

2 Timothy 4:9-18

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Paul tends to some personal matters. He urges Timothy to try as hard as he can to see him before he is executed. Most of his other ministry partners are away from him, except Luke. Paul warns Timothy against certain people, like Alexander the coppersmith. He explains how no one supported him at his first defense, but that he does not want God to hold it against these people. He was able to preach the gospel regardless, and eagerly looks forward to joining Jesus in His kingdom after death.

Paul now exhorts Timothy to *Make every effort to come to me soon*. Paul is about to depart this life. He has written this letter, perhaps in case he is not able to see Timothy in person before he departs this life. But he desires Timothy's company in his last days. Paul notes that *Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica*. *Demas* is noted as sending his greetings to the church at Colossae, along with Luke (Colossians 4:14).

Demas is also called a fellow worker, along with Mark, Aristarchus, and Luke in Paul's letter to Philemon (1:24). But now, Paul states that *Demas* has left him, having *loved this present world*. By this, Paul might mean that *Demas* is running away from dying the death of a martyr. It seems Paul is encouraging all to embrace living as a faithful witness ("martyreo") and not fear rejection, loss, or death. This is, in Paul's view, a sad miscalculation.

Paul states that *Crescens has gone to Galatia*. *Crescens* does not appear elsewhere in scripture. Paul does not state that either he or *Titus*, who has gone to *Dalmatia*, have done so because of love of the present world. They might have just had ministry responsibilities. *Titus* appears nine times in Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth. Paul tasked him with the responsibility to collect an offering promised by the church there to aid the suffering church in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:3; 2 Corinthians 8:6). He appears to have been among Paul's most trusted ministry partners, and had been with Paul for the approximate decade of ministry from the time of his missionary journeys until now.

Paul states that he only has one companion remaining to comfort him while in his Roman prison cell. *Only Luke is with me*. *Luke* is Paul's faithful ministry partner. He wrote the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. From context, it appears that *Luke's* primary reason for writing these gospels was to authenticate Paul's ministry, validate his apostolic authority, and help Paul in his ferocious fight against competing Jewish "authorities" who opposed Paul's gospel of grace. *Luke* joined Paul on his second missionary journey (see Acts 16:10, where *Luke* begins to use "we" in his narration). *Luke* remained faithful from that time until the decade or so of Paul's death.

Paul asks Timothy to *Pick up Mark and bring him with you* when he comes to visit him in Rome. Although Paul believes he will die, he apparently believes he has some time before his death. *Mark* is likely the same *Mark* who Paul did not want to take with him on his second missionary journey, a dispute that caused him to split with Barnabas. Paul did not want to take *Mark* because he had deserted them (Acts 15:38). Barnabas wanted to give *Mark* another chance. It is clear that

Barnabas' ministry was successful, because now Paul says of Mark *for he is useful to me for service*. Barnabas was an agent to bring Paul to Antioch, to minister to the Gentiles there (Acts 11:25-26). It was from Antioch that Paul's missionary journeys began. Barnabas also was an agent to redeem Mark.

Paul is alone with Luke in Rome in part because he has dispatched others to minister elsewhere. He says *But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus*. This might mean that Paul intends for *Tychicus* to take Timothy's place in *Ephesus* for a time. Perhaps *Tychicus* was sent with this letter, and was to take Timothy's place so he could come pay a last visit to Paul. *Tychicus* appears in five verses in the New Testament.

Tychicus accompanied Paul on a portion of his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4). In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul calls *Tychicus* "the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:21). Paul tells the believers in Ephesus that *Tychicus* "will make everything known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts." Paul also mentions sending *Tychicus* to Colossae and Crete (Colossians 4:7; Titus 3:12). *Tychicus* was apparently a faithful diplomat for Paul, who had served him faithfully for what might have been a decade or so between Paul's third missionary journey and his final death.

The mention of these faithful ministry partners makes it clear that Paul had a robust circle of faithful co-laborers in the gospel. His particular attention to the ministry of Timothy seems to point to his gift of teaching and preaching, and Paul's focus on him preaching and teaching the word of God faithfully.

Paul makes a practical request of Timothy. He says *When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments*. It is not clear why Paul desired this particular *cloak*, which he left at Troas with Carpus. It seems Luke would have been able to provide him with a *cloak*. Perhaps he has in mind this *cloak* as something special he intends to wear to his death. This is the only mention of *Carpus*. There might have been many other faithful ministry partners who were never mentioned.

