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**THE PASTORAL EPISTLES:**  
**“A Good Soldier ...  
A Worker Approved”** (2 Timothy 2)

2018–19 LCMS Circuit Bible Studies

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**PARTICIPANT GUIDE**

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# THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

A STUDY FOR DISCOVERY, MEDITATION AND CASUISTRY OF THE BROTHERS.

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Every pastor strives to do as Paul exhorts Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

This series of studies has been designed to walk through the Pastoral Epistles in support of your striving toward these ends. Each study will work through these familiar texts with a search and discover mission through self-examination. To facilitate your searching and discovery in self-examination, each text will follow with a template of questions drawn and structured according to Luther’s “A Simple Way to Pray.”<sup>1</sup> “I divide each commandment into four parts, thereby fashioning a garland of four strands.”<sup>2</sup> These four strands are:

1. **Instruction** – What is God teaching me in these verses about the Pastoral Office and me as one called to this office? (e.g., “What have I learned ...”)
2. **Thanksgiving** - What is there in these words of God for which I get to give thanks to the Lord of the Church as I serve in the Office of the Ministry?
3. **Confession** - In light of what I have learned in these words of God, how have I fallen short in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?
4. **Prayer** - Are there things I need to change/improve in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?

Following the template of questions, there is an opportunity to turn what is discovered into prayer.

While this is a time of searching the Scriptures and reaffirming the Lord’s will for the Pastoral Office and those called to this Office, it is hoped that the questions will facilitate a time of casuistry among the brothers. Listening and learning according to Luther’s four strands will also hopefully foster a sharing of struggles and the mutual support and consolation of the brothers in light of God’s Word, of which we are servants and servers.

Sequence of this Series: This series begins with 2 Timothy. While this is the last of Paul’s letters, it is foundational in that it addresses the Pastoral Office more holistically, as well as the means God provides for it and the holder of that office. Second in the series will be Titus, which addresses many aspects of exercising the Pastoral Office in the context of the congregation. Lastly, the series will then look at 1 Timothy as it addresses exercising the Pastoral Office in the midst of a hostile culture and its influences on the congregation.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, eds. Gustav K. Wiencke and Helmut T. Lehmann, Vol. 43 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 193–211.  
<sup>2</sup> LW 43:200.

# INTRODUCTION: 2 Timothy from *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*

## Second Timothy Introduction

Paul writes from prison in Rome. He has been a prisoner for some time: Onesiphorus, a Christian of Ephesus, had already sought him out and visited him in Rome (2 Ti 1:16–17). There has already been one hearing, at which Paul was deserted by all men and yet, with the Lord's help, so successfully defended himself that he “was rescued from the lion's mouth” (2 Tim 4:16–17). But Paul has no hope of ultimate acquittal; he is at the end of his course. And he is virtually alone; only Luke is with him. He longs to see “his beloved child” Timothy once more and bids him come to Rome before the winter makes travel by sea impossible (2 Ti 1:4; 4:9, 21). But he must reckon with the possibility that Timothy may not reach Rome in time; and so he must put in writing all that he hopes to tell Timothy in person if and when he arrives. The letter is thus, as Bengel has put it, Paul's “last will and testament” in which he bids Timothy preserve the apostolic Gospel pure and unchanged, guard it against the increasingly vicious attacks of false teachers, train men to transmit it faithfully, and be ready to take his own share of suffering in the propagation and defense of it. The most personal of the Pastoral Letters is therefore in a sense “official” too; for Paul cannot separate his person from his office. The man who has been “set apart for the gospel of God” (Ro 1:1) remains one with that Gospel in life and in death. Date of writing: A. D. 65–67.<sup>3</sup>

## God's Grace in 2 Timothy

God's grace is the central message in all of Paul's letters — down to his last letter, 2 Timothy, composed while he

was chained in prison at Rome, knowing that the end was near. As his last will and testament, Paul again encourages Timothy to proclaim the message of God's grace, emphasizing its basic truths. This grace was given us “in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (1:9–10). “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel” (2:8), that “the elect ... may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory” (2:10), and so “we will also live with him ... we will also reign with him” (2:11–12) and will receive “the crown of righteousness” (4:8).

What an inheritance for Paul to leave to his spiritual son Timothy — the Gospel of God's grace — and for us to leave to our children!

## Luther on 2 Timothy

This epistle is a farewell letter, in which St. Paul exhorts Timothy to go on propagating the gospel, even as he has begun. This is quite necessary, since there are many who fall away; and false spirits and teachers keep springing up all around. Therefore, it is incumbent upon a bishop always to be alert and to work at the gospel.

