



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

"BUT THE LORD STOOD WITH ME!" - 2 TIMOTHY 4:14-17

COLORADO

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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. In spite of the disagreement Paul had with Mark in the beginning of his ministry, it's clear that Paul and Mark worked out their differences. Do you have those in your life with whom you've had sharp disagreements? Maybe you 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.

I. "BUT THE LORD STOOD WITH ME!" - 2 TIMOTHY 4:14-17

(14) "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. (15) Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching. (16) At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. (17) 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." 2 Timothy 4:14-17

Paul continues in his letter to Timothy by warning him about a man, Alexander and yet reminding him of God and His ever faithfulness!

A. "ALEXANDER THE COPPERSMITH"- 2 TIMOTHY 4:14-15

We aren't sure who Alexander is or what he did exactly. But this we know; he did Paul a great deal of harm.

"did me a great deal of harm" Greek **"endeiknumi"** a verb that literally means to display. It is used often for giving information against someone.

Informers were one of the great curses of Rome at this time. Could Alexander have been a professing believer at one point? By the use of this Greek word, it suggests that Alexander had gone to authorities with false information about Paul and thus seeking to ruin him in such a dishonorable way.¹ Harm from likely informing on Paul could have been the direct cause for Paul's arrest.

And though Alexander did Paul much harm, Paul wasn't seeking revenge. It wasn't from anger that Paul writes. No he sought only the Lord's will. And Paul wasn't taking action against injuries to him personally, but rather for God's truth which was so dear to him that he was willing to sacrifice his life. Paul would leave vengeance in God's hands. But he cautions Timothy to watch out and be on guard for this man for, *"he vigorously opposed our teaching."* (2 Timothy 4:15) Alexander opposed the sound teaching from Paul. He opposed the Gospel. That's what stirred Paul's heart against this man, that God's truth was attacked. Think about your life. Are you offended by

others personally because they have attacked you? Or is your heart stirred when God is attacked; when His saving, life giving Gospel is condemned? Are you disturbed when God's truth is attacked?

B. AT MY FIRST DEFENSE ALL DESERTED- 2 TIMOTHY 4:16

Usually a Roman trial would begin with a preliminary examination to form a precise charge against the prisoner. And Paul tells Timothy that not one stood with him or supported him. Of course we know that there were some faithful friends who were about the Lord's work in other places and would have stood with Paul if there.

Here was the great missionary general, who had weathered the storms of several continents for the Gospel. Near the end of his life, he stood alone before the Roman court.² It seems almost impossible but that's what Paul writes.

But if you think about it, if you lived in Rome, it would have been very dangerous to be a friend of a man on trial for sedition when Nero was the Emperor. He was so vehemently against Christians in particular. But no one was there to stand by Paul or testify on his behalf when he had his first defense. In spite of what may have been weak heartedness in the face of persecution, Paul prayed that this would not be *"counted against them."* (2 Timothy 4:16) This he writes to Timothy following these events as he sits in the Roman dungeon awaiting his execution. What a lonely place to be with difficult memories to recount. What would your reaction have been? Would you have been so willing to forgive for even less?

Paul doesn't stop with those who deserted him in hardship. He doesn't leave Timothy with the fact that he was alone. No! In contrast to the fear of man stands the faithfulness of God!

C. "BUT THE LORD STOOD WITH ME..." - 2 TIMOTHY 4:17

Paul had been abandoned by his friends but not by God! The Lord stood with Paul and *"strengthened"* him!

"strengthened" Greek **"endynamoo"** means to be strong, to have power and resources capable of producing results.

Paul had used this same word before in his letters. Philippians 4:13 says, *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."* Paul knew that in God's will for him, he could do all things, suffer all things, be content in all things, endure all things because of Christ Who lives within him and does the strengthening in his life. God graciously provides for us just exactly what we need, when we need it. Paul knew he was strong enough to endure anything through Christ Who would strengthen him through the hardest of difficulties. We have

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“BUT THE LORD STOOD WITH ME!” - 2 TIMOTHY 4:14-17 (14) *“Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. (15) Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching. (16) At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. (17) 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.”* 2 Timothy 4:14-17

limits, but in Christ we have the power of God working in us to accomplish His work, His way. Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:19-21, *“...and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places...”* (See also Ephesians 3:14-16, 20)

And what was it that God *“strengthened”* Paul for? Yes God stood with him in his defense. Yes God gave him the strength to stand alone in the Roman court! But God also strengthened Paul to preach the Gospel to all the people present.

