

**THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD**  
Arlington Presbyterian Church (PCA)

***“Lonely but Not Alone”***  
2 Timothy 4:9-16, 19-22 (599)  
March 17, 2002

It is customary to begin a sermon by reading the text from which it springs. This morning as I do so I want to supply something of a running commentary. As we read through these verses you will notice that Paul makes no mention of administrative procedures and policies, church growth strategies, ministry programs, or statistical analyses. He is dealing with the strategic movements of strategic men. The obvious focus is on people. In these twelve verses Paul refers to seventeen individuals by name. My commentary will highlight these seventeen people. Let's begin with ...

**Verse 9. *Make every effort to come to me soon.*** Do you recall how Paul began this letter to Timothy? In **1:4** he said, *I thank God ... 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.* The words *come to me*, which appear in the Greek text itself, add a touching personal dimension to Paul's request. Timothy's will be no mere business trip. Before Paul's life is ended he wants to see, to embrace, and to fellowship and strategize with Timothy, his dearest son in the faith, brother in the Lord, and associate in the work of the gospel.

**Verse 10. For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.** Demas is mentioned in two other verses in the New Testament – **Colossians 4:14** and in **Philemon 24** where he is called a *fellow-worker*. Demas had accompanied Paul for years but had just recently defected. He is listed first maybe because his departure was particularly painful. Paul's explanation is simply that Demas *loved this present world*. It may have been that Demas, **weary** of hardship, bailed out with the expectation of ease and comfort back home. It may have been that Demas was **afraid**. Calvin says, "He could not stay with Paul without becoming involved in Paul's trials and tribulations and putting his own life on the line" (p.164). It may have been that Demas was simply **distracted** by the pleasures, possessions, and passions of this life and went after them. Whatever it was he rejected the way of the cross in favor of the way of comfort and convenience.

**Crescens has gone to Galatia.** *Crescens*, of whom we know nothing, was a co-worker who has been dispatched to Galatia, north central Turkey, for ministry. **Titus to Dalmatia.** *Titus*, a Greek (**Gal. 2:3**), was a convert of Paul (**Titus 1:4**) and one of the apostle's most trusted and capable associates. He has been dispatched on an evangelistic mission to *Dalmatia*, the coastal area of current Bosnia-Herzegovina.

**Verse 11. Only Luke is with me.** Luke is the *beloved physician* (**Col. 4:14**) who often accompanied Paul, making his contribution through kind personal

service. This is the same Luke who probably authored Luke and Acts. ***Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.*** John Mark was the son of a Mary at whose house Peter and other believers in Jerusalem met for prayer (**Acts 12:12**). He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. When they reached the city of Perga, John Mark left the team and returned to Jerusalem (**Acts 12:25; 13:5,13**). As they planned for their second journey (**Acts 15:36**), Barnabas wanted to take Mark along (**15:37**). Paul did not (**15:38**). So sharp was their disagreement that the men separated (**15:39**). Barnabas took Mark and Paul took Silas (**Acts 15:39-40**). But now Paul says of Mark, he's a good man to have around (Barclay, p.217).

**Verse 12. *But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.*** In **Ephesians 6:21** Paul refers to Tychicus as *the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord* (see also **Col. 4:7**). In **Titus 3:12** we learn that Paul sent him to Crete to relieve Titus so Titus could come to Paul. Here in **4:12** we learn that *Tychicus* is now being sent to *Ephesus* to relieve Timothy so that Timothy could come to Paul. *Tychicus* must have been a great "sixth man." A great interim pastor so to speak, very capable and willing to do whatever it took to advance the gospel.

**Verse 13. *When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.*** We know nothing of *Carpus* except that he was a believer who lived in *Troas* and into whose care Paul had

left a *cloak*. We are not sure about these *parchments*. They may have been portions of the Old Testament Scriptures or some sort of ministry log book.

**Verses 14-15.** *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.* This is most likely the same *Alexander* mentioned in **1 Timothy 1:20**. A former church member so disaffected that he aggressively opposed the gospel and the men who preached it.

**Verse 16.** *At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.* This is probably a reference to Paul's arraignment before the Roman judiciary to answer to the charges leveled against him. Sadly, no one appeared to speak in his behalf.

