

The Love of God or the Love of the World

A Lesson on Perseverance and Preservation

2 Timothy 4:5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

⁹ **Do your best to come to me soon.**

¹⁰ For **Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me** and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

¹¹ Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.

¹² Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.

¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.

¹⁴ **Alexander the coppermith did me great harm**; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.

¹⁵ Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.

¹⁶ At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but **all deserted me**. May it not be charged against them!

¹⁷ But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So **I was rescued from the lion's mouth**.

¹⁸ **The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom**. To him be the glory forever and ever.

Amen.

¹⁹ Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

²⁰ Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.

²¹ **Do your best to come before winter.** Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers.

²² The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Tim. 4:5-22).

Traditors and Apostates

In the early fourth century, **Donatus of Casae Nigrae** (part of today's north-eastern Algeria) was charged and found guilty of re-baptizing clergy. Why would he do such a thing? Enter the ruthless **Emperor Diocletian** who so insisted on the return of the worship of the Olympian gods that those who were responsible for silencing them must be hunted down and murdered. Thus, in a series of edicts known as **The Great Persecution**, the early church faced its most dangerous and deadly threat.

It was in the face of this threat, especially in Africa, that many Christian clergy got cold feet. They did not think they could make it through the persecution and so they began, one by one, to give into it. One of the worst stories has to do with **Mensurius**, Bishop of Carthage and those who served alongside of him. From them, the word *traditor* has

become infamous in books on Church history. A *traditor* is literally “one who handed over.” In this case, they would hand over to the authorities the sacred vessels, the Sacred Scriptures, and even the names of their own brothers in order to avoid the worst forms of persecution.

We know many of the specifics of how those books were stolen, as there were official minutes of an investigation that were taken and are still preserved. The bishop and clergy were all but ready to give everything they had, but they drew the line at betraying their brothers, although that really wasn't all that remarkable, since when they were asked to give names they replied, “You already know their names and addresses.” As the authorities came to the property, they found the bishop, four priests, three deacons, and four subdeacons who all said the Scriptures were not here (in the main building). However, they then gave a detailed inventory of all the church's possessions, handing over many golden chalices, silver bowls and lamps, men's and women's cloths, boots, and smocks. Then, one of the subdeacons produced a thick book. Other houses were visited, and more books were handed over. Then more. And still more.

Those already in prison in Carthage, of whom [49 would eventually be martyred](#) accused Mensurius of being a traitor, because he willingly handed over the sacred Scriptures. For his part, was adamant that he *hid* the Scriptures in his own house, substituting *heretical* writings, which the authorities ignorantly took without question. The imprisoned Christians also called out one of his deacons, [Caecilian](#), saying he was more furiously enraged against them than the persecutors themselves—sending armed men to prevent them receiving relief, throwing their food to the dogs, spilling their drink on the streets, so that the martyrs would die in prison of hunger and thirst.¹

How should those willing to die for their faith think about such cowardly and faithless actions? We return now to Donatus, a bishop who created such a schism in the church that it lasted over three centuries and got no one less than Augustine himself involved. Donatus and many others viewed these actions as nothing short of [apostacy](#). Philip Schaff, the great church historian of the 19th century, while not calling them apostates, nevertheless said that these

¹ See the wiki on Mensurius and the Catholic Encyclopedia on Donatism.

traitors belonged in the same class as those “who preferred the earthly life to the heavenly.”²

Donatus insisted that *traditores* could not be reinstated (which was happening on a regular basis once the persecutions finally came to an end with the Edict of Milan), unless they were re-baptized and re-ordained. All rituals performed by them were also invalid. Therefore, anyone who had been baptized, ordained, or consecrated by them should not be recognized by the church. As you can imagine, this created a huge uproar that was heard from one end of the Empire to the other. Eventually, Donatus lost the battle and was himself viewed as a schismatic. But this story goes to show in a very relatable way just how hard the choices can be in this life to make it all the way to the end as a faithful follower of Christ.

