

Paul's Needs Met by Others

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[0:00] 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 9, we'll read through the end of the book. Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.

Crescens has gone to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

Alexander, the metal worker, did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him because he strongly opposed our message.

At my first offense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

[1:09] And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever.

Amen. Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.

Do your best to get there before winter. Eubulus greets you and so do Putins, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Sometimes when we sing, we sing, blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.

But we also sing, though friends should all fail us and foes all unite, yet one thing secures us.

Whatever be tied, the promise assures us the Lord will provide.

[2:13] Amen. So which is it? Do we delight in the tie that binds our hearts together in Christian fellowship and love and friendship and companionship?

Or is our delight in the God that never fails us, though all earthly friends should? It's not really a fair question, is it?

Because it's not an either or proposition. It's a both and proposition. As Christians, we delight in both Christian companionship and in the Lord who is always with us.

And as Paul is drawing not just this letter to a close, but his last letter to a close, as his life is drawing to a close, his mind turns towards particular needs that he has and how those needs have been met and fulfilled.

And some of them have been met and fulfilled by Christian friends and companions. But other times, friends and companions have failed him. They've let him down. But the Lord who is faithful has never let him down.

[3:20] He stood with him to the very end. And so as he writes, he shows that we all have needs. You have needs. I have needs. And even the great Apostle Paul had needs.

Sometimes those needs are met by other people. Praise God for it. That he provides the means to meet those needs through other people. But sometimes God provides what we need directly himself.

And so we want to talk about human needs tonight. And we want to talk about the human fulfillment of those needs. And the sometimes failure to meet those needs. And we want to talk about divine fulfillment.

Now that's not really fair because we're not going to get to divine fulfillment tonight. I wanted to finish up tonight, but that won't be the case next time. We'll look at the divine fulfillment of our needs.

God meeting our needs. But tonight we'll consider those needs, what they are from Paul's perspective, and how they're met by other humans. And so sometimes how those people fail to meet our needs.

[4:17] So let's start with the needs. We all have them. And Paul is thinking of them, and three in particular jump out as he writes these last words to Timothy. The first is companionship.

Paul needs a friend. He needs somebody to be with him. He asks Timothy to come. Twice he says, do your best, make every effort, do everything in your power to come see me, Timothy. Before winter comes. He wants to see him, and he wants to see him soon. For either legitimate or illegitimate reasons, there's only one person left with him, and that's Luke.

And that's good, but Paul wants to see his son in the faith. And as he talks about those who are there and not there, we get the feeling that he simply wants some companionship.

Now, some people might say to Paul, you have Jesus for your friend. That's enough. You don't need anybody else. Suck it up, Paul. Now, to an extent, that is true.

[5:14] Christ is our friend, and we are going to consider the divine fulfillment of our need for companionship. But God is the one who designed us with the need for human companionship.

That's how he made us. You remember back in the Garden of Eden. And I hadn't thought of it this way before, but remember that God was with Adam in the Garden of Eden.

He was there with him. And we read in Genesis 2.6, the Lord God said, it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.

Now, that's in the context of all the animals, and even with all the animals, Adam was still alone. But God was with him in the garden, and he said it's not good for the man to be alone. And so what did he say?

Adam, it's good enough for you to be friends with your God. That's not what he said, and that's not what he did. He made a companion. His solution was to give Adam a wife, a human friend, one to be with him.

[6:17] Now, of course, that was a wife, but the principle applies to other relationships. God created us with a need for companionship on a human level. So, we need it personally from other people.

My wife and I celebrated our ninth wedding anniversary this past weekend. It's actually this week, but we celebrated this last weekend. And she has been my companion for nine years. Actually, for longer than that.

But she's been my companion as a wife for nine years. And I rejoice in that. And I delight in it. And I wouldn't function very well without it. Very well at all. I bless God for the provision that he's made for my need for companionship in my wife.

He's designed us with that need, and he fulfills it with other people. So, we need companionship. That's one of the needs Paul's thinking about. He needs his son in the faith to be with him at the end of his life. A second need is that we need help.

It's not a sign of weakness to admit that you need help. It's something that's true, whether you're cleaning the house or raising children or laboring in the ministry like the Apostle Paul is. We need help.

[7:26] And we say that jokingly sometimes to people. You need help, man. But that's true. You need help, man. Woman. You need help. And I need help. And guess what?

The great Apostle Paul needed help. And he wasn't above admitting it. As we sometimes are. Paul is sending out fellow workers all over to continue the ministry.

He's sending out Crescens and Titus and Tychicus. And he's not about to say, you know what? I'm good enough. I can do it on my own. I don't need you. He needs help. And so he says to Timothy, bring with you Mark, because he's useful for me to the ministry.

I need help. And that's one of our needs. And we should be able to admit it. And there are others who have been helpful to Paul, if not directly in the work of the ministry themselves, in serving and caring for the needs of the Apostle.

He needed help. And so do we. But a third need that he points out is physical needs. We see it in his request for his cloak and his books. Verse 13, When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

[8:34] Now Paul gets really practical. He wants Timothy to bring some things he left in Troas with Carpus. Have you ever done that before? Or you call somebody. You've been to visit family away.

