

2 Timothy 4B

I was originally going to bypass the closing verses of 2 Timothy and move on to the next study BUT when I reread and really contemplated the closing verses and listened to John Piper's exposition of the text I was convinced that we had to study them together.

The text is choppy; it contains a scattered array of Paul's final thoughts. In many ways it's like the communication of a wife to her husband as he is walking out the door in the morning:

- Remember that we have dinner with the Lucidi's tonight.
- You have to pick up a dessert.
- Jimmy has baseball practice until 4:30.
- Stop at the drycleaners on your way to pick up Jimmy.
- He is leaving for camp tomorrow.
- Don't forget to sign and fax the permission slip that is in your briefcase.
- My mother called to say that she is not feeling well and Nicky took her to the hospital.
- Pray for her on your way to work.... Oh can you take dad to the hospital on your lunch hour.
- Remember, I LOVE YOU!

Paul's closes his letter to Timothy with a barrage of emotional communication, expressing deep loneliness, disappointment, concern over his opposition and finally he speaks of his great comfort.

- That will be our outline for today:
 - Loneliness - Disappointment - Opposition - Comfort

Remember the context of this letter: The church is undergoing a severe persecution and the great Apostle Paul is sitting in prison, under the deranged rule of Nero. He has been convicted of a capital crime and his death is imminent.

- His last words are uniquely helpful to every one of us in the church today.
 - After all who among us has not endured a season of loneliness?
 - Which of us has NOT been disappointed, let down by a Christian brother?
 - All who take a strong stand for the Gospel will eventually face some form of opposition.
 - In all of this we take great comfort in knowing that the Lord will never leave us or forsake us.

Let's begin with Paul's loneliness.

Listen to the pathos, the emotion of Paul's heart as he writes to Timothy.

9 **Do your best to come to me soon.** (Realize - Timothy was 1000 miles away)

- YET - Like Father and Son Paul longs for Timothy as he faces his last days.

10 For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 12 Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 16 At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me.

20 Erastus remained at Corinth, I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.

- Paul is lonely: I wonder if you are able to relate to him today? Those you thought to be good friends have left and you are alone, facing life's greatest trial by yourself.

Even in the church, relationships can be hard and believers are not immune to loneliness. One of the most difficult phrases to read is found in verse 16 where Paul says:

2 Timothy 4:16 **At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me.**

- When Paul stood before Nero, at his preliminary trial, NO ONE stood with him.
 - Where was Luke, was he afraid, or simply away that day?
 - What about the others that Paul names: Eubulus, Pudens, Linus and Claudia, where were they? (Did they run away like the disciples on the night that the Lord Jesus was arrested?) Self preservation is a STRONG motivator.
 - Some of the brothers get a pass, they had excuses: Tychicus was sent to Ephesus, Erastus remained at Corinth, Trophimus was ill at Miletus.
 - Paul stands alone before the judge. His loneliness is clearly evident in the words that he writes.

Albert Einstein said: "It is strange to be known so universally and yet to be so lonely."

(At times: I have found myself to be lonely even in a crowd)

John Milton (English Poet best known for his work, "*Paradise Lost*") said, "Loneliness is the first thing which God's eye named 'Not Good.'" (Genesis: "Man to be alone")

When you stop to consider it: Human beings are uniquely fickle. There are times when we grow tired of the crowd, times when we get on each other's nerves and we need some time alone.

Other times, times of difficulty we are easily offended when nobody is there for us.

- We might say: "If they were real Christians they would have been here in my time of need."
- *Nobody loves me everybody hates me I'm going to eat some worms.*
- Somehow we make a direct correlation between being absent and being indifferent. Immediately we think the worst. We conclude "*they just don't care.*"
- BUT in reality that is too simplistic. After all, in life, STUFF HAPPENS.
- People are imperfect, fallible, frail and finite.
- Even good friends will disappoint you. Spouses will fail you.
 - Forget your birthday, be out of town at a time when you need them most.

That brings us to the SECOND POINT:
People, *even* people in the church *will* disappoint you.

2 Timothy 4:10, **For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.**

- Ever been deserted by a friend? Someone you shared sweet fellowship with for years and all of a sudden they take off. What happened?
- What do we know about this Demas?
- Scripture shows that he was a co-worker with Paul during his first imprisonment.

Colossians 4: 14 **Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.**

Philemon 1:23 **Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, 24 and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.**

- Paul names Demas as one of his: “fellow workers”
- BUT something in Thessalonica, rather, something in this present world drew his affections away from the Gospel. He abandoned Paul because he loved this present world.
- Was it romance? Financial gain? A business opportunity - “*I have gifts that are in demand in the marketplace. I can make a lot of money.*” I have served the Lord for a long time, I need to take care of ME.

Demas is a good example of the seed that is sown among the thorns.

