

## SOME PERSONAL MATTERS

### II Timothy 4:9-18

These verses cause the meaning and power of the whole Epistle to stand out in clearer light. They disclose the dark, damp, cold and cheerless dungeon in which the letter was written. They reveal the great apostle, despised, deserted, yet undaunted even by the shadow of approaching death, and still sustained by his unconquerable faith. They introduce characters who were so associated with heroic missionary efforts that their appearance enforces the great exhortation of the Epistle to be loyal to the truth and to be steadfast in service.

Facing death and writing from the dungeon in Rome, Paul longed for the presence of his "beloved child" Timothy. He wanted him to come quickly, that is, "before winter." Paul was lonely. In the darkness of his dungeon he longed for companionship. No doubt he desired the help of Timothy in the furtherance of the work which neither bonds nor imprisonment ever stopped; yet there need be no question that the tender heart of the great apostle yearned for sympathy and Christian fellowship. If there are those who can be happy without friends, Paul certainly was one of them. He was not merely a man of mighty intellect, but a man of deep affection and of tender emotions, and in the light of these verses we realize that this last letter is a monument of his love.

Paul was exceedingly anxious to see Timothy once more before his impending death, so he urged him to come to him immediately, especially before winter. Possibly he already knew that he was to be executed as a martyr that winter. Moreover, because the cold weather was near at hand he wanted Timothy to bring him the needed supplies that would help to make the winter more comfortable in that underground dungeon.

Paul explained his loneliness and the urgency of his summons by telling Timothy of the dispersion of that circle of friends who for a time had cheered the darkness of his dungeon. One had deserted him; two had left him for reasons which he did not mention, but possible on evangelistic tours; and one had been sent by him to Ephesus.

#### 1. Demas the deserter. 4:10a.

Demas, a fellow-worker and assistant in the gospel ministry of other years, had forsaken Paul. Demas had not left Paul on some legitimate mission, but had left him in the lurch, had abandoned him. He left his companion down in the clutch of circumstances. Demas had forsaken Paul because he had fallen in love with the present age, the "world" on this side of the grave.

##### (1) A worldly spirit.

What damage that has done to individual Christians and to the Lord's churches! This spirit manifests itself in many ways.

##### a. Possessions.

Sometimes there is a lust to get or the policy of grab.

##### b. Pleasure.

Pleasure is reasonable, but it can also become ruinous. It makes for good health to have relaxation and enjoyment. Yet, it can completely run away with us if we are not careful. We may legitimately enjoy our pleasures provided they are of the right kind, at the right time, and in the right proportion.

c. Popularity.

It is nice to be popular, but it can also be a snare. After all, it is not what others will think but what He will think.

d. Pride.

This is peculiarly ugly in a believer, but a worldly spirit readily engenders it.

e. The Present.

It is unfortunate to have the habit of looking at things from the viewpoint of the present. It is really surprising how many Christians have acquired this squint. You can understand it in the worldling, but it is dreadfully out of place in a believer in Christ.

(2) A cowardly spirit.

Demas deserted. There was nothing ennobling or enriching about this man's going.

a. Why did he go?

Persecution of Christians was in the air; to continue with Paul, and be known as one of them, was to court trouble. He decided he had better go while the going was good.

b. Where did he go?

He went to Thessalonica. Seemingly he thought if he went there that he would no longer be an out-and-out Christian. It must not have dawned upon him that a half-hearted Christian always will be uncomfortable wherever he is. Such a person is like a man with a headache, who doesn't want to lose his head, but it hurts him to keep it; so this Christian doesn't want to lose his religion, but it hurts him to keep it. Of Demas Maclaren said, "He was a religious man who had not religion enough to resist the constant attractions and seductions of the present." Demas disgraced himself in deserting Paul in the hour of his direst need. Having fallen in love with the pleasures and promises of his day, he forsook the high road for the low and went to Thessalonica. Perhaps he thought that the deepest desires of his soul could be better satisfied there than elsewhere.

2. Crescens. 4:10b.

Whether Crescens had been dispatched upon an honorable mission, or had decided that it would be wise for him to labor in a field where his life would be safer than in Rome, Paul did not state. Crescens had gone to Galatia. No reason was given for his going, but there was no word of censure because he did. His name does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament. He was one of the many relatively unknowns who played a very important part in the early days of the history of Christianity.

