

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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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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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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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

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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SEARCHING
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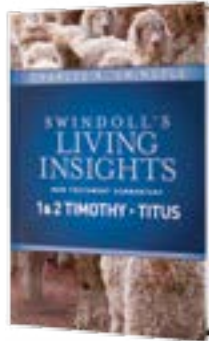
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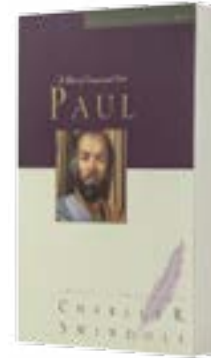
Tools for Digging Deeper



Paul's Swan Song:
A Study of 2 Timothy
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Insight for Living Ministries
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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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