But he prophesies especially ... concerning the perilous time at the end of the world. It is then that a false spiritual life will lead all the world astray, with an outward show, under which every sort of wickedness and wrong will have its fling. Sad to say! we now see this prophecy of St. Paul all too amply fulfilled in our clergy.<sup>4</sup>

## READ: 2 Timothy 2:1–26 (ESV)

**Commentary Excerpts:** 2 Timothy 2 from *Reformation Heritage Bible Commentary: Timothy / Titus / Philemon*<sup>5</sup>

**2:2 faithful men:** These refer to those men who meet the qualifications for the pastoral office that Paul set down in his first letter (3:1–7). In light of Paul's experience with the unfaithfulness of many in the face of persecution, he stresses the quality of faithfulness in those Timothy will prepare and likely appoint to be pastors.

**2:3 suffering as a good soldier:** Paul introduced the imagery of waging spiritual warfare in his first letter (1 Tm 1:18). Here, he uses the analogy of an obedient soldier to further enlighten Timothy, and every pastor, to the potential consequences to one enlisted by God to fight the good fight of faith (4:7). The quality of “good” is determined by the pastor's willingness to share in the suffering that may come from faithfully fulfilling the charge and responsibilities of the pastoral office.

<sup>3</sup> Walter R. Roehrs and Martin H. Franzmann, *Concordia Self-Study Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 2:224.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 35, *Word and Sacrament I*, eds. E. Theodore Bachmann and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 389.

<sup>5</sup> Mark W. Love, *Reformation Heritage Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 99–112.

The “good” pastor is the one who seeks no conflict in speaking and administering the Word of God for the sake of his hearers. At the same time, he does not shrink away from speaking and administering that Word, even if it may cause conflict or offense. It is spoken only and always for the sake of the hearers, whether they like that Word or not.

**2:4 civilian pursuits:** While Paul may have 1Co 7:26–34 in mind, he stresses the necessity of freedom from earthly agendas and occupations by which Timothy may have had to support himself prior to his enlistment in the Office of the Public Ministry. Paul seeks to have Timothy, and every other pastor, understand that he is to give himself wholly over to the work and will of God for him according to this office. This is a warning against any potential distractions of focus and conflicts between fulfilling their pastoral charge and earthly agendas. If pastors are drawn away from what they have been enlisted to do, they are less useful to those they serve and to the One who enlisted them. In emphasizing this, let it be understood that by these words Paul is not sanctioning the neglect of wife and family for the sake of the ministry. God created the office of husband and father before Christ instituted the Office of the Public Ministry. Paul’s emphasis upon the importance of marital state on the part of any pastor or deacon makes this point most clear (1Tm 3:2, 12; Ti 1:6).

**2:4 One who enlisted him:** When Christ enlisted the apostles, He did this immediately by personally calling each of them. When it comes to the Office of the Public Ministry, Christ enlists men by calling them through His Church. Whether a man was enlisted by the appointment of an apostle or his representatives (Ti 1:5) or by the local congregations, each man serves at the pleasure of Christ for the sake of His Body — the Church (cf. 1:1).

**2:6 first share:** While this verse sounds rather proverbial with regard to hard work, it is a statement of fact in the matter of farming. By way of this third analogy, Paul uses the farmer and the harvest to illustrate not what ought to be, but what has to be in regard to the spiritual welfare of Timothy and every pastor. The farmer, no matter how hard he works, has to take the first share of the crop that’s harvested if he is to survive. Notice it is the “first” share, not the largest. If he had said the “largest share,” then the issue would be about how hard the pastor had worked. What Paul is telling Timothy and his fellow pastors is that when they are laboring to raise the harvest of spiritual food with which to feed those they serve, pastors must feed and nourish themselves

with this same food. Any pastor who fails to preach and apply the Word of God to himself in all its fullness will be spiritually malnourished, become weak of faith, and ultimately, will poorly feed those he is called to serve.

**2:14 them:** These are the faithful men who are able to teach others (cf. v. 2). Those called into the pastoral office and thereby entrusted with the Gospel ministry.

**2:14 not to quarrel about words:** Understanding and teaching the meaning of certain words can be necessary for the sake of proper hearing and understanding of the faith of the hearers. The kind of quarrels Paul wants pastors to avoid are those that are begun by individuals seeking to use such quarrels to display how intelligent they are and to establish themselves as authoritative teachers. Their purpose is to glorify themselves, and is not for the sake of the hearers. They do not aid those who hear them in their life of faith. It’s like wrestling in the mud with a pig. The problem is that, while the pig enjoys it, you get muddy. The proper understanding of words in the Scriptures cannot be drawn purely from their origins or merely from a dictionary meaning. The understanding must be informed from how the word is used elsewhere in Scripture. When its use is limited in the Scriptures, keys to rightly understanding that word can be found in how it was used in the common language and discourse of the time, as found in other documents.

