

THE LORD KNOWS THOSE WHO ARE HIS: A STUDY OF 2 TIMOTHY

Notes For Week One: We Know Whom We Have Believed (2 Timothy 1)

God, Jesus, and the gospel can offer us certainty and stability in an uncertain and unstable world. God knows those who are truly his, and he will always be ready to protect, teach, help, and guide the faithful. While little else in this world is reliable, God always is. In this epistle, Paul hopes to leave Timothy with this impression, and to encourage him to instill it in others.

The Spirit God Gave Us (2 Timothy 1:1-7)

As Paul writes again to Timothy, this time Paul has now been imprisoned for the final time, and he knows that he will probably live in this world only a little longer. This epistle, then, has a different focus than the first one had. Paul now concentrates on some especially important general principles for life and ministry in this temporary world.

Paul remembers warmly Timothy and of the sincere faith he has seen in him (1:1-5, see also Philippians 2:19-21). Paul's faith and his hope are in Jesus alone, and he sees this in Timothy too. The apostle is also most grateful for the fellowship he has with Timothy and other his faithful brothers and sisters in Jesus, for he knows that they too have made many sacrifices and have faced many trials.

Paul also remembers Timothy's faithful mother and grandmother, as he reminds Timothy what God has given him. In Jesus, Timothy has seen the fulfillment of what his grandmother waited in hope for. Like John, Paul is joyful and thankful as he thinks of each believer who is walking by faith and is walking in the truth (3 John 1:3-4).

Timothy has received a precious gift* from God, as indeed all of us have (1:6-7). So Paul encourages him to 'fan it into flame', to let God nurture his understanding and to strengthen his faith and trust. As we ourselves learn to appreciate the spiritual blessings God has given us, God hopes that we will also learn how to help others have them.

* The text doesn't specify exactly what this 'gift' is - most likely, it simply refers either to the Spirit or to salvation, or to faith, redemption, or some combination of all of these. In any case, the general meaning is much the same. It is also possible that Timothy received some specific gift.

So the apostle now helps us to understand some of the many blessings we have in Jesus and having his Spirit within us. As we face this world each day, God helps us not to be timid or frightened, for knowing Jesus offers each of us a chance to rise above his or her fleshly nature, and to live in ways that were not possible under our own strength.

The Spirit is a Spirit of power, so even the weakest among us has God's power working on our behalf. The Spirit is a Spirit of love, so even the broken-hearted or the hard-hearted can learn to love others through feeling the compassion of Christ. And the Spirit is a Spirit of self-discipline, so even the most disorganized person can be transformed by the self-control that comes from being led by the Spirit of God.

Many other scriptures also remind us of how God makes his strength perfect in our weaknesses,

how he deliberately works through those who know they are weak and confused, how God eagerly gives us strength and guidance when we trust in him and his ways, instead of relying on our own strength and understanding (Isaiah 40:28-31).

Questions For Discussion Or Further Study: What does Paul mean by a 'sincere faith'? Why does he find such joy in remembering Timothy and his family? What does this tell us about God? What does it mean to 'fan into flame' the gift of God within us? How does the Spirit give us power, love, and self-discipline? Explain what each of these means, and why God wants to give them to us.

Because Of God's Purpose & Grace (2 Timothy 1:8-12)

As Paul writes to Timothy for perhaps the final time, he reassures his friend of what God has done for all of us to save us. The apostle also discusses how God has helped him through them his own sufferings, and explains that his faith has not been diminished by them. Paul also reassures Timothy of the eternal blessings waiting for us in the next world.

Whatever may happen in this world, God has saved us, and he has called us to a new life (1:8-9). He has also called us to a holy life, a life of faith in Jesus instead of trusting in human strength and human talents, a life of hope in eternal things instead of in earthly possessions and accomplishments. Since becoming a follower of Jesus, Paul has faced many earthly troubles, and he knows that one time or another most of us will face some of these things.

Despite his sufferings, Paul is unashamed of believing and following Jesus, so he reminds us too to continue trusting in him, even when we must endure sorrows or fears (Romans 5:5). The truths of the gospel often contradict the conventional wisdom of the world. Likewise, Jesus promises us spiritual blessings far greater than anything this world can offer us, and he asks us to fix our eyes on unseen, eternal things.

It is indeed by God's unchanging purpose and his overflowing grace that he gives us these things, not because of anything we have done. This in itself reminds us to trust in him rather than in ourselves, to let his words renew our minds, and to let God guides us as he teaches us how to walk in step with his Spirit.