2 Timothy 4:9-22—Context and Structure

Today we come to the end of 2 Timothy. The end of the letter corresponds to an appropriate spiritual counterpart—*the end of our Christian lives*. It does it in ways already

² Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 69.

discussed and in some that are new. This doesn't happen in every NT letter. But it does happen here, and there are several related points both to the here and the hereafter that are brought up for us to consider. But first, let's get some **context**.

First, let's recall that the letter itself is structured to **fall back in on itself**. As such, it begins with a **salutation** and ends with a **benediction**. It then immediately talks about Paul's great longing to see Timothy. This now is how the letter is going to end, on this same theme.

1a) 2 Tim 1:1-2, Salutation + grace, mercy, peace in Jesus Christ our Lord;

1b) 2 Tim 1:3-4, Paul greatly desiring to see Timothy;

1c) 2 Tim 1:5-2:26, Stir up/ hold fast what you received/ heard + exhortation to **faithful ministry**;

1d) 2 Tim 3:1-13, **Evil men and imposters** in the last days:

1e) 2 Tim 3:14-16, Continue in **Scriptures** known from childhood, profitable to **reprove, correct, instruct**;

central axis) 2 Tim 3:17, That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work;

2e) 2 Tim 4:1-2, Preach the **Scriptures** in + out of season, by them **convince, rebuke, exhort**;

2d) 2 Tim 4:3-4, **Ungodly and deceived hearers** in the last days;

2c) 2 Tim 4:5-8, Watch/ **fulfill your ministry** + Paul's ministry completed in faithfulness;

2b) 2 Tim 4:9-21, Paul's longing to see Timothy;

2a) 2 Tim 4:21b-22, Benediction + Lord Jesus Christ/ grace be with you. Amen.³

³ **Christine Smith**, "Book of 2 Timothy Chiastic Structure," *A Little Perspective* (Nov 6, 2013), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/book-of-2-timothy-chiastic-structure/>. Jeon had his own chiasm for the letter which had a slightly different focus for this section. In my mind, having gone through the letter, I think Smith is closer to the point, so I'll show her's here.

It is clear that vv. 9-22 are their own independent unit, again forming a chiasm. Different people see different centers, each of which can be seen as important on their own merits. One is forgiveness in the face of abandonment, something the Donatists didn't seem to want to listen to. A second is God's rescuing Paul both temporally and in the life to come. A third is the contrast between those who deserted Paul vs. God who refused to do that, but instead strengthened him in the midst of it.

- 1a) 2 Tim 4:9, Be diligent to come to me quickly;
- 1b) 2 Tim 4:10-13, Instructions + news of fellow ministers;
- 1c) 2 Tim 4:14, Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him;
- 1d) 2 Tim 4:15, Beware him also for he has greatly resisted our words;
- 1e) 2 Tim 4:16a, At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me;
central axis) 2 Tim 4:16b, May it not be charged against them;
- 2e) 2 Tim 4:17, But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me;
- 2d) 2 Tim 4:17b, So that the message might be preached fully + that all the Gentiles might hear;
- 2c) 2 Tim 4:17c-18, I was delivered from the lion + the Lord will deliver me from every evil;
- 2b) 2 Tim 4:19-20, Instructions + news of fellow ministers;
- 2a) 2 Tim 4:21a, Try to come before winter;⁴

⁹ Do your best to come to me soon. ¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Luke alone is

⁴ Smith, *ibid.*

with me. Get **Mark** and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. ¹² **Tychicus** I have sent to Ephesus.

A. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that **I left** with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.

B. ¹⁴ **Alexander the coppersmith** did me great harm;

C. **the Lord** will repay him according to **his deeds**. ¹⁵ Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. ¹⁶ At my first defense **no one came to stand by me, but all deserted** me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷ But **the Lord stood by me** and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

E'. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

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D'. **The Lord** from every **evil deed** and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

C'. ¹⁹ Greet **Prisca** and **Aquila**, and the household of **Onesiphorus**. ²⁰ **Erastus** remained at Corinth,

B'. and **I left Trophimus**, who was ill, at Miletus.

