beneficial as “the teaching.” [For more on didaskalia see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13].

**Chapter 4**

4:1. “and in view of his appearing and his kingdom.” This is the more correct translation. The KJV, “at” his appearing does not fit the context and grammar nearly as well. The charge is a solemn one indeed: “I solemnly charge you in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, and by his appearing and his kingdom…”

4:2. “preach the word; be ready…reprove, rebuke, exhort.” All five verbs are in the imperative mood and are a command. The situation is dire: Paul was in prison about to lose his life and Nero’s persecution of Christians was severe. Worse, people were being hardened to the truth, as 4:3 tells us: “For the time will come when they will not put up with the sound teaching.” In these circumstances, Jesus commands us to always be ready, to preach, to reprove, to rebuke, and to exhort.
The five imperative verbs are in a string and are the figure of speech asyndeton, “no ands.” In asyndeton, there is no “and” between the final items in the list, and so the reader quickly moves to the conclusion: “with all longsuffering and teaching!” In this case the figure asyndeton fulfills two important functions. It lets us know that although there are five things in the list, more could be added. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, it is meant to give us pertinent examples. It also places an emphasis on the conclusion, and thus shows us that in trying to stand firm in the faith and in trying to reach others, we must be longsuffering toward others and try to reach them by teaching the truth. [For a more complete explanation of asyndeton, see commentary on Galatians 5:22].

“When it is convenient and when it is not convenient.” The Greek text has the figure of speech asyndeton, dropping the “and,” and making the phrase very punchy and attention grabbing. The Greek reads, eukairôs akairôs (εὐκαιρός ἀκαιρός). The Greek word kairos (#2540 καιρός) refers to a point of time, which can be past, present, or future; thus “time,” or “moment” (cp. Matt. 11:25), or it can refer to a fixed period of time marked by suitableness; thus favorable time, right time, opportune time, opportunity, or season (cp. 2 Cor. 6:2). It can also refer to a specific and decisive point, often a divinely allotted time or season (Mark 1:15). It is also used of a future period of time marked by some set of characteristic circumstances, as in the last times, the end times, the Messianic times (cp. Matt. 16:3; 1 Tim. 4:1) (Friberg’s Lexicon). In this verse, the essence is “when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient” (BDAG lexicon). The punchiness of the Greek, if brought into English might be: “Proclaim the word: convenient, inconvenient” or “opportunity, no opportunity,” or “right time, not the right time.”

4:3. “Teaching.” The Greek word is didaskalia (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it was a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse we felt bringing didaskalia into English as “teaching” was better than “doctrine,” because “sound teaching” is more inclusive than just “doctrine,” and also because “sound teaching” is predicated upon sound doctrine. [For more on didaskalia see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13].

4:8. “Longed for.” The Greek is agapâ (Αγαπάω), and literally grammatically is “have loved.” However, in this case it carries the sense of “have longed for.” It is a current state of longing, preceded by longing in the past.