

22. Fellowship in God and warning

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When I think about the authorship of the Books of Romans and Ephesians, I don't know about you, I am just lost for words. Some of you are thinking, "Now that would be the first time." They were beautifully written, articulate and powerful theologies with strong exhortation and practical applications. I cannot wait for us to study the Book of Ephesians. Truly, those Books are two pillars of the New Testament with the exception of the Gospels and Acts.

Then there is Galatians that talks about liberty in Christ so powerfully. His letter to Philippians has a stunning series of absolute joy in the Lord while Paul himself was sitting in a prison cell. The Books of Titus, Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Philemon and who can forget 1 and 2 Corinthians that were dealing with the spiritual problem adolescents of the church of Corinth.

Here we are at the last portion of the Book of 2 Timothy where this great apostle pours out his heart to Timothy and he asks for the young man's presence before he departs the earth. At the same time, he warns him about a couple of people who hurt Paul in many ways.

A. COME TO ME QUICKLY

2 Timothy 4:9-10 Be diligent to come to me quickly; 10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

Yes, Paul was a great man of God who stood toe to toe against emperor Nero, king Agrippa, the high priest of Israel and many others who threatened him with execution. But he was not a superhuman. He needed and wanted companionship. Paul was lonely.

I am sure that you've heard the famous phrase: "No man is an island" by an English poet John Donne. Indeed we need each other. The Lord knew it and He Himself wants to be our friends and our God. At the same time, the Lord is telling us that we believers should have fellowship with one another through the church:

Hebrews 10:25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near. NLT

I've met many people who told me that they don't need to go to church to be Christians. I agreed with them. But at the same time, I told them that they are neglecting our meeting together which are church services where we get to have fellowship and learn sound doctrines to live by.

Isolation is a basic tactic of any army against its enemy – isolating a person or unit from the main body. Then it is not difficult to overcome them. Let me make it very clear to you. Attending church faithfully should be an important priority over watching ball games on TV. You shouldn't go to church because there are free donuts and coffee, but because you want to hear from God and have fellowship with other believers of Jesus Christ. God should be the highest priority in your life, not some games or any other things or people.

Why should Timothy be diligent and faithful to be with Paul? V10 gives us a portion of the answer.

Demas was mentioned three times in the NT. You can see a sad progress of failure and backsliding.

Philemon 24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

Colossians 4:14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.

From a fellow laborer to no compliment, then in 2 Timothy 4:10 we find the desertion of Demas. It must have broken Paul's heart to see Demas fail so shamefully. Yet it can happen to any believer.

I know it all too well. As a lay pastor of Calvary Chapel Tucson prison ministry for the prison inmate at the AZ State Prison Wilmot Complex for 12 years and 10 years in our church, I've been pouring out my heart to many people. The most hurtful occasion as a pastor and shepherd is when a believer / friend chose to walk away from the Lord because he loved this present world and backslid to the carnal world.

Proverbs 26:11 As a dog returns to his own vomit, So a fool repeats his folly.

I know a friend who was the former pastor of Calvary Chapel of the White Mountains in Showlow and was one of my mentors. He got into internet pornography heavily. As a board of director of that church, I and another board member had to dismiss him. Recently I found out that he was divorcing his wife so that he can go after other women and more pornography. He is just like Demas – loving this present world enough to leave the Savior who died for him.

B. BRING MARK WITH YOU

2 Timothy 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

Dr. Luke had traveled with Paul on many of his missionary journeys, remained with Paul. Here is Mark, a.k.a. John Mark, the author of the Gospel of Mark. At their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas took Mark with them. In the middle of their journey, Mark decided that he wanted to go back to his home in Jerusalem. However, at the beginning of Paul and Barnabas' second missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to take his nephew Mark in their journey again. Paul said, "over my dead body." And Barnabas said, "That can be arranged." Just kidding.

Acts 15:37-39 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. 39 Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;

Here we see Paul urging Timothy to bring Mark with him. This is evidence of a restoration of trust in Mark from the apostle.

C. BRING MY STUFF WITH YOU

2 Timothy 4:12-13 And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13 Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.

According to Acts 20, Tychicus was a believer from the province of Asia who willingly accompanied Paul and probably ministered as a personal servant to the apostle. He was with Paul during his first imprisonment which was mentioned in Ephesians 6. Paul sent Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus previously. Now he was sending him to Ephesus to relieve Timothy.