A'. ²¹ **Do your best to come before winter**. **Eubulus** sends greetings to you, as do **Pudens** and **Linus** and **Claudia** and all the brothers.⁵

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B. ¹⁰ For **Demas**, in love with this present world, **has deserted me** and gone to Thessalonica. **Crescens** has gone to Galatia, **Titus** to Dalmatia. ¹¹ **Luke** alone is with me. Get **Mark** and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. ¹² **Tychicus** I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that **I left** with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.

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⁵ An extrapolation from **Paul Jeon**. *2 Timothy: Fight the Good Fight, Finish the Race, Keep the Faith* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020), 161-62. Jeon almost always sees only an ABBA, but based on his highlighted words, this is how I've presented it.

⁶ *Biblical Chiasm Exchange*, 2 Timothy 9-21.

Because the idea of **suffering for the faith** is embedded in this passage, but also comes from **vv. 5-8**, I think we need to talk about them as we look at the end of this letter. To look only at 9-22 without these previous four verses would be to miss something very important about persevering in the faith.

Also, when we look at **vv. 9-22**, we find a lot of **names**. This is reminiscent of the end of several of Paul's letters, like Romans 16, which is entirely a list of names. However, this letter ends differently in that the focus of these names are those who have helped or harmed Paul in ministry. As such, they teach us something about how individuals and churches should **think about doing missionary work**.

Come to Me Soon (9, 21)

We'll begin in **vs. 9**. Paul exhorts Timothy, who is in Ephesus, "**Do your best to come to me soon.**" Paul is in Rome in captivity under his second house arrest and Timothy is in Ephesus, over 800 miles away as the crow flies. To get to Rome, it would have been a long voyage by boat through islands and open water through the northern

Mediterranean Sea. But Paul needs Timothy and asks him to come to him.

Vs. 21 shows you the parallel and the great urgency Paul senses. “Do your best to come before winter.” Why? First, because travel by sea in winter was extremely hazardous. If he waits, he won’t be able to make it for many extra months. Second, as we will begin to see, Paul needs certain things and he does not have much time left to work.

Now, this verse continues by naming four people: Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, and Claudia. All four are mentioned only here in the New Testament. Given that Rome has so many names and that Paul is in Rome, it is strange that none of these people are found in that other list. This has been used as evidence to some that Paul is not actually in Rome at all, but rather in a place like Caesarea.⁷ But there is no reason to assume that these were all members of the church at Rome. It is more likely that they were fellow travelling and missionary companions with Paul, an idea I’ll return to later.

We know nothing about Eubulus other than his name. It means *Good counselor; well advised; prudent*.⁸ Many have speculated on who Pudens is. Some have said he may be

⁷ Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 126-27.

⁸ This and all the name meanings that follow are from Stelman Smith and Judson Cornwall, *The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos, 1998).

Claudia's husband. Ancient tradition says that he was Priscilla's son who became a Roman senator and extended hospitality to Peter.⁹ His name means *Shamefaced; bashful. Modest. Linus* means *Flax; nets. Linen*. Some have suggested he is the son of Pudens and Claudia. Ancient tradition (cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.3.3) connects him to the first bishop of Rome after the Apostle. As you have heard, *Claudia* is a woman's name. Besides what we've just said about her, some have suggested she was a member of the imperial household, perhaps as a slave. The name means *Lame*.

What is **the purpose of these names** here? **First**, they all seem to know Timothy, as they send their greetings. This suggests to me that at least some were in fact travelling companions with Paul, especially Eubulus of whom that is stated specifically. **Second**, citing them and the other "brothers" here would have been an inducement to have Timothy hurry up. **Third**, it shows that Paul is not alone in his prison. He has others with him to help. Yet, he still wants Timothy to come. Let's discover more of why that might be.

⁹ Florence Morgan Gillman, "Pudens (Person)," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 546.

