

Last Stand

Famous “Last Stands.”

- OK Corral
- Custer’s last stand

Who has stood with you through thick & thin? Who’s been with you, when the world was in turmoil?

- A friend?
- A spouse?

We are going to find out who stood with Paul in his darkest hours...

Make every effort to come to me soon, ¹⁰ because Demas has deserted me, since he loved this present world, and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you, for he is useful to me in the ministry. ¹² I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak I left in Troas with Carpus, as well as the scrolls, especially the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did great harm to me. The Lord will repay him according to his works. ¹⁵ Watch out for him yourself because he strongly opposed our words.

*¹⁶ At my first defense, no one stood by me, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them. ¹⁷ **But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me**, so that I might fully preach the word 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 work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.** To him be the glory forever and ever! Amen. 2 Timothy 4:9-18*

Similar to our court systems today an “advocate” could help a defendant present their case; but Paul couldn’t find one. No one wanted to stand in solidarity with a Christian, especially one as outspoken as Paul. Christians were accused of horrid crimes against Rome & against civilized society...

- Atheism – Because Christians denied worshipping many gods & the emperor, they were accused of not worshipping any gods at all!
- Cannibalism – The Lord’s Supper, outsiders accused them of drinking blood & eating flesh (eating Christ’s body)

- Hatred of the Human Race – Because of their apparent disloyalty to Caesar & them not participating with the popular pleasures of sin (orgies, festivals, etc.)
- For this, and I'm sure many other reasons, Paul had no human by his side. And yet he was not bitter!

At my first defense, no one stood by me, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them. V. 16

- While Paul had no human advocate, he was not alone! **But God...!!!!**

But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, v. 17a.

Paul was no stranger to the Lord's strength....

- “When Paul had been discouraged in Corinth, the Lord came to him and encouraged him (Acts 18:9–11).
- After he had been arrested in Jerusalem, Paul again was visited by the Lord and encouraged (Acts 23:11).
- During that terrible storm, when Paul was on board ship, the Lord had again given him strength and courage (Acts 27:22ff).
- Now, in that horrible Roman prison, Paul again experienced the strengthening presence of the Lord, who had promised, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).” (Wiersbe)

What was Paul's greatest fear?

- Not Death!
- It was that he might do something to disappoint or embarrass the Lord!

Find your strength in the Lord.

Where do you find your strength?

- When we find our strength/comfort/joy from the things of this world then when they let us down, or are no longer there, what do we have?
 - Like Demas we may end up being “deserters” of the faith because we loved this present world more than the one we will inherit!
- If our identity is in our bank account...what happens when the stock market crashes?
- If our identity is in our physical physique/health?
 - What happens when we are in an accident?
 - Or when we get old?
- Friends/Family?
 - They don't last forever.
 - They are human & make mistakes.
 - Wives, your husband will disappoint you.
 - Husbands, your wife won't always agree with you that you need a new gun.
 - Conflict will occur.
- When people do disappoint you. When you are hurt, follow Christ, Stephen's, & Paul's example.
 - *At my first defense, no one stood by me, but everyone deserted me. **May it not be counted against them.** V. 16*
 - Find your strength in the Lord to forgive others.

But our soul, our resolve can remain strong, we can hold our head up high when we Find our strength in the Lord.

What are some ways that God strengthens us?

- Other Believers!
- The Bible
- Prayer
- Music
- An encouraging word... (My wife was encouraged by a co-workers desk calendar.)

Find your strength in the Lord.

But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that I might fully preach the word and all the Gentiles might hear it. V. 17

- What are you doing with the strength God is giving you?
 - Are you obeying Him?
 - Are you proclaiming Him?

God gives us strength to fulfill our mission; to glorify Him.

Don't be timid. Share the Gospel.

Find your strength in the Lord.

- Use it to
 - Love God
 - Love Others
 - Serve All

Be Diligent and Faithful (2 Tim. 4:9–22)

“Hurry and get here!” is the meaning of the admonition to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:9). Tychicus would take Timothy’s place in Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12). As Timothy hurried to Rome, he could stop in Troas and get the cloak, books, and parchments (2 Tim. 4:13). Paul probably left them there in his haste to depart. It is touching to see that, in his closing days on earth, Paul wanted his dear “son in the faith” at his side. But he was also practical: he needed his cloak for warmth, and he wanted his books for study. The “books” would be papyrus scrolls, perhaps of the Old Testament Scriptures; and the “parchments” would be books made from the skins of animals. We do not know what these “parchments” were, but we are not surprised that a scholar such as Paul wanted material for study and writing.

Before he ended the letter, Paul urged Timothy to “come before winter” (2 Tim. 4:21). Why? All the ships would be in port during the winter since it would be too dangerous for sailing. If Timothy waited too long, he would miss his opportunity to travel to Paul; and then it would be too late.

Why should Timothy be diligent and faithful? Look at 2 Timothy 4:10, which gives part of the answer: Some in Paul’s circle were not faithful, and he could not depend on them. Demas is named only three times in the New Testament; yet these three citations tell a sad story of failure. Paul listed Demas along with Mark and Luke as one of his “fellow laborers” (Phile. 24). Then he is simply called “Demas” (Col. 4:14). Here (2 Tim. 4:10) it is, “Demas hath forsaken me.”

Paul gave the reason: Demas “loved this present world.” He had, as a believer, “tasted . . . the powers of the world to come” (Heb. 6:5); but he preferred “this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4). In his *Pilgrim’s Progress*, John Bunyan pictured Demas as the keeper of a silver mine at the Hill Lucre. Perhaps it was the love of money that enticed Demas back into the world. It must have broken Paul’s heart to see Demas fail so shamefully; yet it can happen to any believer. Perhaps this explains why Paul had so much to say about riches in his pastoral letters.

Another reason why Paul wanted Timothy in Rome was that his next hearing was coming up and only Luke was with him. The believers in Rome and Ephesus who could have stood with Paul had failed him (2 Tim. 4:16); but Paul knew that Timothy would not fail him. Of course, the Lord had not failed Paul either! (2 Tim. 4:17) The Lord had promised to stay with Paul, and He had kept His promise.

