

INVITATION TO 2 TIMOTHY

Paul left his co-worker Timothy in the city of Ephesus to deal with some renegade leaders in the community of Jesus-followers. Timothy was unable to do this, and Paul needed to go back to Ephesus himself. There he suffered a great deal of harm from Alexander, one of these leaders, and he was once again imprisoned and taken to Rome. He expected that this time he wouldn't be released, but would be tried and executed. Since most of his other co-workers were either on different assignments or had deserted him, Paul wrote to Timothy and asked him to come to Rome quickly. He was concerned that winter might prevent travel, or his trial might reach its conclusion, before he could see one of his most dependable co-workers again. Paul wanted both to enjoy his company and assistance and to challenge and encourage him about the uncertain future. Things in Ephesus had not gone as Paul or Timothy expected. Paul had ordered both Alexander and another renegade leader, Hymenaeus, to step down. But both men were continuing to oppose Paul. Others had joined their ranks, including Phygelus, Hermogenes and Philetus. They were still misdirecting people into a corrupted version of the faith that stressed debate and dissension rather than purity and obedience. Paul believed Timothy was feeling discouraged and intimidated. So his letter includes challenges to stay faithful to the true message—even if this meant suffering or death—and warnings against the dangers of the false teaching. Paul reminds Timothy that in the last days, that is, before the open appearance of Jesus as king, there will be terrible times. False teachers, treacherous and insincere people, persecutions and more will all challenge the faithfulness of Jesus-followers. Paul urges Timothy to remember the gospel message: Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.

He points out that the sacred writings Timothy has known since he was a child are God-breathed and will make him thoroughly equipped for every good work. Knowing of Timothy's sincere faith, we can be confident that Paul's letter helped his longtime protégé to be able to say at the end of his own life, as Paul himself did, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