Praise and Blame

Vs. 10 is actually **the first verse** in the chapter that starts **naming names**. The first in the list is *Demas*. His name means *Popular; ruler of people*. Demas does appear in other places, namely at the end of Colossians, where he is found together in the same verse with Luke (**Col 4:14**) and Philemon where he is found in the same verse as Mark, Aristarchus, and Luke (**Phm 1:24**). In these earlier letters, Demas was clearly a **missionary helper in good standing** with Paul. But here, at the end of Paul's life, as he faces his most pressing trial, it is a different story.

Paul says that he was “**in love with his present world.**” This sounds like **1 John 2:15**, “**Do not love the world or the things in the world.**” Why must one not love the world? In our context it is because it lends itself towards **abandoning the faith**. And if one does that, how can they be saved? Paul says Demas “**deserted me and [went] to Thessalonica.**” This love of the world also sounds similar to Schaff's comment about the traditors, that they were those “**who preferred the earthly life to the heavenly.**”

In fact, this connection is spot on as we learn from **Polycarp** a few decades later in what is clearly one of the

first applications of our passage. That famous martyr went willingly to death because **he did not love the world**. He himself was emulating the likes of Ignatius and the Apostle Paul himself (**Polycarp** 9:1) and then cites this verse saying, “**For they did not love the present world, but him who died on our behalf and was raised by God for our sakes.**”¹⁰ Polycarp contrasts a willingness to undergo martyrdom with attachment and love of the present age. When Paul is therefore imprisoned like a criminal and likely to die, Demas not only saw the writing on the wall for Paul, perhaps he also did for himself. He was not willing to die for all this, because he loved the world more than Christ.

Can we know any **more about Demas’ motives** for fleeing? A case has been made that love of the world is often contrasted with **wealth and honor**. It is interesting that Demas means “**Popular.**” So someone has speculated that “**it was the precarious poverty of the apostolate that eroded Demas’s zeal,**” or even that he had “**somehow provided for the imprisoned apostle and then left with the purse.**”¹¹ Sounds like Judas.

¹⁰ **Michael William Holmes**, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 215.

¹¹ **Jerome D. Quinn** and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*. Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 808. Cited in **Philip H. Towner**, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 622.

This deserves some reflection. First, **how difficult** does wealth and honor make a coming persecution in a society where everyone has everything they need and in many respects are inundated and soaked to the bone by the culture with the love of the world? How many will fall away because of this? I personally know many who already have, and the true persecution has never even begun. Would you be one of them? If you do not work today to take away this false love, when the time comes, tomorrow will be too late, for how will you stand then if you can't even stand now?

Second, there was a **massive stigma attached to incarceration** in their world, even as there is in our own. It doesn't matter if the person was there for a crime or for Christ. People often do not want to be associated with such people. It is too hard personally to see them suffer and too hard socially to be attached to them. After all, you might end up there yourself! Paul needed now more than ever those who would not leave or abandon him, as do so many people today when they face trials.

Third, we need to see that Demas fled to *Thessalonica*. Why? Perhaps he was from there (he is associated with someone from there, Aristarchus was a Thessalonian). Or perhaps he fled the persecution and went to live a quieter

life *as a Christian* in that church. Or so he may have thought he could do. Many people flee their problems in one church, thinking that those problems won't follow them to a new one. But this is often a fool's mistake, because if those problems were caused by you, you can't escape yourself. Besides, the word always gets out what you've done.

This point needs further reflection as well, because Paul does not say that Demas became an **apostate**. He says he **deserted** him. There's a difference. It is quite possible that the love of the world caused Demas to apostatize. But it is also possible that he didn't. This takes us back to the **traditor** problem of Mensurius and Donatus. Mensurius did not apostatize. But he was willing to do nearly everything but. This rightly incensed the Christians who refused to compromise and paid for it with prison or torture or death. The point is that the love of the world makes this much more of a gray area for those people than it should be and that gray can lead to great darkness if one is not caught up by the Light. Hence, we are shining the light of the word on these things today so that we might consider them in good times, before it is too late.

