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*An Outlined Interpretation  
of II Timothy*

THE INTRODUCTION, 1:1-5

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications, night and day longing to see thee, remembering thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and, I am persuaded, in thee also.

THE INTRODUCTION to II Timothy is characteristically Pauline. It opens with the usual Pauline salutation with its distinctively Christian form and connotations (vv. 1, 2). This is followed, in accordance with Paul's practice, by a statement of his gratitude to God for the

reader, a statement full of deep emotional overtones (vv. 3-5).

1. *The Salutation*, vv. 1, 2

The salutation is very similar to that in I Timothy, yet there are interesting differences in the details. Each of the three members in this salutation receives some expansion, half of the brief salutation being devoted to the writer. As in I Timothy, the writer and reader are named once each, God the Father is mentioned twice, while the name of Christ Jesus is mentioned three times. How Paul loved and gloried in that adorable name! The very thought of Him runs through all of his thinking and writing. He cannot move, think, or live without Him. Truly for Paul "to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

a. The writer, v. 1. In accordance with the accepted practice of that day, Paul begins with his own name. We moderns sign our name at the end of our letters, while the writer of a letter in that day, with greater logic, placed his name at the beginning of his letter. And the very sight of that name at the head of this communication to him must have thrilled the soul of Timothy. How eagerly he would peruse any word from his beloved friend and teacher!

The writer describes himself as "an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God." At first sight it may seem rather strange that Paul in this personal communication to his beloved son Timothy should thus insist upon his apostleship. The stress upon it is not due to any need for its defense. Rather, everything that Paul writes to Timothy is in the interest of that apostleship. It is in his office as a God-commissioned apostle that he writes this letter to his son who will soon have the responsibility to carry on alone the cause of the Lord. His apostolic authority enforces all that he has to say to Timothy. "Inti-

macy was never meant to enfeeble that divinely given place and authority" (Kelly).

His official position is that of "an apostle." The term "apostle," coming from the Greek verb *apostellō*, means "one who is sent forth or dispatched on a mission" and carries the thought of official and authoritative sending with the necessary equipment for the commission received. In the New Testament the term is sometimes used in a broad sense to designate an official messenger or representative (cf. II Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). Here, however, Paul uses the term in its usual narrow sense as one called to the apostolic office, like the Twelve, and invested with its authority. The added genitive "of Christ Jesus" defines whose apostle he is. He belongs to Christ, has been commissioned and sent by Him, and acts as His authorized representative.

The Greek manuscripts vary in the order of the compound name. The order "Christ Jesus," followed in the American Standard Version, has much stronger support than the reverse order in the King James Version. Both orders are common to Paul, but the order "Christ Jesus," while not prominent in his earlier epistles, gradually takes over until in the Pastoral Epistles it is the prevailing order used.<sup>1</sup>

The average English reader uses either order merely to designate the Person to whom reference is being made without a clear sense of any difference in meaning. But to Paul and his Greek readers each order had a significance over and above that of a mere identification of the Person. In either case the first member of the compound name indicated whether the theological or the historical idea was uppermost in the writer's mind.

<sup>1</sup> In the Greek text of E. Nestle "Christ Jesus" occurs twenty-five times while "Jesus Christ" occurs six times in the Pastoral Epistles.

The word "Christ" is a transliteration of the Greek word *christos* and is the equivalent of the Hebrew word translated "Messiah," both meaning "the anointed one." On the opening pages of the Gospels "the Christ" is not a personal name but an official designation for the expected Messiah (cf. Matt. 2:4; Luke 3:15). As by faith the human Jesus was recognized and accepted as the personal Messiah, the article was dropped and the designation came to be used as a personal name. The name "Christ" speaks of His Messianic dignity and emphasizes that He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises concerning the coming Messiah. The name "Jesus," the other member of the compound designation, comes from the Greek *Iēsous*, the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua," which means "Jehovah saves." It was the name given Him by the angel before He was born (Luke 1:31; Matt. 1:21). It is His human name and speaks of the fact of His Incarnation, His taking upon Himself human form to become our Saviour.