When Paul had been discouraged in Corinth, the Lord came to him and encouraged him (Acts 18:9–11). After he had been arrested in Jerusalem, Paul again was visited by the Lord and encouraged (Acts 23:11). During that terrible storm, when Paul was on board ship, the Lord had again given him strength and courage (Acts 27:22ff). Now, in that horrible Roman prison, Paul again experienced the strengthening presence of the Lord, who had promised, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).

But note that Paul’s concern was not for his own safety or comfort. It was the preaching of the Word so that Gentiles might be saved. It was Paul’s special calling to minister to the Gentiles (see Eph. 3); and he was not ashamed of the Gospel, even in the great city of Rome (Rom. 1:16).

What a man! His friends forsake him, and he prays that God will forgive them. His enemies try him, and he looks for opportunities to tell them how to be saved! What a difference it makes when the Holy Spirit controls your life.

“I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion” (2 Tim. 4:17). 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. Instead, he would be executed by being beheaded. Was “the lion” the Emperor

Nero? Probably not. If he had been delivered from Nero, then this meant he was acquitted; yet, he had only had a preliminary first hearing. The lion is a symbol of Satan (1 Peter 5:8). Perhaps Paul was referring to some scheme of the devil to defeat him and hinder the work of the Gospel. To be “saved from the lion’s mouth” was a proverbial saying which meant “to be delivered from great danger” (Ps. 22:21).

But for a Christian, there are things even more dangerous than suffering and death. Sin, for example. This is what Paul had in mind (2 Tim. 4:18). He was confident that the Lord would deliver him from “every evil work” and take him to the heavenly kingdom. Paul’s greatest fear was not of death; it was that he might deny his Lord or do something else that would disgrace God’s name. Paul was certain that the time had come for his permanent departure (2 Tim. 4:6). He wanted to end his life-race well and be free from any disobedience.

It is heartening to see how many people are named in the closing part of this last letter Paul wrote. I believe that there are at least 100 different men and women named in Acts and Paul’s letters, as a part of his circle of friends and fellow laborers. Paul could not do the job by himself. It is a great man who enlists others to help get the job done, and who lets them share in the greatness of the work.

Luke (2 Tim. 4:11) is the “beloved physician” who traveled with Paul (Col. 4:14). He is author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. (Notice the “we” sections in Acts, the eyewitness reports of Dr. Luke.) Paul probably dictated this letter (2 Tim.) to Luke. Being a doctor, Luke must have appreciated Paul’s reference to gangrene (2 Tim. 2:17, NIV).

Crescens (2 Tim. 4:10) was sent by Paul to Galatia. We know nothing about him, nor do we really need to know. He was another faithful laborer who assisted Paul in an hour of great need.

Titus (2 Tim. 4:10) was Paul’s close associate and, along with Timothy, a trusted “troubleshooter.” Paul had left Titus in Crete to straighten out the problems in the churches there (Titus 1:5). As we study Paul’s letter to Titus, we get better acquainted with this choice servant of God. Titus had met Paul at Nicopolis during that period between Paul’s arrests (Titus 3:12). Now Paul had summoned him to Rome and sent him to Dalmatia (our modern Yugoslavia).

Mark (2 Tim. 4:11) was a cousin of Barnabas, Paul’s first partner in missionary service (Acts 13:1–3). His mother was a noted Christian in Jerusalem (Acts 12:5, 12). Unfortunately, John Mark failed on that first missionary journey (Acts 13:5, 13). Paul refused to take Mark on the second trip, and this led to a falling-out between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36–41). However, Paul now admitted that John Mark was a valuable worker; and he wanted Mark with him in Rome. How good it is to know that one failure in Christian service need not make one’s whole life a failure.

Tychicus (2 Tim. 4:12) was a believer from the province of Asia (Acts 20:4) who willingly accompanied Paul and probably ministered as a personal servant to the apostle. He was with Paul during his first imprisonment (Eph. 6:21–22; Col. 4:7–8). Paul sent Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus (Titus 3:12). Now he was sending him to Ephesus to relieve Timothy. What a blessing it is to have people who can replace others! A relief pitcher may not get all the glory, but he may help win the game!

Carpus (2 Tim. 4:13) lived at Troas and gave Paul hospitality. Paul must have departed in a hurry (was he being sought for arrest?) because he left his cloak and books behind. However, Carpus was a faithful brother; he would guard them until somebody picked them up to take to Paul. Even such so-called menial tasks are ministries for the Lord.

Is *Alexander the coppersmith* (2 Tim. 4:14) the same Alexander mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20? Nobody knows, and there is no value in conjecturing. The name was common, but it is possible that this heretic went to Rome to make things difficult for Paul. Satan has his workers too. By the

way, Paul's words, "The Lord reward him according to his works" (2 Tim. 4:14), are not a prayer of judgment, for this would be contrary to Jesus' teaching (Matt. 5:43–48). "The Lord *will* reward him" is a better translation.

Prisca (or Priscilla) and *Aquila* (2 Tim. 4:19) were a husband-and-wife team that assisted Paul in many ways (see Acts 18:1–3, 24–28; Rom. 16:3–4; 1 Cor. 16:19). Now they were in Ephesus helping Timothy with his ministry. It is wonderful when God's people do their work regardless of who their leader is.

Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 4:19) and his household we met in 2 Timothy 1.

Erastus (2 Tim. 4:20) might be the treasurer of Corinth (Rom. 16:23); and he might be the same man who ministered with Timothy in Macedonia (Acts 19:22).

Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20) from Ephesus was a friend of Tychicus (Acts 20:4), and the man whose presence with Paul helped to incite that riot in Jerusalem (Acts 21:28–29). He had been serving at Miletus, but now he was ill. Why did Paul not heal him? Apparently not every sick person is supposed to be miraculously healed.

The other people mentioned (2 Tim. 4:21) are unknown to us, but certainly not to the Lord.

"Grace be with you" (2 Tim. 4:22) was Paul's personal farewell, used at the end of his letters as a "trademark" that the letter was not a forgery.

The Bible does not record the final days of Paul. Tradition tells us that he was found guilty and sentenced to die. He was probably taken outside the city and beheaded.