Curiously, many have pointed out that Demas' love of the world **contrasts** sharply with **vs. 8's** "those who have

loved [Christ's] appearing.” This is one of those connections to the previous section we must see. The love of the world leads to darkness and judgment. The love of Christ's coming in the flesh leads to light and vindication on the Great Day. A double-mindedness about these leads to trouble. And so we must daily put the light of Christ before our eyes so that we do not stumble in the darkness. His Gospel is not just for non-Christians to be saved; it is for Christians that they might not fall away by his grace and the power of his word.

Paul lists two more people in vs. 10 and two more in vs. 11. The first is *Crescens*. He is found only here. His name reminds me of this gray. It can mean *Fleshy Shadow*. Paul does not say that he deserted him. Nevertheless, he “has gone to Galatia.” He was probably sent there by Paul to further strengthen the churches there.

Titus is mentioned next. He is the recipient of the letter that follows 2 Timothy. He appears several times in 2 Corinthians (2Cor 2:13; 7:6-14; 8:6-23) and in Galatians (Gal 2:1-3). His name means *Nurse; rearer. Protected; honorable, from “I honor.”* Titus is gone too. He is in Dalmatia, which is modern day Croatia. Paul most likely sent him there.

2 Timothy 4:11 mentions *Luke*. This name means *Light giving, luminous*. This is the Luke who wrote the Third Gospel, the book of Acts, perhaps Hebrews, and perhaps was even the scribe for Paul, putting Paul's thoughts to paper in letters like Ephesians and even 1, 2 Timothy and Titus. People suggest this because Paul says, "**Luke alone is with me.**" This is the doctor who would have loved a reference like gangrene than we saw **2:17**.

Mark appears next. His name means *A large hammer; polite*. We are in the midst of a true Whose Who in the Bible list. This is the Mark who wrote the Second Gospel. Mark is not with Paul. He is, however, *with Timothy*. And Paul wants Timothy to bring Mark with him, "**For he is very useful to me for ministry.**" This is quite a change of mind from the Apostle, for in the early days of the missionary endeavors, Paul had such harsh feelings about Mark that it brought about an irrevocable split between he and **Barnabas (Acts 15:37-39)**. Think of Mark in light of Demas, because the reason Paul was so upset with Mark is that he had also "**withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work**" (**38**). Barnabas trusted Mark and gave him a second chance, and apparently, all these years later, Mark was so faithful that Paul called for him. This is

one of those reasons why when you read about Demas, you should not be overly quick to be a Donatus and damn him for deserting Paul. People make bad choices. But as we will see, there is even in these kinds of sins, **forgiveness to be found in Christ.**

Vs. 12 adds another name. “*Tychius I have sent to Ephesus.*” Tychius means *Fortuitous; fortunate*. He is sent to Ephesus, where Timothy is at, most likely because he is **the letter bearer**. He would also then have been the one who relieved Timothy of his duties in Ephesus, duties that Tychius would have taken over in his stead.

Vs. 13 stops the names for a moment and Paul mentions some **personal belongings**. “*When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.*” It’s fascinating that this makes it into God’s word! It probably isn’t anyone’s Life-Verse. So why is it here? Paul clearly left these **important belongings** behind, thinking he would not need them on his travels to the west (he wanted to go to Spain). But now that he is in prison and the winter is approaching, he wants **his cloak**. This adds a personal and historical touch to the letter. This verse is a true insider view of the Apostle, his circumstances, and his aim in life.! Now that he is in prison and unable to

leave, he needs the **books**, probably the Scriptures themselves, although given the kinds of things he quotes in other places, it probably included written oral traditions, secular writers and poets, and other materials that he wanted close at hand so **that if he could not plant new churches**, at least **he could write** and strengthen those that remain. He's always thinking about the Gospel and how he can best give it to others.

The list of names returns in **vs. 14**. "**Alexander the coppersmith**" appears. He is only mentioned here by this name, although there was at least one and perhaps two **Alexanders** who were in Ephesus (**Acts 19:33; 1Tim 1:20**). It is quite possible that these are all the same person. Whatever the case, all three are presented in **a bad light**. He is even worse than Demas. The Coppersmith "**did me great harm**." This is brought up I believe as a way of finishing out **vv. 5-8**. How?