Jesus brings life and immortality to light, he has appeared to show us the Way, and he does much, much more for those who believe in him and follow him (1:10-12). So Paul helps us understand that our hope, our confidence, our peace, rest on whom we have believed, on Jesus himself, on his eagerness to redeem us and to be with us (John 11:25-26). Likewise, it is Jesus himself who makes Paul so willing to risk everything for the gospel.

The apostle simply understands that Jesus himself is our foundation, our truth, our life. Our confidence and our hope don't come from having perfect knowledge nor from living flawlessly, rather they come from knowing Jesus. For it is he who guards us all our days in this world, it is Jesus who poured out his blood to redeem us, it is Jesus who opened the way so that we may approach God to receive the grace and mercy we need.

Questions For Discussion Or Further Study: Why isn't Paul ashamed of his sufferings? What has helped him through them? What does a 'holy life' involve? What do we learn

about God's nature from verse 9, and why he saved us? In what sense has Jesus brought life and immortality to light? How has he destroyed death? What are the implications of hoping in 'whom we have believed'? How does Jesus guard us in this world?

Certainty Amidst Uncertainty (2 Timothy 1:13-18)

Paul is well aware of all the uncertainties of this world, so to reassure us he reminds us of the certainties that Jesus offers to his followers. As we face the world's confusion and uproars, the good news of Jesus and redemption never changes. Human weaknesses plague even the faithful, yet Jesus is a sure foundation for all of our times.

The apostle now reminds timothy, and us, to hold onto the sound teaching of Jesus and to the good 'deposit'* of the Spirit (1:13-14). Moreover, we are to do this with faith and love in Jesus, so that we will be aware of our need for God's guidance and grace, and so that we can be patient and compassionate to others.

* The New Testament uses this expression several times in referring to the Spirit. See below for the reference in Ephesians, and see also 2 Corinthians 1:22 and 5:5.

We couldn't do this by ourselves, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, and as we draw closer with God, he can help us to do this. For the Spirit indeed lives in each of us, a deposit guaranteeing us an eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). The Spirit also reminds us of God's nearness, as he also helps us understand what Jesus has done so that we could know him.

Paul has seen many examples of human weakness, and the contrast with God's faithfulness (1:15-18). Paul mentions the believers who pulled away from him when he was in trouble, not to condemn anyone nor to make anyone feel guilty, rather reminding us of how fragile human nature can be, and how easily we can be distracted or frightened.

On the other hand, when someone makes a special point of caring for someone, such as Onesiphorus's example of care for Paul, these are both a blessing and a reminder of God's compassion. Notice the apostle's appreciation for this act of kindness, and how he prays for God to bless Onesiphorus.

Unlike human nature, the purposes of God's heart stand forever (Psalm 33:11-18). He knows our hearts and he knows our thoughts and he know what we really need. The eyes of the Lord are on those who revere him and who put our hope in his unfailing love, as he gives us the nourishment our spirits need.

Questions For Discussion Or Further Study: What does 'sound teaching' involve? Why does the New Testament describe the Spirit as a deposit? In what way can we 'guard' this deposit? Why does Paul mention both those who left him as well as Onesiphorus's care for him? What do we learn in this chapter about God and about our walk of faith with him?

- Mark Garner, January 2019

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Notes For Week Two: God's Solid Foundation (2 Timothy 2)

As Paul writes this epistle, he is especially aware of the ways that his mortality might affect close friends such as Timothy. He impresses upon Timothy how faithful God always is to his own Word, his own nature, and his own promises. This in turn gives us the assurance that God will always be there for us, regardless of what happens in this world.

Reflect On This (2 Timothy 2:1-7)

Paul now uses a series of illustrations to help Timothy understand what it means to know God and to help others understand him better. These everyday examples encourage Timothy to rely on God's grace, to keep his mind and heart on what matters to God, and simply share God's truth and grace with those who are willing to listen.

There is nothing in this world to give us lasting spiritual strength, so the apostle reminds us to let God strengthen us by his grace (2:1-2). The more we understand the grace that is in Jesus, the more we learn about what it does for us, the more we realize how constant it is, the more it indeed strengthens our hearts (Hebrews 13:8-9).

The apostle also encourages Timothy to instill this same sense in others so that they too may reassure one another of the good news of Jesus. Paul realizes that Timothy will never know with certainty whether these others will faithfully communicate the truth in their turn, nor will he ever know exactly how long he himself will remain on this earth, so this is a reminder to be patient and thoughtful as we help one other to learn more about God and his words and his ways.

