

# Friends and Fellow Workers

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## Text:

II Timothy 4:6-22

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

9 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: 10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. 12 And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. 13 The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring *with thee*, and the books, *but* especially the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: 15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge. 17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

19 Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. 21 Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. 22 The Lord Jesus Christ *be* with thy spirit. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

## Introduction:

We are back to where we began. We started our study of this last letter of the Apostle Paul at the end instead of the beginning. We read the very same passage that we have read today. We began here because the entire letter must be understood in light of the situation of its author when he wrote it. In that first study we emphasized Paul's circumstances and his confidence in those circumstances. We are almost finished but before we conclude there are a couple of things in these final four paragraphs of the book that are instructive.

First, you undoubtedly noticed as we read through the passage that it contains a lot of names. Most of them are names of friends and co-workers of Paul. They come in two groups. First in verses 9-15 he is imploring Timothy to come to see him as quickly as possible. Here he mentions eight people, most of them fellow-workers. The reason they are mentioned is that they all have some bearing on the need for Timothy to come and preparations he must make or precautions he must take for the journey. The last paragraph then contains names of People that Paul wants Timothy to greet in Ephesus or as he sees them on his way to Rome and people in Rome that send greetings to him. It is on the names in verses 9-15 that I want us to concentrate. Four of them I will mention only briefly. Crescens, and Titus have been dispatched to other regions of the empire to carry on the work of the gospel. Paul may be in prison, but the mission continues and will continue when he is no longer there. Tychicus has gone to Ephesus to bring this very letter to Timothy and is possibly going to remain in Ephesus to replace Timothy during his absence.

It is possible that Paul on his way to visit Ephesus had been arrested by the Roman authorities in Troas. Having to leave quickly, he had entrusted his belongings that he could not take with him, a heavy winter cloak and his books and parchments with a believer named Carpus. Since Timothy will be going through Troas on his way to Rome, Paul wants him to recover them and bring them to him.

His words in v. 13: “The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring *with thee*, and the books, *but* especially the parchments.” are poignantly echoed in a letter written by William Tyndale from his jail cell in Vilvorde Castle 1500 years later. Among other things he says: “Send me for Jesus’ sake, a warmer cap, something to patch my leggings, a woolen shirt and *above all my Hebrew Bible.*”

It is to the four remaining men in the passage that I especially want to draw your attention. Each of the four has something to teach us; two negatively and two positively. Two are examples to be avoided, two examples to be followed. I am going to take them, not in the order they appear in the text, but in ascending order from worst to best. They are:

- Alexander the Coppersmith, The Treacherous Friend
- Demas, the Fickle Friend
- Mark, the Restored Friend
- Luke, the Ever Faithful Friend

## **I. Alexander the Coppersmith, the Treacherous Friend**

In verses 14-15 we read: “Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.” This is the only certain mention of this individual in Paul’s letters. Alexander was a common Greek name. There is one other mention of an Alexander in I Timothy that could well be the same person. If this were the case he would be from Ephesus. In I Timothy 1: 18-20 Paul writes: “This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” If it is the same Alexander, then he would have been someone who had for a time been a part of the church of Ephesus that

Paul had put out of the church. It would not be hard to imagine such a person seeking a chance to take revenge.

It should also be pointed out that the words that Paul uses in speaking of the evil that Alexander had done him could imply giving evidence against him or bringing accusation against him. It is possible that Alexander was either the one who had turned Paul in to be arrested, or who had testified against him at his preliminary hearing. In any case he had acted treacherously towards Paul.

What we especially learn from this passage is how to deal with such a person. Paul gives us two important reactions to a person who betrays us. First he says: "The Lord will reward him". Interestingly enough this is the same word Paul uses earlier in the passage when speaking of himself and the crown that he is soon to receive says: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give (reward to) me at that day." Paul is saying: "I will have my reward and he will have his." By doing this he is refusing to take vengeance himself. He is abiding by the biblical teaching and his own teaching in Romans 12:19 "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

While he does not seek vengeance, and he does not ask Timothy to seek vengeance for him, he does warn Timothy to be careful of Alexander. This is the second thing we must do in respect to such people. We leave their judgment up to God, but we also keep our eye on them. They are not to be trusted.

## **II. Demas, the Fickle Friend**

Demas is mentioned three times in Paul's letters, here and in the closing words of Colossians and Philemon, letters that were written and sent together during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. In Philemon Paul calls him a fellow-worker. This means that he had been a committed member of the missionary team. Like Timothy, Titus, Crescens, Tychicus, Luke and others he had been taught and disciplined by Paul. He had travelled and worked with Paul. He had been fully

engaged in the work of the Gospel, but in verse 10 Paul says of him “Demas had forsaken me having loved the present world and has returned to Thessalonica.”

Demas is the fickle friend, the one who when things became difficult went home. The reason for his desertion, Paul says, is that he loved the present world. This stands in contrast to what Paul had just stated in verse 8: “henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” To “love his appearing” is to love the world to come. It is to know that here I am only a foreigner and a pilgrim my true citizenship is in heaven. Demas forgot that and loving the comforts and pleasure of the present world turned his back on his friend and colleague in his hour of need and went home.

### **III. Mark, the Restored Friend**

Demas is not the only one who left Paul and went home. Many years earlier during Paul’s first missionary journey Mark or John Mark as he is called in Acts had found the going too tough and had left Paul and Barnabas and gone home to Antioch. His actions had not pleased Paul and at the beginning of the second journey when Barnabas who was John Mark’s uncle had wanted to again take him along, Paul had refused. The controversy was so great among them that they parted ways. Barnabas took Timothy and went to Cyprus, and Paul took Silas and returned to Asia and then went on to Greece.

How long the feud lasted we don’t know. What we do know is that by the time of the first Roman imprisonment Mark is again among Paul’s fellow-workers. He is mentioned as such in the same two passages we alluded to earlier in Colossians and Philemon regarding Demas. Presently Paul wants Timothy to bring Mark with him when he comes. The reason being he says is that “he is profitable to me for the ministry.” What he means by this is that he is a useful person to have around. He can be counted on to do about anything that needs to be done. When Mark quit and went home he was still a young man, but he learned from his experience and grew up to be a skilled and useful servant of Christ. Paul bore no grudge. He

did not hold Mark's earlier failure against him. His own experience had taught him the power of grace and openness to the work that God can do in the life of an individual.

#### **IV. Luke, the Ever Faithful Friend**

Although Luke wrote two major books of the New Testament, The Gospel of Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles, we know very little about him. Paul mentions him on two other occasions in his letters. They are the same passages where he mentions Demas and Mark in Colossians 4 and Philemon 1:24. In Colossians he calls him the beloved physician and in Philemon he calls him a fellow-worker. We do know that he first joined Paul's mission in Acts 16 shortly after Timothy and as Paul was leaving Asia to sail to Macedonia and to the city of Philippi after having received the vision of the man from Macedonia. We know this because it is at this point that he begins to say "we" instead of "they". It is most likely for reasons of modesty that he never mentions himself in the book of Acts, but we know each time that he is traveling with Paul because the narrative shifts from "they" to "we".

We know that he accompanied Paul on his way to Rome for his first imprisonment, and we know that he is with him now at the end of his life. Luke would have been especially dear to Paul at this time for his medical skill and for his skill as a writer. It was most likely Luke who penned the words of II Timothy as Paul dictated them.

Luke, like Timothy, was an ever faithful friend and fellow worker in the Gospel, the one who stood with him when all others deserted him. If you have a Luke in your life, consider yourself blessed.