"**The Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message**" (**2Tim 4:14-15**). If this is Alexander from Acts, then he was responsible for getting Paul stoned. This takes us back to the themes of **persecution** and **the love of the world** and the difficulties associated, spiritually, with them.

Paul had told Timothy to “endure suffering” (5). He also said that Jesus is the righteous judge (8). Now he warns Timothy to have nothing to do with that man before he leaves, because Alexander might make it impossible for him. This is one of the dangers churches face—trouble from within. They must be diligently watchful.

It is possible that Alexander is brought up here because the “great harm” was actually a charge that Alexander brought against Paul that eventually led him to his own trials he is facing in Rome. Hence the possible translation, “He accused me of man evil things.”¹² If this is correct, then it makes even more sense for Timothy to avoid him, because if he finds out he is going to meet Paul, who knows what Alexander could do? He could have him arrested on charges of conspiring with a criminal.

This takes us to the center of our passage. Vv. 16-18a sum up what Paul has been going through. There are three possible central ideas (see discussion above), each of which is worthy of notice. The first is the idea of forgiveness even in the face of desertion. “At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be changed against them!” (16). What is this first defense? It is probably

¹² Towner, 631.

not the first defense he makes in Israel at the end of Acts 21:37-22:29. Nor would it likely be those defenses he made afterward that led to him being sent off to Rome.

It could refer to the first time Paul was arrested and subsequently released in Rome, but he's making the same point about having friends desert him, which has been talking about *his present* circumstance, not one a couple of years earlier. Thus, it is most probable that it refers to a hearing, like our modern arraignment, related to this second imprisonment in Rome. During this, Paul would have defended himself against the accusations as the prosecutors presented evidence to see if this should go to a full trial.

So imagine yourself in Paul's shoes. He has all these people with him, all these friends in the city, but at this dire moment, *they all left him*. It sounds exactly like what happened to our Lord, as they all fled, even after swearing they would not. They didn't want to be associated with a criminal. He is all alone. And yet here, the Apostle's words are words of forgiveness. "*May it not be charged against them!*" That's the definition of forgiveness when such an action should be all but impossible. It is also the definition of *justification by faith*. God does not charge our sins to our account, but freely forgives us our debts.

How can he forgive like this? This is a lesson every Christian must learn, for you all know it, but you often do not think on it. This is the second possible center in vv. 16-17. Where as all his friends deserted him, “But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me.” Jesus knew what it was like to be deserted; he will not desert those the Father gives to him. And so Paul is overwhelmed by Christ’s faithfulness to one who was so sinful towards him before conversion. Those forgiven much can forgive much. Those forgiven little, forgive little. Paul has been forgiven much indeed and this was done by a God—his Savior Jesus Christ who stood by him when all others abandoned him. That’s why he can forgive. Any Christian struggling with forgiving others can be released from this burden simply by looking to what you have done to Christ, repeatedly, weekly, daily, and yet he is faithful to you. How can we therefore not be that way towards others? Are we somehow so righteous that we can say, “I do not need to forgive them,” when God does this for us?

This leads to a third possible center. This is found in vv. 17b-18a. Paul gives another reason Jesus stood by him. “So that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the

lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom." First, the Apostle is convinced that through him, all the Gentiles would hear the message of the Gospel. He was driven by the promise to Abraham and all the nations of the earth would be blessed in Christ.

Because this was God's desire—that Gentiles would be saved from sin and Satan—God rescued him from the lion's mouth. We discussed this in chapter 3 when Paul said that God had rescued him from all the things that happened to him at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (2Tim 3:11). Now he remembers that thought. The Lord will rescue him from every evil deed. But this time he knows full well that the rescue may not be physical. It has been up to this point. But he doesn't count on that. He never has. This is not a prosperity Gospel, a get-out-of-jail-free card whenever you want it. It will, however, be spiritual. Paul will be brought safely into the heavenly kingdom. Salvation! This is what loving God and not the world anticipates. This is what our eyes focus on to keep away the love of the world.