**Verse 19.** *Greet Prisca and Aquila.* *Priscilla and Aquila* had fled Rome when Claudius ordered all the Jews to leave the city (**Acts 18:2**). They settled in Corinth (**18:1**) where "Paul made their acquaintance and worked and lived with them for a time (**18:2-3**)" (Towner, p.213). All three departed for Asia Minor and *Aquila and Priscilla* settled for a time in Ephesus (**18:19**). By the time Paul wrote his letter to the Romans they had moved back there (**Rom. 16:3**). "Yet when Paul wrote 2 Timothy they had apparently returned to Asia Minor ... in the vicinity of Ephesus" (Towner, p.213). This man and his wife were very dear to Paul having hosted a church in their house wherever they lived (**Rom. 16:5a; 1 Cor.**

**16:11)** and having risked their lives for the apostle (**Rom. 16:4**). ***And the household of Onesiphorus.*** *Onesiphorus* was a source of great joy to Paul. Courageous and consistent in his ministry to Paul and to the gospel having identified with the apostle when the price he might pay was high. While not conclusive, some take this mention of his *household* to suggest that *Onesiphorus* is dead at the time of this writing.

**Verse 20.** ***Erastus remained at Corinth.*** Probably the co-worker of Paul mentioned in **Acts 19:22**. ***But Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.*** *Miletus* was a mere 36 miles from Trophimus' home of Ephesus. There Paul had to leave another who had served so faithfully.

**Verse 21.** ***Make every effort to come before winter.*** Three reasons have been suggested for this urgency. First, Paul needed his cloak to ward off the winter chill. Second Paul suspected that his case would have run its course through the Roman judicial system by then and his execution would be at hand. Third, because of winter storms, shipping on the Mediterranean almost came to a complete halt from November through March. ***Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren.*** These are Roman Christians, possibly leaders in the church there.

**Verse 22.** ***The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.***

It is abundantly clear in both Testaments that we are saved as individuals but we are saved into the community of faith, the body of Christ, the people of God. There was an old song by Paul Simon in which he says, "I am a rock. I am an island." This may not be said of the Christian. Indeed, to the degree that you live distant or in isolation from the covenant community your profession is hollow and your perception of Christianity is distorted. You live a brand of Christianity of which the New Testament knows nothing. The great preoccupation of Paul over the course of his Christian life and ministry was the people of God, the saints. He could say to the Philippians, You are *my joy and crown (4:1)* ... I live *for your progress and joy in the faith (1:25)*. He assured the Corinthians, *I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls (2 Cor. 12:15)*. When you near the end of your earthly pilgrimage, it will be shown that it's the saints, not your stuff, that really mattered. My hope is that you will embrace this truth and live accordingly **now** rather than ignoring it until it's too late. Let me try to put this in perspective.

Paul endured two periods of incarceration in Rome (59-61/62 AD; 67/68 AD) with a 5-year break in between (62-67 AD). The first imprisonment is described for us in **Acts 28:30-31**, *And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.* The second imprisonment was much different. Rather than being housed in rented quarters, he languished in the Mamertine dungeon. Now what food he received

was lowered to him through a hole in the top of his prison cave. The only clothes he owned were those on his back. His only expressed physical want was the almost pitiful request for the *cloak* he had left with *Carpus* (4:13). The question may be this: “What’s left when there’s nothing left?” The answer is, I believe, people. In this life ...

**Your greatest asset will be the saints.** Don’t miss this beloved. Look around at all you possess and want to possess. You will take none of it with you. None of it has or ever will satisfy your soul. And in the end you will care for none of it. One of the more poignant moments for me in Tennessee attending my father in the hospital was gathering his few clothes, putting them into a plastic bag labeled “Patient Belongings,” and carrying them out to the car. In the providence of God, his world is largely reduced to a single room on the ground level of our house with a bed, a bathroom, a TV, and a table to eat on.

Paul had never been a wealthy man in terms of either money or “creature comforts” (2 Cor. 6:10). Although he owned nothing and his world had been reduced to a cold, damp hole in the ground, the apostle was a rich man. That which is truly valuable is that which will last. People are the only things that are eternal. We will all leave this world exactly as we came into it - naked without a single material possession. Paul anticipated an eternity in the company of *just men made perfect* and so his investment in this life was in that same company.