Paul has given Timothy the charge to *“preach the word”* in 2 Timothy 4:2. And here Paul reassures Timothy that in the midst of adversity, God will stand with him and empower and enable him to endure all things because of Christ Who lives within him and does the work of strengthening in his life. After all, Paul is on trial for his life. He has been deserted by his friends. He is opposed by his enemies in a Roman court and not even the spectators would have been on his side. Will he now defend himself and plead his cause?

Although in grave personal danger, facing the probability of a death sentence, his overwhelming concern is not for himself, but Jesus Christ. His pursuit was not to be a witness in his own defense but a witness for Jesus Christ. He did not plead his own cause but the cause of Jesus Christ.³ Look at his words again, *“in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear;”* (2 Timothy 4:17a) The Lord strengthened Paul to share in the Roman court so those folks might hear the good news of salvation in Christ alone, even though his life was on the line!

Think of it! In one of the highest tribunals of the Roman Empire, before Nero’s judges and perhaps Nero himself along with a large crowd of the general public, Paul *“preached the word”*. God stood by him and gave him the strength to proclaim the gospel fully! Think of all who God gave the opportunity to hear the truth. Think of what it took to bring this message! What a testimony of God’s enabling grace for Paul and saving grace to all who might truly hear. And Paul didn’t just say a few words. Notice that Paul stood alone with God and took the opportunity to share the complete gospel, in its fullest. I can assure you what he didn’t say was that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. He didn’t keep silent but fully explained what these folks desperately needed to hear; of the crucified, risen, reigning and coming again Son of God. I’m sure it was similar to the testimony he gave to Felix in Acts 24 or King Agrippa in Acts 26 both rulers of the Roman Empire. Paul preached with Christ by his side, empowering him to share the good news of the gospel. And

this would be an encouragement and reminder to Timothy as he would certainly face such dangers and suffering.

As Paul recounts these events to Timothy, he brings to mind the prophet Daniel with these words, *“and I was delivered out of the lion’s mouth.”* He reminds Timothy of Daniel, who God used as a top leader in the godless and cruel nations of the Babylonians and Medes and Persians. Near the end of his life after serving God faithfully from the time he was a teenager until now in his eighties, Daniel finds himself condemned to a lion’s den for faithfully serving God without compromise. God stood with Daniel in the lion’s den. You can read the account in Daniel 6. Note the similarities to Paul’s life. Clearly Paul emerges as a New Testament Daniel.

Yes, Paul had been delivered out of mortal danger time and time again in his life as he traveled the known world in order to share the gospel. His life was a testimony to God’s faithfulness in adversity and strengthening in serving and proclaiming Christ. And the charge he had given Timothy to preach the word was now only reinforced through Paul’s shining example set in the imperial court at a moment of great personal loneliness and peril.⁴

Paul’s mission and ministry was predominantly to the Gentiles. And God brought him before the highest court where the Apostle preached Christ. Paul didn’t evade the challenges he charged Timothy with. Paul led the way for Timothy to follow.

The world’s opposition is strong and subtle. And behind this stands the devil who hates Christ, the message of the Gospel and His messengers. 1 Peter 5:8 reminds us that *“our adversary, the devil prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour”*. He seeks to dilute, deceive and even silence the proclamation of the gospel.

So with all this in mind, Paul issues to Timothy a fourfold charge to guard the gospel (because it is the priceless treasure), suffer for the gospel of Christ (because the world hates Christ), continue in it (because it is the truth of God) and proclaim it (because it is the good news for the only salvation for the world). Paul calls on Timothy to be faithful in his generation.⁵ Will you be faithful in our generation? You will never be alone. God will stand with you and strengthen you for the work of ministry He has called you to fulfill!

¹Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg.246.

²Hughes, R. Kent and Chapell, Bryan, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus; To Guard the Deposit*. Crossway Books: Wheaton, Illinois, 2000. Pg. 267.

³Stott, John R.W., *The Message of 2 Timothy; Guard the Gospel*. Inter-Varsity Press: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1973. Pg. 124.

⁴Stott, John R.W., *The Message of 2 Timothy; Guard the Gospel*. Inter-Varsity Press: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1973. Pg. 125.

⁵Stott, John R.W., *The Message of 2 Timothy; Guard the Gospel*. Inter-Varsity Press: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1973. Pg. 126.