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# THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

**NEW TESTAMENT**

**BOOK 55**

**2 TIMOTHY**



**St. Paul before the Proconsul by Raphael**

## SUMMARY

By the time Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, the young pastor had been ministering to the church at Ephesus for four years, and it had been almost that long since he had received his first letter from Paul.

Timothy had been a faithful servant to Paul since he had left home with the apostle more than a decade earlier. Since then, Timothy had ministered alongside Paul for the duration of both the second and third missionary journeys, in places such as Troas, Philippi, and Corinth.

Timothy was not unfamiliar to the Ephesians when he settled in Ephesus to minister, having served there alongside Paul for a period of close to three years on Paul's third missionary journey. Paul wrote again to this young leader in the church at Ephesus to provide him encouragement and fortitude in the face of difficulties and trials.

Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a dark and damp Roman prison cell, just before his death in AD 67. The Roman emperor Nero had been slowly descending into madness since his ascent to the throne in AD 54, a process exacerbated by the great fire of Rome in AD 64 that burned half the city.

With the residents of Rome in an uproar, Christians became a convenient target for Nero, who used believers as scapegoats for his city's own lack of preparedness. Paul was one of those caught up in this persecution and was beheaded by Roman officials soon after writing this letter.

The second letter to Timothy offers a picture of Paul at the end of his ministry, just before his death. Certain personal details in the letter reveal a man settling his accounts and preparing for the inevitable.

At the close of the letter, Paul mentioned a significant number of people—some who had wronged him and others who had served faithfully alongside him.

It is as if Paul were giving Timothy a state of the church address, updating Timothy on the current state of their acquaintances and friends so that the young pastor could carry on after Paul's departure.

Paul understood that the ministry would only become more difficult for Timothy with the apostle's impending death. (Indeed, at some point after this letter from Paul, Timothy was imprisoned for his faith).

Paul knew that Timothy's task of keeping the church within the bounds of sound doctrine while encouraging believers to live their lives well for the sake of Christ would be an often thankless and difficult task.

Though hardship would come, Paul wanted Timothy to continue in those things he had learned, drawing on the rich heritage of faith that had been passed down to the young pastor, not just from Paul but also from his mother and grandmother.

The most striking feature of Paul's encouragement comes when the aging apostle used a phrase that showed up prominently in his letter to Timothy four years prior. In that earlier letter, Paul exhorted Timothy to fight the good fight.

## SUMMARY Continued

But in this letter, Paul turned that phrase on himself, writing that he had fought the good fight, finished the course [and] kept the faith. What a great encouragement it must have been to the young pastor of the church at Ephesus to know that his mentor boldly modeled his perseverance in the faith, even to the point of death.

Second Timothy brings us to the brink of death, forcing us to consider its reality and how we might react when faced with it. Paul's response instructs us still today. His mind was not on himself, dwelling on the injustice that had befallen him.

Instead, trusting that God had him right where He wanted him, the aging apostle turned his attention to others, specifically to the church and to his young protégé, Timothy.

## NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 1:7** For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.
- 1:9** who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,
- 1:10** but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,
- 1:14** That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.
- 2:16** But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.
- 2:22** Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
- 2:23** But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.
- 2:24** And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,
- 2:25** in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,
- 2:26** and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.
- 3:1** But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:
- 3:2** For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,
- 3:3** unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,
- 3:4** traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,
- 3:5** having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!
- 3:6** For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts,
- 3:7** always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

## NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued

- 3:16** All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
- 3:17** that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- 4:14** Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works.
- 4:22** The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

## CHARACTER Definitions

**NERO** - Born Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus in December of AD 37, Nero became the fifth emperor of Rome. Nero, along with Rome's first four emperors—Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius—made up what is called the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

Nero was adopted by his great uncle Claudius to become his successor, and upon Claudius's death in AD 54 Nero became the youngest emperor at age 16. His reign lasted nearly fourteen years, until AD 68 when he committed suicide at the age of 30.

Nero took the throne approximately two decades after Christ was crucified. Although still in its infancy, Christianity was spreading rapidly during this time. In fact, approximately fourteen of the New Testament's twenty-seven books were written in whole or in part during Nero's emperorship.