Paul is asking Timothy to bring his cloak – overcoat – since his prison stone cell is too cold for his aging body.

I've read two different commentaries regarding Paul's 'books and the parchments'. Some biblical scholars say 'books' represent the Scripture he read since the Greek word for 'book' is 'biblion'. And the other claim 'the parchment' is the Scripture he studied. Either way, the apostle liked to read. According to the church tradition, well-respected rabbi Gamaliel was Paul's teacher before his conversion to Christianity. Gamaliel could not give enough books to Paul because his bright mind consumed everything he could read.

D. A WARNING TO BEWARE OF ALEXANDER

2 Timothy 4:14-15 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. 15 You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.

In 1 Timothy 1:20 Paul mentioned Alexander as someone whose faith had suffered shipwreck. We don't know if these two Alexanders were the same person, because Alexander was a relatively common name in the Greek culture.

Now Paul warned Timothy about this man Coppersmith. Paul simply wrote that Alexander did him much harm. Apparently he did more than merely oppose Paul's teaching. Perhaps he had a hand in Paul's arrest. Satan has his workers, too.

Rather than bad mouthing about Alexander the coppersmith, Paul simply warns Timothy about him and expects the Lord to repay him according to his works rather than avenging Alexander with his own hands. Paul was doing exactly what he preached to us. It is a terrible thing to be judged by the Lord according to one's works.

Romans 12:19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

For believers in Christ, our sins have been washed away by the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross. In other words, there is nothing to be judged, because Jesus took it all to Himself for us. What a relief, isn't it?

Do you know someone who hurt you deeply? Don't go after them, neither you talk about them to others constantly. If you do, you are just opening the old wounds over and over again. That person doesn't suffer from your rehashing, but only yourself. Let the Lord take care of that person.

E. THE LORD STOOD WITH ME

2 Timothy 4:16-17 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

What a comforting thought to know that the Lord is with us no matter what the family members and friends say about you and how they treat you! After all, only what the Lord says matters. Paul was not holding his grudge against those people who deserted him.

Who or what is this "lion"? It cannot mean a literal lion because Paul was a Roman citizen and, if convicted, he could not be thrown to the lions like happened to many

Christian slaves from foreign countries. Instead, he would be executed by being beheaded. Was “the lion” the Emperor Nero? Probably not. If he had been delivered from Nero, then he was acquitted. He had only had a preliminary first hearing. The lion is a symbol of satan.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour

F. THE LORD WILL DELIVER ME

2 Timothy 4:18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

One of the things that amazes me about the apostle Paul is how he always seemed to rise to the top of every situation and seized every opportunity to preach the Gospel.

We read in the Book Acts that when Paul and Silas were thrown in prison, they began to sing praises to God at midnight. I am sure that the Lord enjoyed their praise and worship session in the joint so much that He was toe tapping, knee slapping and hand clapping. I guess that was a little too much for earth to handle, an earthquake happened. After the walls fell, and the next thing you know, the very jailer who was responsible for chaining them up and whipping them asked, “What must I do to be saved?”

Then, when Paul was brought before the various dignitaries of Rome, such as Felix, Festus and Herod Agrippa II, he became master of every situation. Even when he was a prisoner on a ship, and in a short time, the crew, the captain, the soldiers and even the Roman centurion were taking orders from Paul and everyone was listening to him.

Paul was bold. He didn’t seem to be afraid of anything. He never seemed to get down. His life wasn’t always easy. But he was fully convinced of the faithfulness of God and was sustained by that conviction.

G. COME BEFORE WINTER AND FAREWELL

2 Timothy 4:19-22 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick. 21 Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren. 22 The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

Prisca – a.k.a. Priscilla – and Aquila were a husband-and-wife team that assisted Paul in many ways in Acts 18. Now they were in Ephesus helping Timothy with his ministry.

This has much heart and emotion behind it. As an old man, Paul dearly wanted to see his spiritual son before he laid down his life for his Lord. We don’t know if Paul ever saw Timothy again, but we can be sure Timothy did his utmost to come before winter. During winter time, there was no ship that traveled due to rough and cold winds and frozen harbors. So Paul was urging Timothy to come before winter.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) If you isolate yourself from the fellowship with believers of Christ, you are only a few steps away from compromise with satan and this carnal world. Keep yourself in the Word and the body of Jesus Christ, the church.

2) Let the Lord do judging and avenging. Otherwise, we will live the lives of constant vengeance.