

TTS Scripture S4 – 2 Tim 1:9-10

This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. [2 Tim 1:9-10]

[1] Introduction

DISCUSS: What can we remember about the letters to Timothy?

READ: 2 Timothy 1

I'll be focusing this afternoon on one question: **What does it mean for Christ to have "abolished death"?**

- FIRST: because this will hopefully prove helpful as an exercise in good exegesis.
- SECOND: because there'll hopefully be something genuinely helpful *and* beautiful in the answer.

DISCUSS: how many ways could 'abolishing death' be read?

1. Death no longer exists – realised eschatology.
 - a. **LOOK:** 1 Cor 7:25-31
 - i. *"There are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom"* [Matt 16:28]
2. Death as vanquished spiritual power – *Christus Victor*.
 - a. **LOOK:** Col 2:13-15 + Eph 6:12
 - i. *"He himself shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death"* [Heb 2:14]
3. Death & Resurrection of Christ – Paul's poetical flourish.
 - a. In the style of Rom 16:20...
4. All that PLUS death is somehow different now – because of what Christ did.

So how do we go about handling a tricky text like this?

[2] Handling the Text Well

We ask a number of questions.

[2A] Does this passage connect to a wider theme or concern?

- This is a good general test that can sometimes explain a text immediately.
 - For example – **LOOK:** John 6:53
 - Tricky text, but does it connect?
 - **LOOK:** John 6:35
 - The alternative is jumping everywhere and anywhere.
 - BUT God revealed a library, not a monograph.
- **DISCUSS:** So does 2 Tim 1:9-10 connect to a wider theme / concern that we're aware of?
 - Grace given to us in Christ before the ages began, but now revealed through his “appearing” –
 - **LOOK:** 1 Tim 6:14 / 2 Tim 4:1 / 2 Tim 4:8
 - Suggests Paul hasn't an overly realised eschatology.
 - Re: Gal 4, fullness of time, etc.
 - Remember the reason for Paul's writing.
 - 1 Tim 2 etc – persecution is in the background.
- **DISCUSS:** what does this suggest so far? Our first glimpse.
 - There's a big picture here – Christ's appearing.
 - But Paul isn't just being poetic – he's meaning to be pastorally helpful.

[2B] Do the translations vary significantly?

- What about those translations in this room?
 - “Abolished death” – NRSV, RSV, KJV, NKJV, ESV, NASB, AMP, WEB, GB
 - “Destroyed death” – NIV, NCV
 - “Broke the power of death” – NLT
 - “Ended the power of death” – GNT
- **DISCUSS:** What does this suggest?
 - The Greek is pretty uniform.

[2C] What about the Greek itself then?

- **DISCUSS:** How can we find out about this?
 - Lexicons, commentaries, interlinear, websites, etc.
- **DISCUSS:** How should we use these tools? What are we looking for?
- **Green Thumbs:** Round [1] In the letter/s?
 - **θάνατος** (thanna-toss / death);
 - Only use in 1+2 Tim.
 - **ζωή** (zoh-ay / life);
 - Twice used in 2 Tim 1 (v1).
 - **καταργέω** (kat-ar-gay-oh / to abolish);
 - Only use in 1+2.
- **Green Thumbs:** Round [2] – In Paul?
 - **LOOK:** Rom 3:3 – to nullify.
 - **LOOK:** 1 Cor 13:11 – to put away.
 - **LOOK:** 1 Cor 15:26 – to destroy.
 - **This gives us the ‘semantic range’ – the reasonable ‘frequency’ we need to tune to.**
 - **DISCUSS:** What does this suggest Paul’s trying to describe in 2 Tim 1:10?
 - Again, big picture with pastoral life.

[2D] What about *Tota Scriptura*?

- *Scriptura sui ipsius interpres:*
 - Scripture clarifying itself!
- **DISCUSS:** Does Scripture teach us that Christians still die?
 - **LOOK:** 1 Cor 11:29-30 + 1 Thess 4:16.
 - Reasonably inferred even from 2 Tim itself, re: persecution.
 - Thus no realised eschatology.
- **LOOK:** 1 Cor 15:50-57
 - **Death hollowed out and made to serve Christ, ultimately to be destroyed.**
- **LOOK:** Heb 2:14-15
 - **Death as Satan’s spoil, now vanquished by Christ, through whom we might be liberated from the fear of death.**
- Here we understand 2 Tim 1:10 – big picture but pastoral.

This gives us a sense of Paul's throwaway comment.

Christ as Conquering Ruler – the potentate of life. His first fiat – to 'abolish' death – to vanquish it, to hollow it out, to make it his servant, to promise its end, to rescue us from Satan's lordship over it, and to free us from its grip.

The pieces have fallen into place – big picture with pastoral realness.

To illustrate this:

Luther

Piper

"Although Christians are not absolved from physical death, their approach to it means its virtual abolition since it is no longer to be feared (Heb 2:14-15) and has lost its sting (1 Cor 15:55)" – Donald Guthrie