But Timothy and the other devoted believers carried on the work! As John Wesley used to say, "God buries His workmen, but His work goes on." You and I must be faithful so that (if the Lord does not return soon) future generations may hear the Gospel and have the opportunity to be saved.¹

a. Deserted by his friends (verses 9–13 and 19–21)

It is quite true that Paul has not been left entirely friendless. This becomes clear if at this point we glance on to the end of the chapter. Paul mentions here, first, his friends overseas (19), and he sends them a message of greeting. Prisca and Aquila, whom he has called his 'fellow workers in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 16:3) and with whom he stayed in Corinth (Acts 18:2; 1 Cor. 16:19), are evidently still in Ephesus where we last heard of them in the Acts record (18:26). So is 'the household of Onesiphorus', although, as was suggested in the comment on 1:16–18, it seems that Onesiphorus himself is still separated from his family and in Rome.

Paul next sends Timothy items of news about two other mutual friends (20). Erastus, he says, 'remained at Corinth'. It may well be right to identify him with the Erastus who is described as Corinth's 'city treasurer' (Rom. 16:23) and with the Erastus whom Paul sent with Timothy into Macedonia (Acts 19:22). The fact that Paul needs to inform Timothy that he had stayed in Corinth suggests that after Paul's re-arrest he may have accompanied the prisoner as far as Corinth on his

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 256–258). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

way to Rome. The other news item concerns Trophimus, who was a native of Ephesus and had been one of Paul's companions during his third missionary journey at least in Greece and Troas and on the voyage to Jerusalem (Acts 20:1–5; 21:29). We do not know the circumstances in which Paul left him ill at Miletus, the port near Ephesus.

In these final verses of the letter the apostle also mentions some Christians in Rome, who send their greetings to Timothy. He gives the names of three men—Eubulus, Pudens and Linus (the latter just possibly the Linus whom Irenaeus and Eusebius mention as the first Bishop of Rome following the martyrdom of Peter and Paul)—and of one lady, Claudia, and then mentions 'all the brethren'. It seems likely, since Paul knows some of their names and can send greetings from them to Timothy, that they have visited him in prison.

Nevertheless, the apostle feels himself terribly cut off and abandoned, exiled from the churches he founded and from the people in them he knows and loves. More poignant still is the fact that a number of his close circle of travelling companions have—for a variety of reasons—left him or become separated from him. It is their fellowship that he misses more than anybody's. In verses 10 and 12 he mentions four in particular, Demas, Crescens, Titus and Tychicus.

The desertion of Demas is obviously extremely painful to Paul. He was previously one of his close associates or 'fellow workers'. In the two other New Testament verses in which he is mentioned his name is coupled with Luke's (Col. 4:14; Phm. 24). But now, instead of setting his love on Christ's future appearing (8), he has fallen 'in love with this present world' (literally, 'age'). The details are not divulged. Bishop Moule may have been right to guess that he was 'smitten with cowardice in that reign of terror'.¹ The other three are not censured for their departure. Crescens, whose name does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament, has 'gone to Galatia' (perhaps here meaning Gaul), and Titus, who must by now have finished his task in Crete, has travelled to Dalmatia on the Eastern Adriatic coast. No reason is given for these movements. Of Tychicus, however, Paul says: 'I have sent' him 'to Ephesus' (12). Twice described as 'a beloved brother and faithful minister ... in the Lord', he has been sent on several responsible missions before, apparently carrying Paul's letters to the Ephesians, to the Colossians and to Titus (Eph. 6:21, 22; Col. 4:7, 8; Tit. 3:12). It looks as if he is now being entrusted with the last of all Paul's letters, this one to Timothy. It may be that Paul also intends him to replace Timothy in Ephesus while the latter is absent visiting Paul in Rome.

Here, then, are four intimate and trusted fellow-labourers whom Paul sorely misses, although (except Demas) their absence is on the Lord's legitimate business. He goes on: 'Luke alone is with me' (11). It is a touching testimony to the unflinching loyalty of the apostle's companion and 'beloved physician' (Col. 4:14). Apart from this solitary exception of Luke, however, for various reasons good and bad Paul is alone in prison. He feels it keenly. He longs and asks for three things: first, for people to keep him company; secondly, for a cloak to keep him warm; thirdly, for books and parchments to keep him occupied.

First, companions. He bids Timothy: 'Get Mark and bring him with you' (11). Mark had been a deserter on the first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:13; 15:38, 39). Later, however, he was restored (Col. 4:10; Phm. 24; 1 Pet. 5:13), and now he could be 'very useful in serving' Paul.

But above all Paul yearns for Timothy himself. 'Do your best to come to me soon', he writes (9). 'Do your best to come before winter' (21). If he is ever to see Timothy again and enjoy his friendship, then Timothy must come soon (while he is still alive) and in any case before winter (when navigation would be impossible). So twice he urges him to do his best to come. We must not play down the urgency of Paul's affectionate desire to see Timothy. The same apostle who has set his love and hope upon the coming of Christ (8), nevertheless also longs for the coming of

Timothy. 'I long night and day to see you,' he has written at the beginning of his letter, 'that I may be filled with joy' (1:4). The two longings are not incompatible. One sometimes meets super-spiritual people who claim that they never feel lonely and have no need of human friends, for the companionship of Christ satisfies all their needs. But human friendship is the loving provision of God for mankind. It was God himself who said in the beginning: 'it is not good that the man should be alone' (Gn. 2:18). Wonderful as are both the presence of the Lord Jesus every day and the prospect of his coming on the last day, they are not intended to be a substitute for human friendships.

Warm clothing is necessary to Paul, as well as companionship. So he urges Timothy: 'When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas' (13). It seems probable that the *phailonēs* ('cloak') was the equivalent of the Latin *paenula*, 'an outer garment of heavy material, circular in shape with a hole in the middle for the head.' It was no doubt in anticipation of the coming winter (21) that Paul felt the need of the extra warmth it could give him. But who Carpus was and why Paul left his belongings with him in Troas, we can only guess. Bishop Moule conjectures that it was in the house of Carpus at Troas both that the 'memorable Eucharist' was held (Acts 20:1 ff.) and that years later Paul was arrested and carried off, with no opportunity to gather his possessions together.

The third necessity Paul mentions is 'the books, and above all the parchments' (verse 13). The difference between the two is probably that the former were made of papyrus rather than parchment. These papyrus rolls may have been writing materials or his correspondence or some official documents, even perhaps his certificate of Roman citizenship. The parchments may conceivably have been unused (NEB, 'my notebooks'). But it seems more probable that they were 'books' of some kind, and the most likely guess is 'Paul's version of the Old Testament in Greek, no small burden to carry around',³ and/or 'possibly official copies of the Lord's words or early narratives of his life'.