The apostle gives several examples (2:3-7). Each of them illustrates just one aspect of our relationship with God, so none of them should be considered as a model of everything involved in following Jesus. As a soldier must respect and carry out his commander's orders, we too must respect and honor what God tells us. As an athlete must train and learn the rules of the game, we too must faithfully study God's words. And, like a farmer, sometimes we must simply work hard.

Yet none of these is a complete description of following Jesus. Unlike a military officer, God wants us to understand him and love him, rather than mere outward obedience. Unlike an athlete, we're not competing against one another, instead we're all trying to help each other receive the same very great gift of being with God. And unlike a farmer, we live in hope that God will produce a crop of the fruit of the Spirit in each of us.

Thus Paul tells us to reflect on these things, to think about what each of these examples might teach us, and indeed to think about further aspects of our walk with God. One thing that they all say is how devotion in small things is of great value in God's eyes. God doesn't call us to do anything grandiose or spectacular, instead he asks us to walk with him each step. As he promises, when we ask God, he will give us insight.

Questions For Discussion Or Further Study: In what ways does the grace of Jesus strengthen us? Why does Paul ask Timothy to entrust his teachings to 'reliable people'? What does he mean by this? For each of the examples in verse 4-6, explain what they

teach us about knowing God. Think of further illustrations of other aspects of our walk with God. Why does the apostle ask us to reflect on them?

A Trustworthy Saying (2 Timothy 2:8-13)

As Paul faces the end of his time in this world, he reminds Timothy of Jesus and his resurrection. Despite his example of faith and devotion, the apostle was quite conscious of his own weaknesses and limitations as a mortal, fragile, fallible being. So he encourages his friend to remember the unchanging nature of God.

The gospel is the good news of Jesus, it is all about Jesus and about what he has done for all of us (2:8-10). As Paul expects to leave this earth soon, he encourages Timothy always to focus on Jesus, the Son of God who died for us, and the resurrected Savior. For his own part, Paul simply endures whatever he must endure and does whatever he can do. The message is not about us, rather about God's own love, righteousness, and grace.

The world has chained Paul and will soon do away with him, yet God's word is not chained by any earthly force. In Deuteronomy (see Deuteronomy 30:14 and Romans 10:8), God reminded the Israelites how he brought his words very near. And now in Jesus, he has made a New Covenant, and he writes his words on our hearts and on our minds (Jeremiah 31:33, see also Hebrews 10:15-16). Whenever someone seeks God, they will find him, for God and his words are near.

Moreover, in a different sense God's words cannot be chained by worldly wisdom nor by mockery nor even by persecution. Our salvation is in Jesus and in the message of him and him crucified and him resurrected. So, as Paul reassures his young friend, when the apostle has passed on, the good news will still be the same, and God's love and mercy and understanding and power will still be the same.

The apostle reassures us that, no matter what things may look like, God will remain faithful (2:11-13). These lines* echo this idea and succinctly describe some more of God's qualities. The apostle reassures us of God's promise, that if we died with Jesus; we will live with him (Romans 6:8-10). Since Jesus suffered a literal (and horrifying) physical death, we need only die in a figurative sense to be united with him. Yet he does call us to die to self, so that we may live truly with Jesus.

* These lines probably come from an early Christian hymn, and in turn they may have originally come from an early Christian poem. This is also the case with the last part of 1 Timothy 3:16.

Even faithful, devoted believers still make many mistakes. So the epistle helps us understand the difference between faithlessness and disowning God. For if we disown him in our hearts, then he too must regretfully disown us in return. Yet as long as we continue to acknowledge him in our hearts as our Lord and Savior, God remains faithful to his promises and to his own nature, even when we sin and make mistakes. Indeed, God knows our hearts, and he knows those who are is.

Questions For Discussion Or Further Study: In what ways is God's word not chained? Why does the apostle mention this, to Timothy and to us? Explain in your own words what it means to die with Jesus, and what it means to live with him. What is the

difference between 'disowning' God and being faithless? In what ways does God remain faithful, even when we are faithless? What do these verses tell us about God and his nature?

The Pursuit Of Godly Things (2 Timothy 2:14-26)

God never changes, but we must now live in a world where everything is uncertain. The world constantly shifts its demands, its favorites, its values, its habits, and its perspectives. This makes it difficult to resist such distractions, and even believers can easily become entangled in worldly thinking. So Paul advises us to set aside the world's ways, and instead to pursue godly things.