The order "Jesus Christ" places the emphasis on the historical appearing of the man Jesus who by faith was recognized and acknowledged as the Messiah. It proclaims the fact that "Jesus is the Christ." It speaks of Him who came in human form, became obedient unto death, and was afterward exalted and glorified. This order is always followed in the epistles of Peter, John, James, and Jude.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this is because in the experience of these writers the human life of Jesus came first in their experiences with our Lord.

The order "Christ Jesus" points to the theological fact that the One who was with the Father in eternal glory became incarnate in human form. This order is peculiar to Paul. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Paul's first per-

<sup>2</sup> The critical texts omit the name "Jesus" in I Peter 5:10, 14.

sonal encounter with Him was as the Christ in Glory. Thus Erdman remarks:

While the other apostles had known their Master first as a man and later as a Messiah, it may be that for this reason they called him Jesus Christ, while Paul, whose first vision was of the glorified Lord, always thought of him as the divine Christ who had borne the human name of Jesus, and whom Paul loved and adored as Christ Jesus.

By calling himself "an apostle of Christ Jesus" Paul stresses the fact that the Person who had called and commissioned him to be His messenger was the Christ of glory who had been ordained and anointed by God in His Incarnation to procure the salvation of His people.

Paul accounts for his apostleship by indicating that he is such "through the will of God." He was an apostle because God in His sovereignty had willed it. He was not an apostle by personal choice; it was a divine entrustment. His apostleship was not of human origin, nor of human ordination, but came to him directly from Christ (Gal. 1:1). In I Timothy 1:1 he mentions that his apostleship was "according to the commandment of God" and as such had to be obeyed. In four other epistles, as here, he relates his apostleship to the will of God (I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1). It was the consciousness that the divine will had chosen him as an apostle, although he neither sought nor merited it, that held him firm throughout all the years of his strenuous and eventful life. It was this conviction that kept him calm in the face of impending martyrdom. As a prisoner, lonely and largely forsaken, he could fall back upon the consciousness that "he is an apostle, not by his own appointment, but by the will of God. In the hour of our extremity, when earthly friends and securities fail, there is but one secur-

ity, the rock on which we stand, *the will of God*, and the assurance that we are standing upon it" (Horton).

Paul further characterizes his office as being "according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus." The significance of this phrase has been differently interpreted. It is generally held that the words are to be referred back to the word "apostle," rather than taken with what immediately precedes. This is the view adopted in the King James as well as in the American Standard Version, as shown by the use of a comma after the word "God." This interprets the expression as denoting "the object or intention of his appointment as apostle, which was to make known, to publish abroad, the promise of eternal life" (Spence). But we feel that it is far simpler to take the phrase in close connection with the whole of what precedes. The preposition (*kata*) retains its ordinary sense of "according to, in conformity or harmony with." His apostleship by the will of God was in perfect harmony with "the promise of life," that is, the promise which had life as its contents. "Had there been no such promise there could have been no divinely willed apostle to proclaim the promise" (Hendriksen). The words thus express not the object and intention of the apostleship but rather its character as being in harmony with God's promise of life. The apostleship of Paul certainly did further the proclamation of the promise of eternal life, but the thought here is that his apostleship was in harmony with that promise.

The promised life is described as that "which is in Christ Jesus." It is not simply life but that God-promised life "in union with Christ Jesus." It is "life in the higher sense, comprehensive of all the blessings and glory, both in this world and the next, which flow from an interest in the redemption of Christ" (Fairbairn). And it is only in

union with Christ that this life is available to man. "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (I John 5:12). How appropriate that Paul in facing imminent martyrdom should cling to this life in Christ which no temporal death is able to harm!