Back there I suggested it was possible that the lion's mouth was literal, and that perhaps Paul was sent to die in the arena, but God shut the lion's mouth like he did for

Daniel. That is still a possibility. But something more fundamental needs to be pointed out. Philip Towner has shown¹³ that in what Paul is saying here, he is in fact **reflecting upon Psalm 22**. And thus we enter into the most beautiful part of the end of the letter.

Psalm 22 is perhaps The Great **Messianic Psalm** that predicts the Christ’s death on the cross, including his being deserted or **forsaken** by the Father, the many **evil deeds** of the court and the onlookers and the subsequent deliverance of God **“from the lions mouth”** and **saving of the nations** because of it:

2 Timothy		Psalm 22 (21 LXX)	
2Tim 4:16	but everyone deserted me (<i>egkatelipon</i>)	My God, my God, why have you forsaken (<i>egkatelipes</i>) me?	Ps 21:2
2Tim 4:17b	So that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all (<i>panta</i>) the Gentiles (<i>ethnē</i>) might hear it.	“ All (<i>panta</i>) the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations (<i>tōn ethnōn</i>) shall worship before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations”	21:27–28
2Tim 4:17c	and I was delivered (<i>errysthēn</i>) from the mouth of the lion ” (<i>ek stomatos leontos</i>)	“Our fathers hoped in you, they hoped and you delivered (<i>errysō</i>) them” “Save (<i>sōson</i>) me from the mouth of the lion ” (<i>ek stomatos leontos</i>)	Ps 21:5 22
4:18	“The Lord will deliver (<i>rhysetai</i>) me from every evil deed” “and he will save (<i>sōsei</i>) me into his heavenly kingdom (<i>basileia</i>)”	“ Deliver (<i>rhytai</i>) my life from the sword ...” “To you they cried and were saved (<i>esōthēsan</i>)” “For dominion (<i>basileia</i>) is the Lord’s, and he rules the nations (<i>tōn ethnōn</i>).”	21:21 21:6 Ps 21:29

¹³ Towner, *Letters*, 639-47.

It is without question that Paul is seeing himself as **part of the fulfillment of this Psalm** in a couple of ways. First, he is partaking of the same suffering his Lord did, and thus can rightly stand with Jesus in feeling abandoned and forsaken. Second, the Apostle is **the instrument** God is using to carry out the deliverance of the nations that was made possible by Jesus' death.

As such, his reflecting on those who have deserted him is not so much out of self-pity, but rather out of **an astonishment that these events have happened to him** in order that God might use him to fulfill the Scriptures! Only when you know the Scripture well can you see this hidden gem. There are no quotation marks or footnotes for you to cheat here. But when you see it, you wonder in astonishment at the ways God fulfills his word. Is it any wonder that he breaks out into his final doxology of the letter right here: **“To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (2Tim 4:18)**. God has predicted. God has fulfilled. God has promised. God been faithful. God will reward. He will do all that he says he will do because of Jesus Christ our Lord, the judge of the living and the dead.

With that, we have just three more verses and then we'll close with some reflections. First, Paul remembers **some of**

his own friends in Ephesus. The first two are the famous couple, Priscilla (here Prisca) and Aquila. They appear in **Acts 18:2** where they are natives of Ephesus. They were a wealthy couple who were converted under Paul's ministry. They are also found in **Romans 16:3**, where they lived in Rome for a time, until Claudius commanded all the Jews to leave Rome (**Acts 18:2**). They were also in Corinth for a while (**1Cor 16:19**). *Aquila* means Hebrew: *I shall be nourished*; Latin: *Eagle*. Greek: *Immovable*. *Priscilla* (diminutive of Prisca) is *Ancient. Little old woman*. She is almost always found first in the list, probably showing her prominence and importance to the ministry of Paul.