**2:14 ruins the hearers:** Such quarreling creates confusion and subverts the simple truths of God’s Word. Uncertainty about the truths of God’s Word serves only to cause doubt and disunity among the hearers. When we do not know the truth in such matters, there is a tendency to attach ourselves to personalities involved. As such, the source of faith is shifted from the Word of God to some person, and faith is quickly ruined. Paul’s words here testify to the fact that such unprofitable quarreling does not take place privately, but publicly, as the self-appointed teacher seeks to establish himself among the hearers. Such quarrels are completely contrary to the responsibility of every pastor and church member to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3) that Christ Himself has established among the saints.

**2:15 present yourself:** In contrast to the quarrelers who seek after the approval of the people to advance themselves and their agenda, Paul reminds Timothy that he, and every pastor, is to examine himself and his ministry according to what God approves. All pastors are to preach, teach, admonish, exhort, and administer the Sacraments in such a way that what they say and

do, and how they say and do it, has the approval of God. How would Timothy or any other pastor do this? By letting their words and practice of the Gospel ministry flow from what God has said and from what Christ has done and commanded. This may not make Timothy or any pastor popular with the people, but it will be the words and practice that God approves of and blesses.

**2:15 approved:** Timothy's young age led many to question both what he preached and his authority to do so. Paul is telling Timothy to preach, teach, and do all things as one whom God Himself has called into the pastoral ministry. In the face of opposition, Timothy, like many pastors, was tempted to doubt whether he still had God's approval as a pastor. Paul is telling him to jettison such doubt and get on with fulfilling his vocation of rightly handling the word of truth in love for the sake of the Church he served.

**2.15 rightly handling the word of truth.** This describes the skillful application of God's Word, in which no provision is made to spare anyone or anything from it. How many people approach and handle the Word of God in such a way that they selectively apply it, so as to spare this person or that, even themselves and their own pet sins. It has to be handled for the salvific sake of the hearer. Can it be said mercifully? Yes, but it cannot be held back from the faithful and full application of it, lest the hearers obtain a false security in their sins. Bengel noted that a similar expression occurs in the Greek translation of Pr 3:6; 11:5: "Timothy may prepare a right course (may make ready a straight way) for the word of truth, and may himself walk straight forward according to this line, turning neither to the right nor to the left hand" (301). Melancthon showed how this verse applies to the teaching of Law and Gospel, saying:

"We tell godly minds to consider the promises, and we teach about free forgiveness of sins and about reconciliation, which happens through faith in Christ. Afterward, we add also the teaching of the Law. It is necessary to distinguish these things aright, as Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:15. We must see what Scripture says about the Law and what it says about the promises. For it praises works in such a way that it does not remove the free promise." (Ap V 67)

**2:19 seal:** Based on what is inscribed on the seal, it is a guarantee of permanency on God's firm foundation that makes alteration of any kind impossible.

**2:19 The Lord knows ... His:** This is a quote from Nu 16:5 in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament). The verb "knows" is not a progressive knowing, but a knowing all at once — prior to time — a knowing in eternity. This is what gives the seal its permanency. This particular quote is a reference to the elect, according to the foreknowledge of God (1Pt 1:2). Wesley described those who are the Lord's as "sealed with a seal, which has an inscription on each side," which are the two sayings cited in v. 19. In other words, the one side of the seal describes election, the other side the holy life of those who profess the faith (552).

**2:19 Let everyone ... iniquity:** As this is an inscription on the permanent seal, this is not something the elect, those whom God has known from eternity, are to do, but it is what they have already done in Christ. According to their regeneration (Ti 3:5), they confess to this command: "I have been made to stand away from sin."

**2:22 flee:** Literally, "keep on fleeing." The simplest understanding of this word is the activity of moving quickly away from something. By this, Paul is telling Timothy that when it comes to the youthful passions, he is not to tolerate them, but move away from them and toward the Word.

**2:22 youthful passions:** By this, Paul is not referring so much to sexual passions, but to the emotional escalation and rashness that less mature individuals are given to in disagreements or debates. When in the midst of such situations, Timothy, and every pastor, is to pursue the gifts of faith in Christ that serve to resolve conflicts and win hearts in debates.