**Your greatest joy will be the saints.** One of Paul's most intense desires and sources of joy was the thought and presence of Timothy, his beloved child in the faith; the one who had served him *like a child serving his father* (**Phil. 2:22**). What delight Paul must have taken in considering *Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, Carpus, Prisca and Aquila, Onesiphorus, Erastus, Trophimus, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia* and all the brothers and sisters. Let's face it. Your house, your car, your furniture will never visit you in the hospital, never take your hand and pray for you, never prepare a meal for you and your children, never talk about the things of Christ with you. They won't sing hymns or read the Scripture to you as you lay dying. Folks, it's about the saints, not the stuff. It's about people, not possessions or professions. Paul invested his life in the saints and enjoyed the dividends for a lifetime. His delight was *in them* (**1:16, Timothy**). His dependence was *upon them* (**4:11, Mark**). His fellowship was *with them* (**4:11, Luke**). His prayers were *for them* (**1:3, Timothy**). His memories were *of them* (**1:3-4, Timothy**).

**Your greatest legacy will be the saints.** Paul had spent a lifetime preparing men to take his place. These men were not mere "go-fers," but godly souls upon whose shoulders the full weight of spiritual responsibility rested. Paul had invested his life in *Timothy*, in *Titus*, in *Luke*, in *Tychicus* ... in *Onesiphorus*, in *Trophimus*, in *Priscilla and Aquila*, and in countless others. In Acts and in the Pauline Epistles it is rare to find the man alone. He always has someone with him. He was always teaching, coaching, mentoring, nurturing through formal

instruction, demonstration, and way of life. For you the question is not, “Into what have I invested my life” but rather “Into whom have I invested my life?” Here’s the main reason.

The gospel makes progress through people. The movement of the great itinerant evangelist had been halted. The voice which thundered before great crowds now echoed off the granite walls of his prison and returned to his own ears. The range of the one who had traversed the entire northern Mediterranean was now limited by his chains to a radius of a few feet. His contacts were limited to prison guards and any friends who might be allowed to visit. And yet the gospel continued to advance. And it did so through people Paul had led to Christ and trained (ex. Timothy and Titus).

**Acts 1:8**, but **you** shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon **you**; and **you** shall be My witnesses. **Acts 11:19-21**, So then those who were scattered ... began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. The comfort is that the gospel will progress until all of the elect are called and all of the saints gathered in. Not one will be missing. The challenge is that God has ordained that this will occur through the instrumentality of people like Paul, Timothy, Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, Tychicus, Prisca and Aquila, Onesiphorus, Trophimus ... people like you and me. *Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17).*

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The great \_\_\_\_\_ of Paul over the course of his Christian life and ministry was the people of God ... the saints.

When you near the end of your earthly pilgrimage, it will be shown that ...

it's the \_\_\_\_\_ , not your \_\_\_\_\_ , that really mattered.

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His \_\_\_\_\_ was **in** them (1:16, *Timothy*).

His \_\_\_\_\_ was **upon** them (4:11, *Mark*).

His fellowship was **with** them (4:11, *Luke*).

His prayers were **for** them (1:3, *Timothy*).

His \_\_\_\_\_ were **of** them (1:3-4, *Timothy*).

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The gospel continued to advance. And it did so through \_\_\_\_\_ Paul had led to Christ and trained.

**2 Timothy 2:9**, the word of God is not imprisoned. **Acts 1:8**, but **you** shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon **you**; and **you** shall be My witnesses. **Acts 11:19-21**, So then those who were scattered ... began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

## FOR CARE GROUP DISCUSSION

As parents we know what it means to be responsible and accountable for our physical children and grandchildren. At the same time, when challenged to assume responsibility for the spiritual nurture of another **SPECIFIC** believer we respond as if the concept came from Mars. How do you account for such a “disconnect?”

The subtitle of Michael Bentley's commentary on these verses (4:9-22) is “*Lonely but not Alone.*” How was this true for Paul? What can each of us do **NOW** in order that the same might be true of us as our earthly pilgrimage draws to a close?

Both the greatest disappointments and the greatest joys in ministry are occasioned by people. How was this confirmed in Paul's experience (Note: Review the seventeen people)? In your own experience?