Paul refers to God's Word as the word of truth, and he reminds us to handle it accordingly (2:14-18). Likewise, God's words are meant to bring life and hope and grace, not condemnation, so he also calls us to handle them accordingly. Thus he reminds us to avoid quarrelling about words and chattering about meaningless things.

Besides teaching the truth, handling God's word also involves a complete change of perspective. The world enjoys winning arguments, but God rejoices when we study and teach his word with humility, patience, and respect. There is always a lot more to learn from the Scriptures, so we are not called to know all the answers; rather we are called to be students of God's Word who want to learn about God and who he is and how we can know him better and what matters most to him.

Despite all of the world's uproars and chaos and its instability, God's solid foundation still stands firm (2:19-21). Moreover, all understanding and strength come from God alone, and in him alone can we find lasting hope and meaning for our lives. And truly, as Paul reminds us, the Lord knows those who are his. God knows our hearts and he looks at our hearts instead of judging by outward appearances. He knows his sheep (John 10:14-15), and he knows those who humbly seek him.

The example of household objects and their different purposes reminds us that some human souls have devoted their hearts to God, while there are others whose hearts are set on worldly things. Moreover, this is not always evident from outward appearances; for someone who seems sad and struggling may be deeply devoted to God, while bearing burdens we don't know about. So we can be thankful that our cleansing and sanctification come from God, who knows everything about us.

As long as we are in this fallen world, we will be surrounded by sin and temptations; yet God doesn't ask us to examine our lives minutely, instead to call on the Lord out of a pure heart, to flee from sin and to embrace godliness (2:22-26). We are called to do this with reverence and love for God, and in awareness of our weaknesses and our need for God's guidance and grace. This also teaches us to show grace to others who struggle, for we know how much grace God gives us.

The One who calls us is faithful (1 Thessalonians 5:16-24). Praying often, reflecting on God's words, giving thanks to God, and learning to appreciate him, are all means of pursuing godliness and closeness with God. When we walk each step by faith in Jesus, God will indeed sanctify us through and through, and he will keep us close with him. He is faithful, and he will do it.

Questions For Discussion Or Further Study: Explain all that is involved in handling the Word of Truth appropriately. What does Paul mean by "God's solid foundation"? What are the implications that "The Lord knows those who are his"? What can we learn from the image of a house (in verses 20-21)? What qualities does God ask us to pursue (verse 22); what do they tell us about what it means to seek God?

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Notes For Week Three: Continue In What We Have Learned (2 Timothy 3)

Like Timothy, we live in a world full of confusion, distractions, disappointments, and problems. Yet we do not need to live in despair, for God reassures us that he is near, that Jesus understands what we go through, so he tells us to continue in what he has taught us. Moreover, the apostle reminds us of the sure foundation of Jesus and God's words and his promises.

Living In A Fallen World (2 Timothy 3:1-9)

Paul now talks about 'terrible times', yet they are not times with endless calamitous natural disasters and global military conflicts; rather they are simply full of everyday, commonplace sins. This also helps us understand what the 'last days' means, for in every era human nature and its flaws are the same. The apostle uses these expressions to help us understand our ongoing need for God's grace.

These times are terrible (or difficult, or perilous, or distressing*) simply because this is what sin looks like to God (3:1-5). Sin is terrible and perilous because of the ways it affects our relationship with God. Notice also the kinds of sins mentioned in these verses. Many of them are the kinds of sins that are routinely excused or even encouraged, or may even be considered strengths, by the worldly.

* As the original word is translated in the NIV, NASB, KJV, and NRSV. Other versions use similar words.

In turn, this helps us understand that the 'last days' simply means the present era, the time of the new covenant, when God speaks through his Son Jesus*, the days since Jesus has opened the door so that anyone, anywhere, may seek God through Jesus and may come to know him. The New Testament often refers to this era as the 'last' days because Jesus has now done everything necessary for everyone in the world to know God through him.

* See Hebrews 1:1-2. The phrase is also used in Acts 2:17, James 5:3, 1 Peter 1:20, 2 Peter 3:3, Jude 1:18.

Problems such as being self-centered, boastful, ungrateful, lacking self-control, and the rest of the things listed here, can be harder to see for what they are. Thus Paul says that it is possible to have "a form of godliness yet denying its power", for human nature often relies on outward appearances. As Jesus reminds us, true life and lasting meaning come from knowing him (John 5:37-40).