**2:23 controversies:** Literally, "questionings." Paul tells Timothy to avoid the uninformed questions raised by those who lack even a basic understanding of the Christian faith. Those who raise such questions are not seeking any real kind of answer, but rather the opportunity to elevate themselves. They would bring their questions to Timothy seeking his support, and by it, validation of themselves as teachers and authorities.

**2:24 servant:** The Greek term is *doulos*. Paul uses this term to identify Timothy, himself (Rm 1:1), and every pastor as those who have been purchased by the blood of Christ (1Pt 1:18–19) and owe Him every allegiance and obedience.



## CITATIONS: 2 Timothy 2 in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*<sup>6</sup>

### 2 Timothy 2:13:

37. *What are some of God's attributes?*

C. God is faithful (keeping His promises).

88 2 Timothy 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful — for He cannot deny Himself.<sup>7</sup>

### 2 Timothy 2:15:

10. *What are the two great doctrines of the Bible?*

Law and Gospel are the two great doctrines of the Bible. We must sharply distinguish between the Law and the Gospel in order to understand the Bible rightly.

33 2 Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.<sup>8</sup>

### 2 Timothy 2:19

209. *When my sins condemn me and I am doubting, how can I be sure of my forgiveness and salvation?*

I cannot and should not rely on myself in any way — my thoughts, feelings, words, or deeds. ... “This teaching [election of grace] gives no one a cause either for despair or for a shameless, loose life. By this teaching, people are taught that they must seek eternal election *in Christ and His Holy Gospel*, as in the Book of Life. This excludes no penitent sinner, but beckons and calls all

poor, heavy-laden and troubled sinners to repentance and the knowledge of their sins. It calls them to faith *in Christ* and promises the Holy Spirit for purification and renewal. It gives the most enduring consolation to all troubled, afflicted people, so that they know their salvation is not placed in their own hands. ... But salvation is in God's gracious election, which He has revealed to us *in Christ*, out of whose hand no person shall snatch us (John 10:28; 2 Timothy 2:19)” (FC SD XI 89–90 [emphasis added]; see also FC SD XI 43–49).<sup>9</sup>

### 2 Timothy 2:23–25

254. *How should we deal with those who dishonor God's name?*

A. We should gently admonish those who unknowingly misuse God's name in speech or in teaching.

845 Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

846 2 Timothy 2:23–25 Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.<sup>10</sup>

## FOR REFLECTION & MEDITATION

### What is God teaching?

1. What is God teaching me in these verses about the Pastoral Office, and about me as one called to this office?

- a. About Himself – Father/Son/Holy Spirit?
  - › About His work?
  - › About His promises/gifts?

b. About me/others?

- › What have I been given?
- › What I am suppose to do/not do?
- › How am I to do what is given me to do?

c. About faith/belief/unbelief/doubt?

- › What is it that I am given to trust in about myself?
- › What is it that I am given to trust in as I serve in the Pastoral Office?

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> Luther, *Small Catechism*, 63.

<sup>8</sup> Luther, *Small Catechism*, 49.

<sup>9</sup> Luther, *Small Catechism*, 210–13.

<sup>10</sup> Luther, *Small Catechism*, 244–45.

- d. About the Pastoral Office?
- e. About the congregation I serve?
- f. About engaging the communities (civil/cultures) in which I serve?

#### Praying God's Word

*Lord of the Church, grant that I may be mindful of ...*

### Thanksgiving

- 2. What has the Lord told me for which I can give thanks to the Lord of the Church as I serve in the Office of the Ministry?

#### Praying God's Word

*Lord of the Church, I thank you for ...*

### Reflection and Repentance

- 3. In light of what I have learned, how have I fallen short in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?
  - a. Is there something God would have me to do that I have failed to do?
  - b. Is there something God would not have me do that I have done anyway?

#### Praying God's Word

*Lord of the Church, I confess to You that ...*

### Petitions in Prayer

- 4. In all that I have learned, what needs to change/improve in fulfilling my responsibilities in the Pastoral Office?
  - a. What and/or How ...
    - › I have been thinking, saying or doing that I need to change/improve?
    - › I have been thinking, saying or doing that I am able to rejoice in doing well?

#### Praying God's Word

*Lord of the Church, grant the work of Your Holy Spirit that I may ...*

*“This the Spirit will grant us and continually instruct us in when, by God’s word, our hearts have been cleared and freed of outside thoughts and concerns.”<sup>11</sup> May it ever be so Lord! Amen.*

<sup>11</sup> LW 43:209.