These, then, were Paul's three conscious needs. Later he says that during his first defence in court 'the Lord stood by me and gave me strength' (17), and no doubt he enjoyed the companionship and strength of the Lord Jesus in his dungeon as well. Yet the help he obtained from his Lord was indirect as well as direct. He did not despise the use of means. Nor should we. When our spirit is lonely, we need friends. When our body is cold, we need clothing. When our mind is bored, we need books. To admit this is not unspiritual; it is human. These are the natural needs of mortal men and women. As Bishop Moule wisely says, man is 'never for one moment denaturalized by grace'.¹ We must not, then, deny our humanity or frailty, or pretend that we are made of other stuff than dust.

Of course some Christians today scorn reading and study altogether, and assert that they would not feel the need of books at any time, let alone in prison. Let Calvin answer them: 'Still more does this passage refute the madness of the fanatics who despise books and condemn all reading and boast only of their *enthusiasmous*, their private inspirations by God. But we should note that this passage commends continual reading to all godly men as a thing from which they can profit.'

Several commentators point out the historical parallel between Paul's imprisonment in Rome and William Tyndale's in Belgium nearly fifteen centuries later. Here is Handley Moule's description of Tyndale and quotation from his letter:

'In 1535, immured by the persecutor at Vilvorde in Belgium, he wrote, not long before his fiery martyrdom, a Latin letter to the Marquis of Bergen, Governor of the Castle: "I entreat your lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I must remain here for the winter

you would beg the Commissary to be so kind as to send me, from the things of mine which he has, a warmer cap; I feel the cold painfully in my head. Also a warmer cloak, for the cloak I have is very thin. He has a woollen shirt of mine, if he will send it. But most of all, my Hebrew Bible, Grammar and Vocabulary, that I may spend my time in that pursuit.” ’

b. Opposed by Alexander the coppersmith (verses 14, 15)

The second contributing factor to Paul’s ordeal was the fierce opposition he had sustained to himself and his message from a man named *Alexander*. We know that his trade was that of a ‘coppersmith’, or worker in bronze, for Paul so describes him. But we do not know his identity. It is improbable that Alexander the coppersmith was the same person as Alexander the heretic (1 Tim. 1:20) or Alexander the orator (Acts 19:33), for the name was a common one. Nor do we know what the ‘great harm’ was which he had done to the apostle. A. T. Hanson points out that, literally translated, Alexander ‘informed many evil things against me’ and that ‘the regular word for an informer is connected with this verb’.¹ So some commentators suggest that Alexander was the informer responsible for Paul’s second arrest. If this happened at Troas, it might explain why Timothy, who will pass through Troas on his journey to Rome (13), is warned: ‘beware of him yourself’. But Alexander did more than inform: ‘he strongly opposed our message’. We may be quite sure that it was Paul’s concern for the truth of the message, and not personal pique or vindictiveness, which led him to express his belief (it is a statement according to the best MSS, not a wish or a prayer): ‘the Lord will requite him for his deeds.’

c. Unsupported at his first defence (verses 16–18)

Some have thought that Paul’s ‘first defence’ is a reference to his first imprisonment and that the proclamation of the word to the Gentiles (which he mentions in the following verse) was due to his release from this imprisonment. The context seems, however, to require a reference to some more recent event. So most commentators understand his *first defence* to have been the first hearing or *prima actio* of his case, ‘the preliminary investigation preceding the formal trial’.

Now Roman law would have permitted him to employ an advocate and call witnesses. But, as Alfred Plummer puts it, ‘among all the Christians in Rome there was not one who would stand at his side in court either to speak on his behalf, or to advise him in the conduct of his case, or to support him by a demonstration of sympathy’. ‘At my first defence no one took my part; all deserted me.’ Yet if ever an accused man needed help it was now. We are not told what charges had been laid against him. But we know from Tacitus, Pliny and other contemporary writers the kind of allegations which were being made against Christians at that time. They were supposed to be guilty of horrid crimes against the state and against civilized society. They were accused of ‘atheism’ (because they eschewed idolatry and emperor-worship), of cannibalism (because they spoke of eating Christ’s body), and even of a general ‘hatred of the human race’ (because of their supposed disloyalty to Caesar and perhaps because they had renounced the popular pleasures of sin). It may be that some of these charges were being levelled against Paul. Whatever the case for the prosecution, he had no-one to defend him but himself. Either because Christian friends could not or would not, he was unsupported and alone.

This moment, one might cautiously say, was Paul’s Gethsemane. Of course his agony was different from Christ’s. Yet like his Master before him he had to face his ordeal alone, for at the time of his greatest need he could say ‘all deserted me’, as it is written of Christ ‘they all forsook

him and fled' (Mk. 14:50). Lock goes even further and, noting nine verbal similarities between Psalm 22 and verses 10 and 16–18 of this chapter, asks: 'had St. Paul, like his Master, been saying this Psalm in the hour of his desertion?' Certainly, again like his Master, he prayed that their sin might 'not be charged against them'. There is no need, incidentally, to make out that there is an irreconcilable discrepancy between this prayer and the statement about Alexander two verses previously. The cases were quite different. For Alexander had actually spoken against the gospel from deliberate malice, whereas Paul's friends in Rome had failed to speak at all, and their silence was due not to malice but to fear.

Nevertheless, once more like his Master, Paul knew that he was *not* alone. In anticipation of the coming desertion, Jesus said, 'the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me' (Jn. 16:32). Similarly Paul could say that, although 'all deserted me' (16), yet 'the Lord stood by me and gave me strength' (17) Christ's presence at Paul's side and his gift to him of inward strength (the verb is *endynamoō* as in 2:1 and Phil. 4:13) both fortified him to preach the gospel to all the Gentiles present and led to his rescue (at least temporarily) 'from the lion's mouth'.