To caution us further, the apostle uses some vivid phrases; so he describes how human nature can become loaded down with sins (3:6-9). He also gives us the sad image of the worldly deceiving, tricking, and exploiting one another*. Instead, God appeals to us to learn what matters, rather than learning mere facts, so that we may come to a knowledge of the truth, and that we may let God fill us with fruits of the Spirit such as humility, compassion, and patience.

* Jannes and Jambres, who are mentioned as examples, are thought to be the names of some of the false 'magicians' who competed with Moses for influence with Pharaoh. Their names are not in Exodus; they are first mentioned in an ancient targum, a type of Jewish commentary.

Relying on our own strength and talent can produce only a temporary and unstable form of security. But nothing is hidden from God, so Paul reassures us that our hearts will be clear to God, and God will also make clear the foolishness of the world's ways (Matthew 12:2-3).

Questions For Discussion Or Further Study: What does the apostle mean by terrible (or difficult) times? Explain what each of the terms in verses 2-4 means, and what it means to have a form of godliness without its power. What can we do to let God help us avoid them? In what way will God make clear the 'folly' of those who practice them? What does all this tell us about God and his nature?

Salvation Through Faith In Jesus (2 Timothy 3:10-17)

In spite of these 'terrible times', God is with those who walk by faith in Jesus, and he will help us live godly lives. The truths of God's Word, the strength of God's love, and the depth of God's grace will not fail us; so he calls us to continue to rely on these instead of trusting in worldly forms of knowledge or strength.

For God will rescue us from these snares; as Jesus said, no one can snatch us out of his hand (3:10-13). As we live in faith, patience, love, and endurance, God keeps us close with him, and we may also be able to encourage others to do the same (Romans 12:12, 12:21). As other scriptures also tell us, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Jesus will sometimes face troubles and opposition and discouragement. Yet even as we do so, this will remind us what Jesus endured for us.

The apostle encourages Timothy not to be discouraged, but to continue in Jesus (3:14-17) hold closely to what we have learned from him. The truths of God's Word, the strength of God's love, and the depth of God's grace will not fail us, and indeed they can make us "wise for salvation" (Galatians 2:19-21), so that we no longer need to rely on worldly wisdom.

Here the apostle reminds us that all Scripture is God-breathed (3:16-17). They were breathed by God (inspired by God), they were not given impersonally, not meant for analyzing forensically, rather they are a personal communication from God to everyone who wants to know him. Thus God's words teach us to know him, and they equips us with truths and promises that will help us get through the world's troubles and sorrows with the assurance of God's compassion and presence.

In turn, this tells us more about the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus (Philippians 3:7-14). Paul came to realize how much better it is to have a righteousness that comes from God through following Jesus, compared with trying to attain righteousness with our own will power and effort. Likewise, God also wants us to know his Son and everything about him - to know Jesus' life, death, and resurrection - and to let them affect our hearts, our minds, and our lives.

Questions For Discussion Or Further Study: What does Paul mean that God rescued him from all his troubles? How does living by faith, patience, and compassion help us get through our own troubles? What does it mean to continue in what we have learned; what might this involve? Why does the apostle describe God's words as 'God-breathed'? What are the implications of this? What does this tell us about God and our walk with him?

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Notes For Week Four: In Season & Out Of Season (2 Timothy 4)

While one aspect or another of the gospel will sometimes find favor in the world's eyes, as a whole the good news of Jesus is in sharp contrast to the world's values, perspectives, and beliefs. If, then, we want to follow Jesus faithfully, we are called to be ready to live and teach the same truths whether they are popular or unpopular, whether they are welcomed or ignored.

In The Presence Of God & Of Jesus (2 Timothy 4:1-8)

As we read Paul's description of persons who resist listening to truths that they dislike, he also reminds us not to speak harshly, and instead to be prepared to speak the truth patiently, both in season and out of season. As the apostle also says, so many persons look for answers in the wrong places, yet Jesus has given us the answers for the deepest needs of our hearts and spirits and souls.

As Paul reminds Timothy of the presence of God and Jesus, he encourages him to be prepared to teach the Word of God, not to teach what others want to hear (4:1-5). He reminds us of God's nature and the message of Jesus, for truth is based on these unchanging things rather than on the whims and fads of this world. Earthly perspectives can never change the truths of God.