b. The reader, v. 2a. The letter is addressed "to Timothy, my beloved child." In the salutation of I Timothy Paul addresses him as "my true [genuine] child in faith" (1:2), thus clearly implying that Timothy was Paul's own convert. He was not a spurious son but a genuine child. Paul's use of the word "child" (*teknon*) is full of fatherly tenderness, a fact which the rendering "son" in the King James Version does not convey. He is further designated as "my *beloved* child." (The "my" is implied but not expressed in the Greek.) The adjective "beloved" indicates intelligent and purposeful love for Timothy on the part of his spiritual father. "The whole letter throbs with the love of a father for a beloved child" (Lenski). Since Paul is quite aware that this letter may in reality be his farewell to his devoted young friend, his fatherly heart goes out to him in tender love and solicitude.

It is highly arbitrary for Alford to hold that Paul's use of the term "beloved," instead of "true" as in the first epistle, expresses "more of mere love, and less of confidence, than in the former." That Timothy does not now deserve the former epithet of confidence is discredited by Paul's reference to the "unfeigned faith" of Timothy (v.5). The term of affection is appropriate here since this letter is written under the shadow of the impending crisis of Paul's martyrdom. As Van Oosterzee remarks: "It was not so much in the mind of the Apostle to bear honorable witness to Timothy, as to express the inwardness of the relation in which both stood to each other."

c. The greeting, v. 2b. "Grace, mercy, peace, from



God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." This greeting is identical to that found in I Timothy. Both are unusual in that "mercy" is inserted between the familiar "grace and peace." Such a threefold invocation of blessing upon the reader occurs elsewhere in the epistles only in II John 3, written years later.<sup>3</sup> A second-century forger of these epistles would not have dared to make such a striking departure from the usual practice of Paul in the very opening of his composition. But it is very natural that the keen solicitude and loving concern of the apostle for his timid and troubled young friend should lead him to insert this added prayer for mercy upon Timothy. It adds that tender personal touch that Timothy needed.

This beautiful triple invocation invokes upon Timothy all the blessings which are offered to us now through the Gospel of Christ. "Grace" is the undeserved favor of God toward the guilty sinner, flowing out in divine goodness and removing the guilt of his past sins and relieving him of deserved punishment. "Mercy" is the self-moved, spontaneous loving-kindness of God which causes Him to deal in compassion and tender affection with the miserable and distressed, freeing the sinner from the resultant misery of his sins. "Peace" is the state of salvation and spiritual well-being which results from the experience of God's grace and mercy. It is the outcome of the restoration of harmony between the soul and God upon the basis of the atoning work of Christ.

Paul thinks of this triad of blessings as coming "from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." Both are involved in the bestowal of these gifts. They come from Him who, as the author of our salvation, holds the relation of Father to all believers because of their union by

<sup>3</sup> The word "mercy" is rightly omitted in Titus 1:4 as lacking sufficient manuscript authority.

faith with His Son. They also come from the Son who through His redemptive work made possible the bestowal of grace, mercy, and peace. Having been redeemed by Him, believers accept His authority over their lives and acknowledge Him as "Lord." Paul uses the appropriate pronoun "our" to indicate that he and Timothy alike accept Christ Jesus as Lord.

The union of the two Persons under the government of the one preposition "from" is strong circumstantial evidence concerning Paul's faith in the true deity of Christ Jesus. It would have been unthinkable for Paul, with his strong monotheistic background, thus to have associated the name of Jesus with that of God if he did not believe in His deity.

It is interesting to notice the resemblances as well as the differences in the salutations of the two letters addressed to Timothy. These will be readily apparent when we place them in parallel columns and italicize the words that differ.

I Timothy 1:1,2

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus *according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope*; unto Timothy, my *true child in faith*: Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

II Timothy 1:1,2

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus *through the will of God, according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus*, to Timothy, my *beloved child*: Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Such a comparison leads Williams aptly to remark:

There are two conclusions lying right on the surface: **The** second Letter is not a copy of the first, nor is either a copy of a common source. Again, the thought is so nearly the same that the Pauline authorship could **not** be asserted for one and denied for the other.