Paul has admonished Timothy to study the word of God, to know it and teach it truly. And Paul himself is studying right up to the end of his life. He asks Timothy to bring *the books, especially the parchments*. These might be some letters he was working on, to leave behind for the church. Or it might have been some scriptures he was studying. Paul never stopped learning.

Paul mentions to Timothy that *Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds*. Paul makes it clear that *the Lord* is the judge of men. Paul rejects bitterness, and has turned over *Alexander the coppersmith* to God's judgement, asking Jesus to make things right. As Paul has made clear in this letter, we should all focus our efforts in this life on the judgement we will face in the next.

Alexander the coppersmith injured Paul in some manner, but Paul does not dwell on that. Paul mentions him here to warn Timothy not to trust him, saying *Be on guard against him yourself*,

for he vigorously opposed our teaching. This warning is consistent with Paul's admonition to Timothy to preach the word of God faithfully, "in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Paul also provides an example of how to deal with those who injure us, or oppose our ministry. We should be shrewd in contesting them, and keeping them from misleading others. But our opposition is not personal. Paul has turned over judgement of *Alexander the coppersmith* to God. When we allow ourselves to become bitter, we come under the control of that person, and do ourselves further harm. Paul makes clear he is not allowing bitterness to creep in, and has turned over judgement to God, the righteous judge. Paul does however pray for the Lord to judge *Alexander the coppersmith*. It is up to God, but Paul makes known his desire.

This request of Paul for God to execute justice upon those who harmed him is echoed by a fascinating scene from heaven. In Revelation, a group of martyrs for Christ cry out with a "loud voice" and ask "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood?" (Revelation 6:10). This is fascinating for a number of reasons. For one, these martyrs are in heaven, and are aware both of time, as well as of things transpiring upon the earth. But even more fascinating is that they are in heaven, and are eager to see God's justice avenge their deaths.

We can derive from these verses that it is a good thing to desire, to advocate for, and to seek justice, but we are not to take justice into our own hands. It is worth noting that God delegated to humans the moral authority to make judgement to bring righteousness to earth through the agency of human government (Romans 13:1-7).

Paul now makes the opposite petition to the Lord on behalf of others. He says *At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.* Paul does not specify which event he has in mind when he speaks of his *first defense*, where *no one supported me, but all deserted me*. But he does ask God to not count this abandonment against the deserters at the judgement. Perhaps Paul judged that they were ignorant at the time. Jesus said something similar from the cross, when He prayed "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Earlier in 2 Timothy, Paul prayed that God would "grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains" (2 Timothy 1:16). We have then, in this letter, Paul praying for God to reward, to overlook, and to avenge relative to things done for or to him by others. This again emphasizes the extent to which Paul had oriented his entire life to live in a manner as to gain the greatest reward at the judgement seat of Christ.

Even though at Paul's *first defense no one supported* him, Paul says *the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.* Perhaps Paul believed that the abandonment of others, perhaps out of ignorance, was part of God's plan to provide a witness of God's faithfulness, and provide strength and courage to others. He might have viewed it as a necessity for Paul to first make a testimony, so they could learn what courage in the faith looked like, and follow Paul's example.

Paul's reference to having been *rescued out of the lion's mouth* is a reference to the Old Testament story of Daniel being rescued out of the lion's den (Daniel 6). Paul states confidently that *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed*. Just as Paul was *rescued out of the lion's mouth* at his *first defense*, when he stood alone, the Lord will rescue him now. But in this case, Paul says that his rescue will be a spiritual rescue, because the Lord *will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever*. The main *safety* Paul relies upon is the *safety* of knowing that Jesus will *bring him safely to His heavenly kingdom* when he dies. Paul was constantly in physical danger, throughout his years of ministry (2 Corinthians 11:23-29). But all the while, Paul was safe, because he always knew that Jesus would usher him into *His heavenly kingdom* if he died.

Paul ends this phrase about the Lord bringing him *safely to His heavenly kingdom* with the simple statement *Amen*. In our modern era, we tend to think of "amen" as "the prayer is ended." *Amen* translates the Greek word "amen," so is a transliteration. It means "so be it" or "it is surely true." By adding "amen" to his comment about going to Jesus's *heavenly kingdom*, Paul is likely saying "It is true, and I look forward to it."

Biblical Text

⁹ Make every effort to come to me soon; ¹⁰ for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. ¹² But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. ¹⁵ Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.

¹⁶ At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.