Onesiphorus appears in the same verse, although this time it is not him (as it was in Ch. 1), but his household. This is most likely because Onesiphorus had died, probably himself as a martyr protecting Paul (**2Tim 1:16-18**). He was an incredible friend to Paul.

Vs. 20 tells us about the final two names for today. *Erastus* means *Beloved*. Erastus appears in **Romans 16:23** as the city treasurer who had been converted. He was clearly a man of great importance. Erastus is also in **Acts 19:22** where he is a helper of Paul and Timothy. They could have been the same man. Here, he is at Corinth and he is brought up

because Timothy would have wanted to know what happened to him, as they were friends.

Finally, we have *Trophimus*. His name means *Master of the house; nourishing; well educated*. That Timothy also knew him is seen in **Acts 20:4**, where he is said to be an “Asian,” meaning from Galatia. Here, he has **fallen ill** and is not counted among those who deserted Paul. He was in Miletus, not all that far from Ephesus.

Father to Son

The letter ends with a **benediction**. “**The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you**” (**2Tim 4:22**). What can we take away from these last verses? Many people just read these lists of names as ... **boring lists of names!** But so much more is going on. We can see here that they are given as contrasts between two types of people. Some are faithful. Some are faithless. Some are friends of Christ, others turn on Christ. This is real life. It was the way of it then. It is the way of it now. Our circumstances are nothing that the disciples themselves did not see in person too.

One thing we haven't mentioned is that most of these people were at one time **in the service of the Gospel**,

accompanying Paul on his missionary journeys, and this is an important thing to consider. From the very beginning with Paul and Barnabas, and then their taking Luke and Mark, missions work to foreign places were **never undertaken alone**. This is in great contrast to so many missionary endeavors today, where the missionary is sent out *all alone* (or maybe with just their own family).

What a great way to **burn out a missionary**! What a terrible way to place an impossible burden upon the shoulder of one man. This section of the letter shows you just how hard this work could be. It also gives you a feel for what it is like to be all alone. Deserted. Abandoned. The church needs to do a better job thinking about this, even as they need to do a better job just sending missionaries, instead of leaving their care in the hands of parachurch organizations and reliance upon the one missionary constantly begging for money. I appreciate the work of our **Reformed Baptist Network**, at least as it regards the latter. Coming together to help missionaries that are being sent out by larger churches is a way smaller churches can cooperate in this kind of work. And it is not only foreign missions, but local missions as well, by which I mean bringing the gospel to people who do not know it. But still, we all need to

consider how important it is to have a network, a team of people surrounding the main missionary, to make that job succeed. Not just people giving money, but also getting their own feet dirty in the ways God has gifted them.

There are **many people** who make churches and gospel work go forward, and it is not wrong to praise them or even to blame them, publicly. Though, I understand that most do it expecting and desiring no praise at all.

This ending of the letter also keeps our minds focused on the things that matter most. Those are **eternal things**, not the world (that is things that are passing away), but the age to come (of which, both heaven and some earthly things participate). Not the gods and idols people have today, but the Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed and praised forever.

This is **the God who is faithful while others are fickle**. This is the God who sustains us in our greatest moments of trial, especially as we face immanent death. This is the God who heals us and rescues us even on this earth, but much more in the world to come.

Most of all, this is a letter of **a spiritual father** to his **beloved son**. Most immediately, that is Paul to Timothy. But more transcendentally, it is the **heavenly Father** to his **chosen people** today. Both letters give us tremendous

wisdom and advice for how to carry on the work of the Gospel today, especially through Christ's church. And both do so only in the context of that very Gospel itself being the power of God to convert hearts and change minds. Sometimes it may be not the easiest thing to hear or to put into practice. But it is God's word to us. So let us always endeavor to carry out Christ's given work to his church together, so that people might come to know our Great God, both those who have never heard, and those who have been adopted into the family, that they may see how the Gospel truly can and does change people's hearts and minds and lives, even as it doesn't penetrate all of them, leaving us with the ever present need to remain vigilant and watchful in our duties to keep his church holy.

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