There is much speculation about the identity of the 'lion'. We can be certain that there is no reference to the lions of the amphitheatre, for as a Roman citizen there was never any question that this might be his fate. The early Greek commentators believed that Paul was referring obliquely to Nero, 'on account of his cruel nature', and A. T. Hanson points out that, according to Josephus, the news of the Emperor Tiberius' death in AD 37 'reached Herod Agrippa in the cryptic form "the lion is dead"'. Other guesses are that the lion is Satan (as in 1 Pet. 5:8), or Paul's human prosecutor in court, or death, or, more generally still, the great danger in which his enemies had placed him (as in Pss. 22:21; 35:17). At all events Paul emerges from this incident as a New Testament Daniel for whose protection the Lord shut the lion's mouth. In the future too, Paul goes on confidently, 'the Lord will rescue me', not indeed from death (for he is expecting to die, 6), but 'from every evil' outside God's permitted will. He will also 'save me for his heavenly kingdom', though Nero may soon dispatch me from my earthly kingdom.

We are now in a position to see what a superb illustration the apostle is giving Timothy of his charge to 'preach the word'. Paul is on trial for his life. He has been deserted by his friends (who have left him in the lurch or been unable to help him), opposed by his enemies and unsupported in his trial by any barrister or witness. So he is alone. Surely now he will think of himself for a change? Surely now he will betray at least a little self-pity? Surely now he will defend himself and plead his cause? Perhaps he did answer the charges laid against him, for he refers to the trial as his 'defence' (16). Yet even now, although in grave personal danger, facing the probability of a death sentence, his overmastering concern is not himself but Christ, not to be a witness in his own defence but a witness to Christ, not to plead his own cause but the cause of Jesus Christ.

In one of the highest tribunals of the empire, before his judges and perhaps before the emperor himself, no doubt with a large crowd of the general public present, Paul 'preached the word'. Or, as he himself expresses it: 'the Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the message fully, that all the Gentiles might hear it'. If ever there has been a sermon preached 'out of season', this was it!

All he tells us about its content is that he 'fully preached the *kērygma*'. That is, he took the opportunity to expound the gospel in its fullness, the good news of Jesus Christ incarnate, crucified, risen, reigning and coming again. Only because of this could he claim as he has done 'I have finished the race' (7).

Alfred Plummer gives a graphic description of the scene as he envisages it:

‘It is quite possible that this event, which the Apostle of the Gentiles regards as the completing act of his own mission and ministry, took place in the forum itself ... But at any rate it would be held in a court to which the public had access; and the Roman public at this time was the most representative in the world ... In that representative city and before that representative audience he preached Christ; and through those who were present and heard him the fact would be made known throughout the civilized world that in the imperial city and before the imperial bench the Apostle of Christ had proclaimed the coming of his kingdom.’

This, then, is to be Timothy’s model. He has in past days followed Paul in his doctrine, conduct and sufferings (3:10, 11); he could safely follow Paul’s example in this also. For in issuing the solemn charge to Timothy to preach the word, and do it urgently, Paul has not evaded the challenge himself. On the contrary, he has enforced his charge, not only from Christ’s coming, the contemporary scene and his impending death, but also by the shining example he has himself just set in the imperial court at a moment of great personal loneliness and peril.

d. Conclusion

Underlying this whole letter is Paul’s basic conviction that God has spoken through his prophets and apostles, and that this unique revelation—‘the faith’, ‘the truth’, ‘the word’, ‘the gospel’, ‘the sound teaching’—has been committed to the church as a sacred treasure or ‘deposit’.

Now the apostle, who throughout his three decades of active ministry has faithfully delivered to others what he himself had received, is on his death bed. He is on the very point of being sacrificed. He seems to have caught a glimpse with his mind’s eye of the gleaming steel of the executioner’s sword. So he burns with a passionate longing that Timothy, his young but trusted lieutenant, will step into his shoes, carry on from where he has had to stop, and pass on the torch to others.

Paul is fully alert to the difficulties, however, both internal and external. Timothy himself is inexperienced, infirm and shy. The world’s opposition is strong and subtle. And behind these things stands the devil, bent on ‘taking men alive’ and keeping them prisoner. For the devil hates the gospel and uses all his strength and cunning to obstruct its progress, now by perverting it in the mouths of those who preach it, now by frightening them into silence through persecution or ridicule, now by persuading them to advance beyond it into some fancy novelty, now by making them so busy with defending the gospel that they have no time to proclaim it.

So then, knowing the sacred deposit entrusted to him, the imminence of his own martyrdom, the natural weaknesses of Timothy, the opposition of the world and the extreme subtlety of Satan, Paul issues to Timothy his fourfold charge regarding the gospel—to guard it (because it is a priceless treasure), to suffer for it (because it is a stumbling-block to the proud), to continue in it (because it is the truth of God) and to proclaim it (because it is good news of salvation).

Timothy was called to be faithful in his generation; where are the men and women who will be faithful in ours? They are urgently needed. No doubt our response will be: ‘who is sufficient for these things?’ If so, we need to consider two brief expressions in the final verses of the letter, which I have so far passed by.

First in verse 22: ‘The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.’ These are the very last recorded words of the apostle. If he has been dictating thus far (perhaps to Luke), possibly now he takes the pen himself and writes this as his autograph. May ‘the Lord be with you’ (singular), he prays, as he has been with me during my trial (17). And may ‘grace (the word in which all Paul’s

theology is distilled) be with you'. This time the pronoun 'you' is plural, which 'recognizes that the letter was in fact destined for public use'. It was directed to the whole church. It is directed to us today.

Then in verse 18 we read, 'To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.' It would be difficult to find a better summary than these two sentences of the apostle's life and ambition. First, he received grace from Christ. Then he returned glory to Christ. 'From him grace; to him glory.' In all our Christian life and service we should desire no other philosophy than this²

Make every effort to come to me soon; (4:9)

At the beginning of his first letter to Timothy, the apostle addresses him as "my true child in the faith" (1:2) and in this second letter as "my beloved son" (1:2). He had no other earthly friend who was so dear to him.

Nor did he have a coworker who was more dependable. He tells the church at Corinth, "I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:16–17). In the same spirit of confidence, the apostle told the church at Philippi, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare" (Phil. 2:19–20). Timothy not only followed Paul's doctrine but also his example.

The love was mutual. At the beginning of the second letter, the apostle says to Timothy, "I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy" (2 Tim. 1:3–4).

