

Subject: Paul's Parting Words

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:9-22

I remember a conversation with my Dad on the front porch after my first year as pastor. I was in seminary and served a small church in Southern Arkansas. Dad said, "Well, Stanley, what do you think about the ministry?" I remember telling him that I loved preaching and teaching God's Word, but people can be hard to deal with and some of them can let you down.

In our text we have Paul's thoughts as he ended some thirty years of ministry and came to the end of his earthly life. He reflects on the good and the bad. He talks of some who left him and some who stayed faithful, some who hurt him and let him down and some who helped him and lifted him up. Best of all, he speaks of the Lord who was always faithful and stood with him, strengthened him, and protected him all the way.

PAUL'S DISAPPOINTMENTS

- Demas, a man who loved the wrong world (vs. 10)

This man had been a close associate of Paul (Col. 4:14) and a fellow laborer (Philemon 24), but over time he proved to be an unfaithful man. The word "forsaken" means to completely abandon. The reason he left Paul and the ministry was that he loved this present world. There is a present world and a world to come. Demas loved the wrong world.

1 John 2:15-17 ¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. The world does not mean the planet or the people, but the philosophy and values of the world.

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Demas made a foolish decision to love the world and forsake the Lord. Moses made a wise decision to forsake the world and love the Lord. Demas was short-sighted, but Moses took the long look.

Hebrews 11:24-26 ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; ²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; ²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

- Alexander, a man who fought the wrong fight (vs. 14-15)

There was a man named Alexander in 1 Timothy 1:19-20, but this is probably not the same man. Paul didn't get bitter, hold a grudge, or seek vengeance, but turned this man over to the Lord.

- No one stood with Paul in his time of need (vs. 16)

Sometimes people spoke out against Paul, but here no one speaks for him. Which one is worse?

PAUL'S DESIRES

He asks for three things and they say a lot about this great man:

- He wanted Christian companionship

Some were old companions like Timothy (vs. 9, 21) and some were new friends. He is with Luke and he is apart from others he loved so much. Paul needed other people and valued other people. He mentions Crescens, Titus, Tychichus, Priscilla and Aquila, the family of Onesiphorus (see 1:16-18), Erastus, and Trophimus. He also mentions Mark (vs. 11) who at one time had been fickle, but over time had proven himself to be faithful (Acts 13:5, 13; 15:36-41). We read in Acts 16 that Timothy joined with Paul and the missionary team. God always has people in place at just the right time. Notice that Paul says Mark is now profitable for the ministry. He had been restored. Failure is not final. For Paul the most important thing was always the ministry of the gospel.

- He wanted warm clothing

Winter was coming soon (vs. 21). The cloak refers to a heavy wool garment that could be used as a coat or a blanket.

- He wanted his Christian books

In verse 13 Paul probably refers to the Scriptures and some copies of his letters and other important writings. Can you imagine a preacher would leave without his Bible? He left it behind in Troas because he was in a hurry or he may have even been arrested. Paul was a man who personally saw Jesus Christ, who led the first missionary trips, who established the first churches, who wrote about half of the New Testament, and now when he is about to die he still needs and wants the Scriptures. How that ought to challenge the rest of us to hunger for the Word of God.

PAUL'S DEFENSE

- The Lord stood with him

Some had been unfaithful to him and some had been faithful, but through it all Jesus had always been faithful. **Hebrews 13:5-6** ⁵ *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* ⁶ *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

- The Lord strengthened him

Paul was a very strong man, but it wasn't his own strength. **Philippians 4:13** *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* The Lord saved him and called him to preach the Gospel and strengthened to fulfill his assignment. He preached to the Gentiles (vs. 17)

just as the Lord said, Acts 9:15 *But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.*

- The Lord sheltered him

Paul was in some dangerous places and situations, but the Lord protected him and delivered him out of the lion's mouth. Satan is clever as a serpent, attractive as an angel of light, and dangerous as a lion. The Lord had delivered him and will deliver him until he enters the heavenly kingdom. What was true for Paul is also true for us. We are unstoppable and indestructible until God's time comes and our work on earth is done.

This chapter is very special because we have recorded Paul's final words: his final charge to Timothy, his final warning about the last days, his final testimony, his final requests, his final thoughts, and his final prayer (vs. 22). He prays for the presence of the Lord and the provision of His grace. What could be better? Paul lived the words of *Amazing Grace*: "Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come. 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."