And you left something at their house.

Done it. And so before they come to visit, the next time you shoot them an email, or you call and you say, Hey, can you bring the... We left our kids' shoes at your house. Can you bring those with you when you come to visit?

Or somebody calls you. Or you let somebody borrow something, but now you need it back. So you say, Hey, can you bring that with me? Or with you when you come to visit? We've made those deliveries and we've received them. And Paul wants a delivery to be made.

And he's just asking Timothy to stop and wherever Carpus, or with Carpus at Troas and to pick those things up and to bring them. Now that cloak was probably a heavy outer garment.

Something that was for warmth. And winter's approaching. Verse 21. Do your best to get here before winter. And he's in a cold, damp, dark Roman prison. And he wants something to keep him warm.

[9:35] He wants his cloak. Look, God has given us physical bodies and we are not to neglect them thinking that we only need to care for our spiritual well-being. We have physical needs and it's good and right to make provision to meet those needs.

And then he asked for his scrolls or his books and the parchment. And we could speculate all day as to what these things are. Whatever they are, I think they're an indicator that Paul didn't want to be idle. To let his mind go to waste.

I think he wanted to use his head while he was still in prison. They could have been copies of the Old Testament Scriptures. It could have been copies of his own letters, his own correspondence. It might have been copies of the sayings of Jesus that were circulating at the time.

It might have been his Roman citizenship papers. It might have been blank paper so that he could do more writing. We don't know. But all of those, with the exception of the Roman citizenship papers, indicate a need to use his mind.

And there's at least two categories there. The scrolls and the parchments. I think he doesn't want to be idle, wasting his time. And so, whether soaking up more Scripture or writing more letters, though death was coming, he wasn't going to roll over and quit.

[10:47] He had needs. He had intellectual needs, physical needs. He had the need for help and he had the need for companionship. But we want to see, secondly then, the human fulfillment of those needs and sometimes the human failure to meet those needs and how it applies to us.

First of all, human fulfillment. God uses people to meet these needs in our lives. And don't you have those needs? You can sit here all day long and tell me that you don't need a friend, but I know that you do.

I know that you need the friends that are around you. Or that you don't need help. But if you're honest with yourself, you know that you do. And you know that you have physical needs. These are not things that are beyond us that we're going, that's really weird, Paul.

I've never experienced that before. We're going, yes, I resonate with that, Paul. I need what you need. I need companionship and help and physical things. Sometimes God uses people to meet those needs.

Other times He operates directly through His Word and His Spirit, but often He works indirectly through the use of second causes like other people. He meets our need for companionship, for help in our physical needs, and He uses people to do it.

[11:55] And when He does that, we should not despise such means as though we're less spiritual because we're not depending on God Himself, but depending on a person.

No, we're depending on Him and His choice of means. And so we don't need to look down on other people who need others to uphold and support them.

They're not weak. They're human. And to look down on such people would be to look down on the Apostle Paul himself who was counting on people to help him.

I love this quote from John Stott. He said, he's talking about Paul, he did not despise the use of means, nor should we. When our spirit is lonely, we need friends.

When our body is cold, we need clothing. When our mind is bored, we need books. To admit this is not unspiritual, it is human. These are the natural needs of mortal men and women.

[12:50] And we must not then deny our humanity or frailty or pretend that we are made of other stuff than dust. We're human. We're made out of dust. We have needs and God uses people to meet them.

And we should praise Him for it. And so, understanding that, let's look at some of these particular means that God used to meet Paul's needs. We start with Timothy. That's who Paul wants to see twice.

Timothy, make every effort. Get here. Come and see me. As soon as possible. Winter's coming. Travel will become treacherous or impossible. Paul learned that by his own experience. He's warned them. We shouldn't set sail.

The weather's getting bad. It's winter. They set sail anyway. And what happens? There's a shipwreck. And so he says, Timothy, before that happens, get here. Besides the fact that probably by the time winter passes, Paul would be dead.

And so, Timothy had been a useful friend to Paul. A faithful companion in his travels. A co-worker with him. Having been separated from Paul, Paul misses that benefit of his son and companion.

[13:52] And he wants him to be with him. Timothy is God's answer to Paul's need for companionship. A couple of things we can learn from Timothy and Paul's request for him to come.

And one, maybe not obvious, is the importance of priorities and understanding that some things are more important than others. There's a lot of work still to be done in Ephesus. That's really clear when you read 1 and 2 Timothy.

And in spite of all that, Paul says, I need you to come, Timothy. And it's not going to be irresponsible for Timothy to drop everything in Ephesus and to go. Paul says he's going to send Tychicus to Ephesus probably to take Timothy's place.

And so, Timothy needs to see at this moment that going to be with the Apostle Paul was more important than his work in Ephesus.

And we have to be able to take a situation and evaluate its importance and its significance and to be able to make a decision. Should I leave this thing that I'm doing that's important to do this other thing?

[14:50] And there will come a time when you've got to drop everything. When something is so important like getting to see a dying friend that all else should be left aside. Now, I can't tell you when that's going to be for you.