Although the faithful and beloved Luke was with Paul in Rome at the time, the apostle longed to see Timothy with the longing of a father, especially because he knew the possibility of seeing him again in this life would soon be gone. It was therefore imperative that Timothy **make every effort to come to Paul soon.**

Many great Christian leaders have had a spiritual mentor, someone who has taken special care in teaching them the Word and in setting a high example. For Timothy, of course, that person was Paul. Like him, such mentors doubtless have no greater satisfaction than seeing someone under their guidance turn into an effective servant of Christ.

The writer of Hebrews told his readers to "take notice that our brother Timothy has been released" (Heb. 13:23). This young minister was following in Paul's footsteps, even to the point of being put in prison for boldly proclaiming and refusing to compromise the gospel.

DEMAS, THE UNFAITHFUL DESERTER

² Stott, J. R. W. (1973). [*Guard the Gospel the message of 2 Timothy*](#) (pp. 117–127). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica;
(4:10a)

Paul moves from the most faithful to the most unfaithful. It is possible that **Demas** in some way had been valuable to Paul and to the ministry in Rome and that the apostle wanted Timothy to come soon in order to pick up the work that **Demas** had abandoned.

Demas is first mentioned by Paul in Colossians, which was written shortly after 1 Timothy and some five years before 2 Timothy, during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. At that time, **Demas**, along with Luke and Epaphras, was one of the apostle's closest associates (Col. 4:12–14). In the book of Philemon, written about the same time and from the same place, Paul sent greetings in behalf of **Demas**, one of his "fellow workers" (Philem. 24). We can be sure that Paul had invested much time and effort in the careful teaching, counseling, and encouraging of **Demas** and expected him to help carry on the ministry.

At that time any friend of Paul, especially a coworker, risked sharing persecution and prison with him. As the risk increased, Demas's resolve decreased, because he **loved this present world** more than he loved the Lord, the Lord's people, or the Lord's work. He may not have been a true believer at all. "If anyone loves the world," John says, "the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Demas's heart may have been a rocky place, covered by just enough soil to superficially accept the seed of the gospel but not enough to bring full salvation. When the heat of the world's "affliction or persecution" became too fierce, he withered and fell away (Matt. 13:5–6, 20–21). Or perhaps his heart was thorn infested; and when "the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches [choked] the word,... it [proved to be] unfruitful" (Matt. 13:7,22). His reaction to the deprivations faced in his physical life eventually exposed the depravation of his spiritual life.

In any case, his cowardice was greater than his commitment, and he **deserted** Paul. **Deserted** is from *enkataleipo*, a strong verb that means to utterly abandon and leave someone helpless in a dire situation. Perhaps the sacrifice of many comforts, including the probable loss of his own freedom, became too high a price for Demas. He was a fair-weather disciple, who had never considered the cost of genuine commitment to Christ. He may have been caught up emotionally with the idea of a noble cause, which he did his part to serve when the demands were not great. But when the cause became costly, he was nowhere to be found.

His reason for fleeing **to Thessalonica** is not given, but he must have considered it to be a safe haven. Perhaps that was his home (See Philem. 4), in which case he may not have been known there as a Christian, or believers there were not yet persecuted. He may have renounced Christ altogether and rejoined the world. Whatever the case, he brought great disappointment and anguish to Paul.

CRESCENS, THE FAITHFUL UNKNOWN

Crescens has gone to Galatia, (10b)

Except for what little can be inferred from this brief mention, we know nothing about **Crescens**. Because he was sent **to Galatia** by Paul and did not flee, as did Demas, he obviously was a faithful and dependable servant of Christ. There were many churches in that region, most of which were strong and had been founded by the apostle himself. Paul had ministered in

Galatia on each of his three missionary journeys, and believers there held a dear place in his heart. He would not have sent them a man in whom he had less than full confidence.

Crescens was a dedicated leader sent to dedicated churches. He is among the myriads of faithful men and women who, for the most part, were known in the early church but have been unknown in church history and are unknown in the church today. Yet his life and work were an open book to the Lord, and we can be sure that he will receive a full divine reward in addition to the deep gratitude of Paul.

TITUS, THE FAITHFUL KNOWN

Titus to Dalmatia. (4:10c)

Titus, on the other hand, was both known and faithful. Paul's letter to him was written several years after 1 Timothy and about a year before 2 Timothy. Besides here and in the book that carries his name, **Titus** is mentioned by the apostle nine times in 2 Corinthians and twice in Galatians.

Paul apparently had preached in Crete during a brief layover there on his way to Rome under guard (See Acts 27:12). At that time, he left **Titus**, his "true child in a common faith, . . . in Crete, that [he] might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as [Paul] directed" (Titus 1:5).

Titus was a builder and equipper, a man the apostle fully trusted to teach and pastor struggling churches. Sometime after release from his two-year house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30), Paul probably went to Macedonia. From there he went to Dalmatia (Also known as Illyricum; see Rom. 15:19), which was located just north of Macedonia on the east side of the Adriatic Sea. He then traveled south to Nicopolis, a town in the province of Achaia near the Macedonian border. It was here that he asked **Titus** to meet him (Titus 3:12). It may have been from Nicopolis that **Titus** went **to Dalmatia**, probably at the request of Paul, in order to strengthen the church there and build up its leaders.

LUKE, THE FAITHFUL COMPANION

Only Luke is with me. (4:11a)

Some interpreters take Paul's mention of **only** to indicate disappointment with **Luke**, as if the apostle were saying with regret, "I have no real friend or helper left, just **Luke**." But that view is unfair to this man and flies in the face of everything else we know of him from the New Testament. It was rather that this devoted friend could not alone carry the burden of ministry in Rome while the apostle languished in a dungeon with no prospect of release. Because of Nero's brutal persecution, many believers had fled the capital. Those who remained were in constant danger and needed spiritual guidance and encouragement more than ever.

Luke is mentioned by name only three times in the New Testament, of which he is the only Gentile author. Yet he wrote the longest of the four gospels as well as the lengthy book of Acts. Paul himself refers to this man as "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) and as one of his "fellow workers" (Philem. 24). Because of his literary skills, it seems probable that he acted sometimes as Paul's amanuensis.

Although **Luke** was a physician by profession, we are told nothing of any medical work he may have done after his conversion, though he doubtless treated Paul and his other companions as their “beloved physician.” From his gospel we know him as an evangelist, and from the book of Acts as a capable historian. He was used uniquely by the Holy Spirit to chronicle both the life of Christ and the early life of the body of Christ. Yet, as a humble servant of the Lord and of his fellow saints, he carefully kept himself in the background.