The apostle tells us to teach God's words with great patience and careful instruction. Although we will face many who "turn their ears away from the truth", when we remain in Jesus and continue walking in the truth, we will have a hope that transcends time, place, and circumstances (Ephesians 4:14-16). Thus God also calls us to 'keep our head', to keep a clear mind and be ready to persevere, so that we won't be ensnared by the world's distractions and false hopes.

Paul himself is writing in full knowledge that his own end is near, yet he also knows what is in store for him - and the same is in store for us too (4:6-8). He describes himself as being poured out like a 'libation' or drink offering (see also Philippians 2:17), since a drink offering was generally an accompaniment to the main sacrifice. As he says in Romans 12, Paul's life is a 'living sacrifice', an added drink offering when compared to the blood sacrifice, the sin offering, of Jesus himself.

And he is also sure of the eternal blessings that come with going home to see God, so he is at peace with an end to his life in this world. He is going home to receive the 'crown of righteousness', that is, the crown of life (James 1:12), the crown of being with God (Isaiah 28:5). The apostle has fulfilled what God called him to do, and it is time for him to leave the work on earth to Timothy and others. Our lives too are drink offerings, and the crown of eternal life with God awaits us too.

Questions For Discussion Or Further Study: Why does Paul mention the presence of God and Jesus? What does it mean to teach God's words 'in season and out of season'? How can we learn to do this? What is the 'crown' that God gives us? What does all this tell us about God and about our walk with him?

The Lord Stands At Our Side (2 Timothy 4:9-22)

God does not guarantee us lasting physical comfort and safety in this present world. But instead he offers us the much greater assurance of keeping our souls and spirits safe in his hands. Not only does he promise us eternal security and safety once we join him in his own home, but he also assures us that he can keep us faithful in this world as long as we desire to be one with him.

Paul now mentions just a few of the persons who have come into and out of his life since he came to know Jesus (4:9-15). He also wants his younger associate to be aware of some things he might himself encounter, and he also has some simple requests. He mentions a former believer, Demas, who has wandered away from Jesus because of his love for this world. The mention of Demas is especially sad because he had stayed close to Paul during his earlier imprisonment*.

* See Philemon 1:24 and Colossians 4:14.

He says this so that if Timothy must also face someone he cares about who drifts away, he will be ready to continue speaking the truth patiently and graciously. There is Alexander*, an example of the kind of malicious opponent of the good news of Jesus who will arise from time to time. This time, the apostle simply advises Timothy to be 'on his guard' in case he encounters such opposition, so again he will be patient and careful in the ways he handles it.

* It is uncertain whether this is one of the other Alexanders mentioned in the New Testament.

As he writes, Paul is nearly by himself, since God has sent some other believers such as Titus and Crescens, to places where they are needed. Instead of complaining, Paul is comforted by knowing that they are walking in the truth, and are teaching it to others. Yet, since only Luke is with him, he longs to have Timothy and Mark come. Since winter is on the way, he asks Timothy to retrieve his cloak, and he especially asks his friend to bring his books (scrolls).

The apostle now shares his perspective on his fate and on this world's troubles (4:16-22). From an earthly perspective, his trial and a probable death sentence would seem to be a complete defeat. Yet this is not at all the way that he looks at it. Even in an apparent defeat, he knows that God is by his side, and that Jesus overcame the world's emptiness and futility, and he overcame it for us. Jesus has won a victory for us that we never could have (1 John 5:4-5)

God gives us strength too, strength to endure the world's sorrows and fears (Isaiah 12:2). Because of God's grace and the strength God gave him, Paul proclaimed the good news of Jesus faithfully even with his life at stake (see also 2 Timothy 2:8-9). God has indeed rescued him from every evil attack on his soul, and our Father in heaven does the same for us as we walk by faith in Jesus.

The closing exchange of greetings reminds us that even as he will soon be in heaven with God, Paul cares for those he will leave behind. His thoughts go to Timothy, whom he hopes to see on earth once more. He thinks also of faithful, trustworthy servants such as Priscilla, Aquila, and others, knowing that he will see them in eternity.

Salvation belongs to our God and to the Lamb (Revelation 7:9-12), who redeems us from every nation and in every language and from every time and place. He gives us clean robes in place of our stained garments, and gives us the gift of eternal life with him. Truly God is worthy of praise and glory forever.

Questions For Discussion Or Further Study: What does Paul want us to learn from what he says about the different persons he mentions? What kind of strength does God give us, and how does it help us? Explain how the apostle has been 'rescued'. What can we

learn from this perspective? What does this tell us about God and his nature?

- *Mark Garner, February 2019*