Mark 4:18 **And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.**

- As the seed of God’s word is broadcasted finds its way into thorny soil. This soil depicts a crowded heart. The heart that is populated by many loves. It is a heart that simply adds Jesus to a long list of other passions. Sooner or later the Word of God is pushed out by the ever pressing cares of this present world.
- It could have been money, romance, success, pleasure we really don’t know but whatever it was Demas loved it more than he loved the Lord Jesus.

Like Paul, MY heart has been saddened by the many Demas like believers that have been important to me over the years; beloved friends whose love for the world now supersedes their love for the Lord.

- They think that they are OK with God. BUT they have abandoned the body.
- They may send their money but they withhold their heart.
- Their priorities are dictated by this present world rather than the Holy Spirit.
- Their Bibles have a prominent place by their bedside which is fitting because they are spiritually asleep.
 - Which of us has NOT been disappointed, let down by a Christian brother?
 - How do you handle disappointment? Do you get angry? Cut people off? Are you someone who seeks reconciliation and restoration?

From disappointment we move to Opposition.

2 Timothy 4: 14 **Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.** 15 **Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.**

- Everyone who takes a strong stand for the Gospel will eventually face some form of opposition.

It is unclear exactly who this Alexander is (aside from his vocation)

- It is possible that he is the same Alexander mentioned in 1 Timothy the one who made shipwreck of his faith?

1 Timothy 1: 19 **holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith,** 20 **among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.**

- Whoever he was, we do know that he did Paul great harm. His attack was personal, his attack was intense, his attack was evil.
- The word translated “DID” “**did me great harm**” is often used as a legal term for one who informs against another.
- It may be that Alexander was somehow responsible for Paul’s arrest or he may have served as a witness against Paul in the trial in which Paul was sentenced to death.
- With all of this in mind, Paul’s concern is not for himself, he has given Alexander over to the Lord, he is simply providing Timothy with a fair warning.
- Other than the Lord Jesus, I don’t know anyone who suffered more than the Apostle Paul and YET he never speaks a bitter word, he doesn’t hold a grudge.

What do we know?

- Paul was alone at his defense, abandoned by all of his friends.
- AND YET he says, “*I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.*” Paul does not hold this against his brothers and he asks the Lord not to hold it against them.
 - We can learn from Paul’s example and from his words:

It is so easy to become bitter against the fickle, fallible, frailties and the finiteness of fallen men BUT in reality WE ourselves are guilty of the very same things for which we so easily judge others. Paul writes:

Ephesians 4: 31 **Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.** 32 **Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**

- Because we are all broken, all unfinished works of God’s grace we need to let go of all bitterness and forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven us.
- In this very text Paul gives us a good example of this forgiveness.

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

- *Bring Mark with you...* There was a time when Paul refused to travel with Mark.
- During his first missionary journey Mark abandoned Paul and returned home.

Acts 13: 13 **Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem,**

- We're not sure why Mark left that first missionary team, whether he was homesick, fearful or disheartened.
- What we DO know is that Paul was so upset by Mark's departure that when Barnabas suggested that Mark accompany them on the Second Missionary journey there was a falling out between Paul and Barnabas and they went separate directions.
- Here in 2 Timothy we find that GOOD FRIENDS can LET YOU DOWN and still REMAIN good friends.

LAST POINT: Paul's Comfort:

2 Timothy 4:16 **At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! 17 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed 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 deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

- While we receive comfort from the friends the Lord brings into our lives eventually our friends leave us: JOBS move them away, circumstances of life bring an unwanted but necessary separation BUT there is only One Friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Proverbs 18:24 **A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.**

- In seasons of loneliness, times of disappointment, even when we face opposition, the LORD stands with us. He alone will never leave or forsake us.

Isaiah 43:1 **But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.**

- Here in Paul's final letter we find that the rivers of loneliness have not overtaken him, the fires of opposition have not burned him. Why? The Lord is there!

From Genesis through Revelation we see that the Lord has a desire to dwell WITH man.

- In the Garden of Eden Adam walked with God in the cool of the day.
- BUT SIN broke the fellowship between God and man.
- What was God's remedy? Come to earth, put on human flesh and tabernacle among man, bearing in his own body the penalty of man's transgression for all who believe.

- Because of Christ's obedience to the will of the Father the final state for man is described for us in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 21: 3 **And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.**

4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

- It is the Lord's good pleasure to dwell with his people.
- If you belong to the Lord Jesus this morning, YOU are never alone, you have a friend who sticks closer than a brother, a comforter who is able to help in your time of need.

2 Corinthians 1: 3 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**

- We prayed for a number of friends this morning. We have brothers and sisters with great needs... Let's do our best to care for them in their time of need.
- More importantly, let's keep pointing them to the God of all comfort.