How much God's cause has been advanced by ordinary and unknown people. It is impressing to read Hebrews eleven and notice how, after the recital of those great and ever-glorious names, there follows the words "and others" (verse 35). These "others" were just anonymous

heroes of the faith. Have you ever heard of Hanani? You have heard of Nehemiah, but you would not have done so if it had not been for Hanani. It was he who lit the flame in the heart of the famous man. Nehemiah was a Torch, a flame for God, but Hanani was the Match that lit the Torch. Who was Edward Kimball? He was only a shoemaker and an humble Sunday School teacher. He, too, was a Match, and his Torch was Dwight L. Moody. How many such have advanced the cause. Crescens was that sort, one of the rank and file.

3. Titus. 4:10c.

Titus had been with Paul in the early part of his second imprisonment. He had been a faithful partner with the Apostle in the contention with the Judaizers, had helped Paul with the problems at Corinth, had represented him in Crete, and had been the recipient of a letter from him. Doubtless Paul had sent him to Dalmatia on an important mission. Titus was not just an ordinary man.

(1) He was a leader.

(2) He was led.

This was the secret of his successful leadership. Joshua became Moses' successor, because he had been such a success as "Moses' minister." He led so well because he had learned to follow. Mark how Titus was led, and you will not be surprised that he was a leader.

a. He was led to Christ.  
Paul did that for him.

b. He was led for Christ.  
The Apostle followed up the work of grace in his heart, nurturing him for the Master, and leading him onward in His service. The Epistle to Titus is part of the wonderful preparation he gave him for his task.

c. He was led by Christ.  
Our Lord led him into rich depths of spiritual experience and into all kinds of service. It was with Titus, as it would be for any Christian, that because he followed so closely, he led so well.

4. Luke. 4:11a.

Luke was the only companion Paul had when he wrote this letter. It might be difficult to determine whether this statement, "Only Luke is with me," depicts more vividly the loneliness of Paul or the heroism of Luke. No one else was willing to share the rigor and peril of his imprisonment. However, there was no one whom Paul would have preferred to Luke. In this last scene of Paul's life, nothing could be more fitting than this sketch of Luke, amid the deepening shadows standing steadfast by his side.

Luke was a remarkable person. "The beloved physician" was always loyal to Paul, to the gospel of Christ and to the Lord. Paul needed a doctor and a friend. Luke was both, and directly or indirectly may also have served in the capacity of Paul's secretary.

Possessing an attractive personality, a charming manner and great literary gifts, Luke gave all that he was and had to Christ. Because of his affection for and fidelity to Paul, he was a wonderful help to the Apostle, giving him so much comfort and encouragement. This fact, along with his matchless gospel and record of the early history of Christianity, marks him as one of the Lord's great servants.

5. Mark. 4:11b.

"Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." This name has become an inspiration to those who have known the bitterness of failure in the service of Christ.

(1) His past failure.

Mark went out with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but left them at Perga and returned to his home in Jerusalem. Because his life had been marred by that grievous fault, Paul considered him to be a cowardly deserter and refused to permit him to be his companion on the second missionary journey. Since he had proved untrustworthy, Paul would not agree to take him along a second time lest he might conclude that it was a mere pleasurable excursion. He wanted a man who would stay with him and endure the hardships of the journey and not go back home if things became difficult.

Paul and Barnabas were both very godly men, but taking Mark with them a second time was something on which they could not agree. Barnabas, who was closely related to Mark, pleaded with Paul to give him another chance, but he refused to do so. The contention between them became so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took Mark and returned to Cyprus. Paul chose Silas to go with him in another direction. In spite of their differences of opinion, God blessed and used both Paul and Barnabas and later they were very warm friends.

(2) His present condition.

By the grace of God and through the tender handling of Barnabas, Mark climbed out of the ditch of failure. Mark made good in spite of his initial failure. He became useful to the Master and to His servant, Paul. He had redeemed his reputation and so convinced the Apostle of his sincerity, his devotion and his worth, that he was summoned to aid Paul in an hour of supreme danger, and in circumstances from which other friends were ready to flee.

(3) His prospective honor.

We can never tell what God has in mind for the returning backslider. For Mark it was something unspeakably honorable, namely, God had chosen him to be the writer of the Gospel which bears his name.

(4) His perennial lesson.

It is that there is always a way back home for the backslider.

6. Tychicus. 4:12.

Paul had long since discovered how utterly trustworthy Tychicus was, and he sent him on numerous delicate missions. He had carried the letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians. Perhaps he had something to do with the safe delivery of this letter to Timothy. This trusted associate of Paul was given high place in the Scriptures.