Also during Nero's reign the apostle Paul was confined to house arrest in Rome (AD 60—63), where he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Nero was the Caesar to whom Paul appealed for justice during his trial in Caesarea.

The early years of Nero's rule were marked by an enhancement of the cultural life of the Roman Empire. Thanks to the guidance of his advisors, namely the Praetorian Prefect Burrus and the famous Roman philosopher Seneca, Rome maintained a stable government during his early years.

Nero loved the arts and was an accomplished singer and musician. He also enjoyed athletic competitions and took part in many chariot races, even winning a race in the Olympic Games at Greece.

Nero's legacy, however, is not a pleasant one. Although his regime began with mildness and idealism, it ended with cruelty and tyranny. He began murdering anyone who became an obstacle to him; his victims include his own wife and mother as well as his step-brother Britannicus—Emperor Claudius's biological son.

In July of 64, the Great Fire of Rome broke out and lasted for six days. Of Rome's fourteen districts, only three escaped damage from the fire. Some historians believe Nero may have been responsible for the fire, although his involvement is not clear.

What is clear is that Nero deflected the focus from himself by blaming the fire on the Christians, many of whom he tortured and killed. The historian Tacitus describes these atrocities:

## CHARACTERS Continued

Covered with the skins of beasts, [Christians] were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as nightly illumination when daylight had expired.

Nero's use of Christians as human torches to light his evening garden parties is well documented. Ultimately, it is the brutality inflicted on the early Christians for which Nero is best remembered.

The end of Nero's reign was filled with strife. Tension among Roman leaders ultimately became so great that the Praetorian Guard transferred their loyalty from Nero to Galba, leading the Senate to declare Nero a public enemy.

Nero was forced to flee Rome, and he later took his own life. Having no heir to succeed him, Nero was the last of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

Nero's death was followed by a brief period of civil war, which was then followed by the rise and fall of four emperors in a single year, a chaotic period of Roman history known as The Year of the Four Emperors.

**ONESIPHORUS** - The name Onesiphorus may not have caught on like other Bible names such as Matthew, Mark, and Mary, but that's not because of any negative connotation the name carries.

More likely, it's the five-syllable pronunciation or the problems the spelling would cause. Onesiphorus the man was a personal friend of Paul's and a great blessing to him. Onesiphorus lived up to his name, which means bringing profit.

Onesiphorus is only mentioned twice in the Bible, both times in the Epistle of 2 Timothy. Early in the Epistle, Paul writes a prayer of blessing upon Onesiphorus: May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

At the end of the letter, Paul sends greetings to the household of Onesiphorus. These two passages convey all we know about Onesiphorus's background: (1) he was from Ephesus, where Paul had founded a church; (2) his whole family were believers; and (3) in Ephesus, he had helped Paul in many ways.

Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a Roman prison cell. It was a difficult time for the apostle, made more difficult by trusted friends who abandoned him in his hour of need. You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

In stark contrast to these deserters was Onesiphorus, who stayed with Paul through thick and thin. In fact, Onesiphorus went out of his way to track Paul down and visit him in prison.



## CHARACTERS Continued

In doing so, Onesiphorus showed great personal courage—it was dangerous to be called a Christian in Rome in those days—and compassion for the apostle.

Probably, Onesiphorus considered that he owed Paul a great debt. The church in Ephesus was a product of Paul's third missionary journey. If not for Paul's faithfulness in preaching the Word of God, Onesiphorus would not have heard the gospel.

In gratitude to the one who first told him of Christ, Onesiphorus determined to be a blessing to Paul. He often refreshed the imprisoned missionary and never balked at being known as an inmate's friend.

Any physical or emotional blessing Onesiphorus could impart would still fall far short of the spiritual blessings he had received through the apostle. Because of the mercy Onesiphorus showed, Paul prays for mercy to be shown to him.

Paul's prayer was no doubt grounded in Jesus' promise in Matthew 5:7, Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

## BIBLE TIMELINE

67 AD

Paul Writes Again to Timothy

2 Timothy 1 - 4

## MAP REFERENCES