Luke had been a longtime companion of Paul, accompanying the apostle for many years and over hundreds, perhaps thousands, of miles. It is easy to trace his direct association with the apostle through his use of plural first-person pronouns in Acts (We, us, our, etc.). He was with Paul at Troas and Philippi during the second missionary journey, joined him again at the end of the third, and went with him to Jeru-salem to face arrest and imprisonment. He accompanied Paul on the trip to Rome, was shipwrecked with him off the shores of Malta, ministered in Rome with him during the first imprisonment, and comforted him during the second and last. At the writing of this letter, the apostle is not sad but glad that Luke still **is with me**.

MARK, THE UNFAITHFUL RESTORED

Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. (4:11b)

We do not know where **Mark** was at this time, but it seems evident that he lived somewhere on the route Timothy would take from Ephesus to Rome. He probably would have traveled by land to Troas (See v. 13) and from there taken a ship to Macedonia. After crossing Macedonia, he may have taken another ship to Brundisium on Italy’s east coast and continued on to Rome.

Mark, who sometimes was called John, was a native of Jerusalem, and one of the first congregations of new believers met in his house (Acts 12:12). Because of his promise as a Christian leader, he was chosen to go with Paul and Barnabas as they set out with other companions on the first missionary journey. But when they “came to Perga in Pamphylia, . . . John [Mark] left them and returned to Jerusalem” (Acts 13:13). Whatever Mark’s specific reason for leaving, Paul did not think it was adequate or excusable. Some years later, Paul and Barnabas set out again from Antioch to “return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” Barnabas wanted to give Mark a second chance, “but Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus” (Acts 15:36–39). Paul had no stomach for men who were lazy, cowardly, or uncommitted. He especially did not want fellow workers who would not carry their share of the load and who bailed out when things became too uncomfortable or demanding.

We do not know if **Mark** changed before or during his ministry with Barnabas, his older cousin (Col 4:10). From all New Testament accounts, Barnabas fully lived up to his name, which means “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36) and probably was a descriptive and loving appellation given to him by the church. Whenever and however the change in **Mark** occurred, Barnabas must have been involved. By the time of Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome—perhaps twenty years after the two had parted company—this young man had proved himself not only to Barnabas but also to Paul. During that incarceration, the apostle asked the church at Colossae to welcome the now faithful **Mark** if he visited them (Col. 4:10) and counted him among his devoted “fellow workers” (Philem. 24).

Mark also spent time with Peter (1 Peter 5:13), from whom he may have received insight into the revelation he records in his gospel. In many ways and to many people, he had become a faithful and valued leader in the early church, and Paul asked Timothy to **bring him [Mark] with you, for he is useful to me for service.**

It is a great disappointment to see gifted servants of the Lord become disinterested in His work and shirk the demands and hardships of ministry. But it is a great satisfaction to see such a person turn from his fears and selfish pursuits and wholeheartedly return to the work of the kingdom.

TYCHICUS, THE FAITHFUL MESSENGER

Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. (4:12)

Perhaps Paul had earlier sent **Tychicus... to Ephesus**, which was located in that man's home province of Asia (Acts 20:4). Or it may be that Paul was sending him there to deliver this second letter to Timothy, just as he had used him to deliver his letters to the churches at Ephesus (Eph. 6:12) and Colossae (Col. 4:7) and perhaps to deliver the letter to Titus (See Titus 3:12).

We do not know what abilities **Tychicus** had, but it seems likely that the Holy Spirit had given him the gift of service (Rom. 12:7). There is no evidence that he was a teacher or pastor, but he was a valuable asset to Paul and a trusted friend.

CARPUS, THE FAITHFUL HOST

When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. (4:13)

Along with his other personal requests of Timothy, Paul asked that he **bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus. Troas** may have been the hometown of **Carpus**; he obviously lived there now. From the context it seems probable that Paul stayed with Carpus there and had entrusted him with the care of several valuable possessions. It also may be that the church in **Troas** met in Carpus's house.

A **cloak** was a large, heavy wool garment that served as both coat and blanket in cold weather, which Paul would soon face (v. 21). In the economy of that day, especially for Christians under Roman persecution, such clothing was extremely expensive.

Books and **parchments** also were expensive. Unlike the cloak, they could provide Paul with no physical comfort or protection, but they were invaluable to him for the sake of the ministry. **Books** probably refers to papyrus scrolls, possibly of Old Testament books. **Parchments** were vellum sheets, made of specially treated animal hides. They were extremely expensive and therefore used for only the most important of documents. These particular **parchments** may have contained copies of Paul's own letters or may have been blank sheets on which he planned to write other letters. He had no plans to finish studying or to finish writing.

One wonders why Paul would not have taken such costly possessions with him wherever he went. It is hard to believe he would have parted with them voluntarily, because the risk of never seeing them again was high. The trouble of taking them along when they were not needed would have paled in light of the trouble, physical and otherwise, of being without them when they *were*

needed. For that reason, some scholars suggest that he was summarily arrested in Troas and had no opportunity, or was not allowed, to take these things with him.

ALEXANDER, THE FAITHLESS ENEMY

Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching. (4:14–15)

Paul devotes almost as many words to **Alexander the coppersmith** as he does to all the other men combined whom he has mentioned in the previous four verses. And for good reason.

This **Alexander** could hardly have been the person who risked his freedom, and possibly his life, by defending Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:33). He may have been the man whom, along with Hymenaeus, the apostle had “delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20).

But Paul’s identifying him as **the coppersmith** probably indicates he was neither of those men. Alexander was a common name in that day, and Ephesus was a large city. Like “Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis” (Acts 19:24), this **Alexander** may have been an idol-maker who fiercely resented the apostle and did him **much harm**. For that, as well as for his false teaching, **the Lord will repay him according to his deeds**, Paul said. Faithful to God’s Word (Deut. 32:35), including his own teaching of it (Rom. 12:19), he left vengeance in the hands of God.

Because the apostle tells Timothy to **be on guard against him yourself**, this enemy may have lived in Rome and caused Paul trouble during one or both of his imprisonments. In that case, he was warning Timothy to be on the lookout for him when he arrived there to see Paul.

