



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

LAST WORDS...FAITHFUL FEW! - 2 TIMOTHY 4:11-13

COLORADO

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Rome was a place of brutal persecution and turmoil for believers during Nero's reign. Because of that, many Christians fled. Any who dared remain were in constant danger. With Paul, as their leader thrown in prison and awaiting imminent death by execution for his faith, who would be left to carry on the work of ministry in Rome and around the world?

I. LAST WORDS...FAITHFUL FEW! - 2 TIMOTHY 4:11B-13

(11) "Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you for he is useful to me for service. (12) But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. (13) When you come bring the cloak which I left in Troas with Carpas, and the books, especially the parchments." 2 Timothy 4:11-13

As we saw in our study last time, Luke was beloved by Paul and greatly used by God, yet he speaks little to nothing about himself in his writings. His life, his work and his mission was all about Christ. He devoted his life to proclaiming, preaching and recording Jesus Christ for all who would come after that we might know the Truth, receive the Truth and proclaim the Truth as well! Luke was a devoted friend and tremendous coworker of Paul's. This is who remained with Paul. Luke was a tough friend for tough times and he was used by the Holy Spirit to chronicle the life of Christ in the Gospel of Luke, the longest of all four Gospels. He also recorded the history of the church from the very beginning in the book of Acts! He was the only Gentile writer in the entire New Testament.

Just one shipwreck or arrest and imprisonment would make any of us quit and say I didn't sign up for this. Be honest. If you know Jesus Christ and have surrendered your life to him, will you remain faithful in the midst of adversity? Persecution for true faith in Christ in our country is just around the corner.

A. "PICK UP MARK..." - 2 TIMOTHY 4:11B

Who is Mark and what's his story? Mark was also sometimes called John or John Mark. He would have grown up in Jerusalem during Jesus' years of ministry. We know from Acts 12:12 that one of the first churches met in his house. And it was to his house that Peter came after the angel delivered him from prison. You can read about it in Acts 12:1-17.

Mark was chosen to go with his older cousin Barnabas (Colossians 4:10) and Paul as they set out on their first missionary journey for the Lord. Exciting days! But Acts 13:13 records that Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. He had deserted Paul in the field.

So after a few years when Paul and Barnabas are ready to set out again on their second missionary journey, returning to every city where they had proclaimed the Word and started a church, Barnabas

wanted to take John Mark but Paul refused. They had a sharp disagreement between them and separated. Since they had such strong and opposite feelings about the matter, they decided to go different directions. Paul took Silas with him and Barnabas took John Mark. You can read Luke's account from Acts 15:36-39.

Paul had no tolerance for someone who bailed out when times were tough. And yet this wasn't the end of the story for clearly something changed. Look again at what Paul writes near the end of his life, "Pick up Mark and bring him with you for he is useful to me for service." Is that not the best? Much later, Paul saw Mark differently and useful in ministry. He desired to see him at the end of his life!

In fact, after years had gone by, we find Mark with Paul during his first imprisonment. In Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 24 Paul calls Mark a faithful friend and coworker. He tells the church in Colossae to welcome him! And now in a time of great need, Paul calls for Mark. Peter wrote of Mark in 1 Peter 5:13 that he was his son...son in the faith. Clearly Mark had become a faithful and valuable leader in the early church.

What would you have done with Mark? Would you have chosen him for future leadership in your endeavors? In Mark we see past failure and rejection. What we don't read but clearly see is reconciliation! Failures don't have to keep you from useful service to Jesus Christ. Mark's story here is one of failure to faithfulness, one of profound encouragement to all of us!

How was Mark eventually used of by God? Remember, Mark grew up in Jerusalem during Christ's ministry. He would have been an eyewitness to Christ's ministry, maybe even knew Him personally. Tradition holds that Mark established the Christian church in Egypt. And from failure to faithfulness, Mark became the Gospel writer of the book of Mark!

In Paul's last days, who does he desire to have with him? *Luke the Gospel writer, Timothy his son in the faith and Mark the Gospel writer!* What a team together for Paul's departure.

Do you have those in your life with whom you've had sharp disagreements? Maybe you even parted ways? Never forget Mark and Paul, and the redeeming work Christ can have in our lives. And though we may think someone can never be used of God, to Jesus Christ, each of us are redeemable, and can be useful in His service.

B. TYCHICUS AND CARPUS- 2 TIMOTHY 4:12-13A

Paul mentions two more faithful guys. We don't know much. Carpus was a believer living in Troas. Somehow, Paul entrusted Carpus with

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some of his most valuable possessions. There are many unknown people whose lives of faithfulness to the Lord are unknown to the world...*but known to Christ!*

Paul used Tychicus to deliver letters for him to different churches in Ephesus, Colossae and maybe even the letter Titus, to Titus. (Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 4:7, Titus 3:12) Clearly he was important to Paul and a trusted friend. His home province was in Asia (Acts 20:4-5), where Ephesus was located. This is where Paul sent him, possibly carrying 2 Timothy to Timothy who was there pastoring.

Did Tychicus stay and fill in for Timothy as he travelled to Rome? Maybe. They were faithful servants of Christ serving in the midst of such adversity. They knew the impending execution of their dear companion Paul was near. Each travelled many miles and through countless dangers with him. Those times bound them as inseparable. And though their hearts must have been so heavy because of their love for Paul, they continued faithfully following Christ, their first love! They would follow in Paul's footsteps and fulfill the ministry God had given them... come what may. May we have such resolve!

C. CLOAK, BOOKS, PARCHMENTS- 2 TIMOTHY 4:13B

These were the possessions Paul requested in his last days...his cloak, books and parchments. A cloak was a large sleeveless woolen outer garment like a poncho or even more like a tent. Paul was soon to face the cold of winter if he tarried. (2 Timothy 4:21) You and I could go to our closet and retrieve many a winter, warm coat. Paul had one that was a great distance away. He couldn't just buy one, or find one obviously. Luke didn't have one because we know he would have sacrificed anything for Paul, and so he asks Timothy to bring it.

And then he asks for his "*books*" and "*parchments*". These books were expensive because they were written on papyrus scrolls. These possibly could have been Old Testament scrolls. "*Parchments*" were more permanent and more costly because they were vellum made from specially treated animal skins. These were used for the most important documents. The Jews wrote their sacred books on parchments so this could be Paul's Old Testament Scripture as well. Maybe there were blank sheets that could serve as durable writing material.

The question is what did Paul want at the end of his life? Yes he wanted his closest companions in the faith. Yes he had need of a cloak for warmth. And he greatly desired his books and parchments. He wanted God's Word. Did he want to be comforted by the Psalms of David or encouraged as to how to walk by Proverbs? Did he desire to be reminded of the Old Testament prophets who remained steadfast in their faith through persecution? Yes, yes and yes.

Barclay wrote this, "Sometimes history has a strange way of repeating itself. 1500 years later, William Tyndale was lying in prison in Vilvarde, waiting for death because he had dared to give the people the Bible in their own language. It is a cold damp winter, and he writes to a friend, "Send me, for Jesus' sake, a warmer cap, something to patch my leggings, a woolen shirt, and above all my Hebrew Bible!" When they were up against it and the chill breath of death was on them, these great believers wanted more than anything else the Word of God to put strength and courage into their souls!"

Do we not need the same? Do we desire the same? Are people and "*parchments*" what matter most to us?

¹Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg.247.