

THE LORD'S COMPASSION

2 Timothy 4:9-22

In our passage this morning we discover that if it hadn't been for Jesus, the Apostle Paul would have given up. Here is the main idea of these verses.

Weakened by desertion, loneliness, and imprisonment, Paul was tempted to give up, but Jesus stood by him and strengthened him to proclaim the Gospel at his first defense.

2 Tim. 4:9-12 In verses 9-12, Paul urged Timothy to come to him in Rome and updated Timothy on the whereabouts of various brothers in the Lord. Paul urged Timothy to come to Rome in large part because Paul was lonely and facing his final days. Timothy was like a son to Paul. The desertion of Demas¹ was particularly discouraging because he was a friend and had been a faithful servant. Crescens and Titus were away probably on ministry assignments. Dr. Luke was with Paul. Paul asked Timothy to bring John Mark. John Mark went with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. But part way through he quit (Acts 13:5, 13). Barnabas wanted to take John Mark on their second missionary journey, but Paul refused and they split up (Acts 15:36-41). John Mark must have proven himself and now, many years later, Paul affirmed him and desired his help. Finally, Paul informed Timothy that he had sent Tychicus² to Ephesus most likely to relieve Timothy from his ministry at Ephesus so that he could come to Rome.

2 Tim. 4:13-15 In verses 13-15, Paul warned Timothy to avoid a man who had done Paul great harm. To collect Paul's things would require Timothy to go to Troas 150 miles north of Ephesus but on a route to Rome. But it is likely that it was in Troas that Paul was arrested. It is likely Alexander the coppersmith was a resident of Troas and identified Paul to the Roman officials as the leader of the Christian movement which Rome was then persecuting. This would explain why Paul left his cloak, books, and parchments in Troas. Paul was concerned that Timothy, in fetching his things from Troas, avoid Alexander. Thus, his warning in verse 15. In verse 14 we see Paul practiced what he preached with regard to Alexander his persecutor (Acts 12:14-21). Rather than rail against Alexander and harbor bitterness in his heart, Paul released Alexander to God and kept his own heart free.

Everything from verses 9 through 15 was newsy and instructive for Timothy, but we think it was meant to explain Paul's condition at his first court hearing in Rome. He was alone (possibly Luke didn't join him until after his first defense). He was discouraged by those who had deserted the faith. He was traumatized by his arrest and imprisonment. Though known by the church in Rome, no one from the church family came to his hearing to speak on his behalf.

2 Tim. 4:16-18 Paul was alone; forsaken as he faced his antagonists in court. What was the lion's mouth from which Jesus rescued Paul? From what evil deeds will the Lord rescue Paul and bring him safely into His heavenly kingdom? At first, it would seem the lion's mouth and every evil deed refer to Rome and its persecution of Paul. But the Lord didn't rescue Paul from Rome; eventually Rome executed Paul.

In verse 17, what was Paul enabled to do *because* Jesus stood with him and strengthened him? He was enabled to proclaim the Gospel. The implication is that without the help of Jesus, Paul would not have proclaimed the Gospel. Weakened and discouraged, Paul would have given in to the temptation to give up. Only by the compassionate support of Jesus was Paul able to overcome the temptation to give up and instead proclaim the Gospel. In verse 17, the "Lion's mouth" from which Jesus rescued Paul was the temptation to give up and not fulfill his call to proclaim the name of Jesus to the Gentiles and leaders gathered at this first hearing (Acts 9:15) In verse 18, "every evil deed" from which Jesus will rescue Paul were temptations to sin such as harboring bitterness, anger, and hatred towards those who deserted him, towards Alexander, and towards those who did not stand with him at his trial.

Paul was confident that the Lord Jesus would continue strengthening him to resist temptations so that he would finish well and enter the next life without shame and without loss of reward.

¹ Cf. Col. 4:14; Phm. 1:24.

² Cf. Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; Titus 3:12.

APPLICATION

Neither _____ nor _____ are permanent.

Demas was for many years a good friend and faithful servant alongside Paul. John Mark early on deserted Paul and Barnabas. But over the years and probably in large part through Barnabas' discipleship, John Mark matured and became a dependable servant. On the one hand, we must fight against spiritual complacency, and on the other hand, we must reject the lie that we can't come back from spiritual failure.

_____ **your brothers and sisters when they fail spiritually. Keep your heart free from _____ for the sake of agape.**

Consider Paul's plea in verse 16 on behalf of his Christian brothers in the Roman church who failed to stand on his behalf in court. Little is accomplished by punishing obvious spiritual failure. Most of the time the guilty are ashamed of their failure; those who are not will most likely just be hardened by punishment and not moved toward repentance. Grace, forgiveness, and patience go a lot further in bringing about repentance and restoration of the failed.

Love Jesus more for His tender _____. Look to Him to strengthen you in times of discouragement and loneliness.

Jesus knew exactly what Paul was feeling as he stood forsaken before his enemies. Jesus, too, was forsaken. We believe Paul saw Jesus standing with him. Strengthened, Paul overcame the temptation to quit and proclaimed the Gospel.

When Paul needed Him most, Jesus was there.

To Jesus be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

GRACE NEWS AND NEEDS

- ***Family Movie Night Fundraiser for Chris & Sarah Villanueva's adoption hosted by Bobby & Jaymee Lang. Saturday, August 12th, 7 PM. 2337 Vermont Street. Please RSVP by texting Sarah @ (619) 602-8283.***
- ***VOM Needs for July: Pack of 11" or longer Zip Ties / Lip balm, ChapStick.***