Even worse than the harm Alexander caused Paul personally was the harm he had done to the cause of Christ by being **vigorously opposed** to Paul’s **teaching**. More than an enemy of Paul, he was the enemy of God.

THE UNFAITHFUL ANONYMOUS

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. (4:16)

Defense translates *apologia*, from which we derive the English “apology” and “apologetics.” It referred to a verbal defense and frequently was used as a legal term. In the Roman court system, an accused person had two hearings, the *prima actio*, to clearly establish the charge, and the *secunda actio*, to determine guilt or innocence. Paul’s **first defense** would therefore have been a *prima actio*.

Whatever kind of trial it was, not one of Paul’s friends and fellow believers had **supported** him. As with the noun **defense**, the Greek verb behind **supported** may have been a legal term, referring to official testimony in court. **No one** stood by Paul or testified on his behalf; instead they **all deserted him**.

It seems certain that Onesiphorus, who “often refreshed [Paul], and was not ashamed of [his] my chains” (1:16), and the faithful Luke (4:11) had not yet arrived in Rome. Had they been there at that time, they would have stood by Paul and gladly shared his fate.

The price for such a stand could have been high. Because Paul was such a well-known leader among the Christians, and because Nero was so vehemently anti-Christian, some scholars believe the emperor himself may have presided over this hearing. Only a few years earlier, Nero had set Rome ablaze, blaming the unbelievably callous and evil deed on the Christians. While still alive, some Christians were sewn into the skins of freshly killed animals and released into the arena among wild dogs, who tore them to pieces. Others were coated with pitch and set afire to light Nero's garden parties. That would be no excuse, of course, for those whom Jesus called not to take up their own crosses and follow Him (Matt. 10:38; 16:24; 27:40).

And although their actions were indefensible, perhaps some of them only rejected Paul, not Christ. Some may have been weak-hearted but not false-hearted. In any case, Paul prayed that their desertion might **not be counted against them**. Like Stephen (Acts 7:60) and the Lord Himself (Luke 23:24), the apostle had a supremely forgiving spirit.

CHRIST, THE FAITHFUL LORD

But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth. The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.
(4:17–18)

Empirewide persecution of the church had begun and Paul was on trial for his life. He stood before the dreadful Roman tribunal, perhaps before Nero himself. The court would have been jammed with spectators, much as in the trials of famous people in our own day, except that none of the spectators in Rome was on Paul's side (cf. Acts 23:11).

Verses 17–18 form the apex of this passage, testifying to the faithfulness of Christ, **the Lord [who] stood with [Paul] and strengthened [him]**. He **stood** there not only or even primarily for Paul's sake but **that through** the apostle **the proclamation** of the gospel **might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear**. Paul was the unique and divinely appointed apostle to the **Gentiles** (Rom. 11:13), and it was above all for their salvation and for the Lord's glory that the apostle himself ministered (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17).

Paul often had been **delivered out of the lion's mouth**, a common figure of mortal danger (See Ps. 22:21; 35:17). It also was the specific danger into which the Lord allowed Daniel to be placed and from which He miraculously delivered the prophet (Dan. 6:16–23). An immeasurably greater threat—for Paul and for every believer—comes from Satan himself, our “adversary, the devil, [who] prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Yet even the devil has no ultimate power over those who belong to Christ.

Paul did not fear physical danger. Many times he had faced death, and at least once was left for dead (See Acts 14:19). “Whatever I face,” he declared, **the Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom**. He knew that the completion of his own salvation was nearer than when he first believed (cf. Rom. 13:11) and preferred “rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). For Paul, as for every believer, “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). And although the apostle would not give up the battle until the Lord took him home, his loneliness, pain, deprivation, and desertion made the prospect of heaven all the more appealing.

For that and for everything the Lord had done, was doing, and was yet to do, Paul exulted, **To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

THE FAITHFUL OLD FRIENDS

Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. (4:19–20)

Paul did not fail to remember old friends. He had met **Prisca and Aquila** at Corinth on his second missionary journey. They had fled Italy when the Emperor Claudius ordered all Jews expelled from Rome (Acts 18:2). Because they were fellow tentmakers, Paul stayed at their house while “reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks” (v. 4). When he and his party left Corinth, he took along this devoted couple and left them to minister in Ephesus (vv. 18–19). While there, Priscilla (The longer form of **Prisca**) and **Aquila** met a fellow “Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, [who]... was mighty in the Scriptures” (v. 24). When they realized Apollos’s understanding of the gospel was incomplete, they lovingly took him aside “and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (v. 26). In his letter to the Roman church, the apostle greeted “Prisca and Aquila, [his] fellow workers in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 16:3), indicating that these two special friends were again living and ministering in Corinth, the city from which the epistle was written.

Earlier in this letter, Paul expressed appreciation **for the household of Onesiphorus**, who “often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains” (1:16). Because the **household** is mentioned in both places, it is obvious that everyone in it was a Christian, perhaps led to Christ by **Onesiphorus** himself. Such a **household** would have included not only family members but also servants and friends who lived with **Onesiphorus**.

The **Erastus [who] remained at Corinth** probably was “the city treasurer” of Corinth, who sent greetings through Paul to the church at Rome (Rom. 16:23). He also may have been the man whom the apostle sent with Timothy to minister in Macedonia (Acts 19:22).

Trophimus was a native of the province of Asia, specifically the city of Ephesus, and had accompanied Paul from Greece to Troas (Acts 20:1–6). He probably helped carry the offering to the church in Jerusalem, where he was the unintentional cause of Paul’s arrest for presumably bringing a Gentile into the temple (Acts 21:29). On his trip to Rome, Paul sadly had to leave him **sick at Miletus**.

It is important to note that Paul made no effort himself to heal **Trophimus**, who, incidentally, was present at the late-night service in Troas when the apostle miraculously restored life to Eutychus, a young man who went to sleep during the sermon and fell out a window to his death (Acts 20:9–10; cf. v.4). The sign gifts were coming to an end. There is no evidence that any of the apostles, including Paul, performed miracles of any sort during their later years. As more and more of the New Testament was revealed and made available to the church, God’s Word no longer needed the verification of miracles.³

³ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [2 Timothy](#) (pp. 204–214). Chicago: Moody Press.