Or even have a lot of guidelines here. You can look at Paul and it was important enough on his deathbed to see his son for Timothy to leave. But again, he's sending somebody else to take Timothy's place.

Last fall, I got a call from my dad that said my grandpa was dying. And I hadn't seen him for quite a while.

My family had been down when I was in Spain and seen him and thought it might be the last time they had seen him with that thought in mind. But I had not. And so, we prayed and tried to decide what to do, take the whole family, should go.

And finally, I dropped everything and I drove to Owensboro on a Thursday, Thursday evening. Saw my grandpa, talked to him, prayed to him, said goodbye to him, and came back on Friday.

[15:52] It was more important than whatever else was going on at that moment. And my grandpa lived for three more months and I got to see him at Christmas and say goodbye to him and then he died on New Year's Day.

And you know what? I don't regret for one minute going to see my grandpa before he died. I don't think I ever will. Some things got lost in the shuffle.

I had to drop some things. It created some problems, but I don't regret it. And we see, I think, the importance of meeting priorities when we see Timothy being called to see the Apostle Paul.

another thing from Timothy, it's important not just to have good companions, but to be one. We're talking about our needs and having other people supply those needs, but have you ever been the supply to fulfill someone's need?

Have you ever been there for them in their time of trouble? Have you been the Timothy to Paul to go and visit? It doesn't have to be on a deathbed. It can be on a sickbed or it can be in another time of need that's totally different.

[16:55] But have you been the one to supply that need? If anybody was on their deathbed, would they call for you? Would they say, please, do your best to get here? Are you that kind of companion that you're that important to someone?

That faithful? That loving? Let's not ever be so concerned with our own needs that we fail to see and meet those of the people around us. Rather be faithful companions.

Let's Timothy. Some others that God used to meet Paul's needs. Crescens and Titus and Tychicus in verses 10 and 12. Paul's locked in a Roman prison.

He can't be out preaching the gospel. And he needs help. He doesn't just need companionship. He needs help. And so, he sends Crescens off to Galatian. Titus, who is a brother and a partner and a fellow worker with Paul, to Dalmatian.

Tychicus, who had been Paul's representative before. He probably carried the letter to the Ephesians and to Colossae. Now he's going back to Ephesus. He needs these people to help him.

[17:51] And he's sending them out. God provides help through these men. And we learn that delegation is a valuable thing in all of our lives. You're not Superman. You're not Superwoman. Regardless of what you might think.

So what a blessing for an employer to have employees that he can entrust work to. And much more work gets done that way than just one person can do. A mom is able to give jobs to her kids around the house and hopefully know that they'll be done.

Hey kids, does your mom give you jobs around the house? When she gives them to you, do they get done? If your mom was going to write a letter to one of her friends, would she mention how helpful you are?

Dear so-and-so, how's life? Nobody really writes letters anymore. If she was going to shoot an email off, it's still good to write letters. But anyway, she's going to write a letter and she says, Dear friend, how are you?

Blah, blah, blah. And she says, my boys have been really helpful lately. They've given Ryan and Andrew the job of making their beds, clearing their place, cleaning up their toys, and they're doing really well at that.

[19:01] And I'm glad I can entrust those things to them. And it's one less thing that I have to do. You kids helpful to your parents like that? Like these people were for Paul? In a church, we couldn't, for example, have a vacation Bible school if we didn't have Christians and Titus and other people like that.

People to whom we can delegate work. We couldn't have age-appropriate Sunday school classes without helpers. Your pastors can't do it all, so thank you. Thank you for your labors in this way. For opportunities, for service in the church. God uses you to supply our need. Thank you. And if you're not involved in service in the church, why not?

If we were to write a letter on the various ministries of the church mentioning those involved, would your name be included? Would you be a Crescens or a Titus or a Tychicus? Imagine, though, that Paul was so proud that he believed he was the only one who was useful to do this kind of work. Because so-and-so, he doesn't do it quite like I do it. And so I can't send him because he's not exactly like me. He's a good worker, but just not quite enough like me.

[20:16] Is anybody a perfectionist so much like that that you just can't delegate? You just have to do it all yourself? And that would just drive you insane. They'll drive you right up the wall. And you can't do it all.

Man, pass some of that work out to others. What a blessing that God has given us other people to help us. Not as much would have been accomplished if Paul was that sort of man.

But he was a humble man and glad that he had help in the ministry. Maybe only a few are gifted to preach and teach, but we're glad when God gives that gift to others to help us in the work.

We're glad that he gives other gifts to help in other ways. And something else we see from this is to hold your companions loosely and be willing to send them on for greater usefulness.

Paul wasn't so selfish as to hinder the spread of the Gospel by telling all of these guys that they had to stay there with him for his own needs, hoarding all the laborers for his own personal well-being.

[21:12] They were useful for companionship, but they were also useful for help. And so he sends them out. And he says, you go and you do that work. There are parts of man he didn't have the companionship that he so needed and desired, but can you imagine him being so selfish that he refused to send out companions to do ministry?

Or maybe closer to home, imagine a mother unwilling to let her son go. Go off to the mission field. He's ready. The church has set him apart. And she doesn't want to. She can't stop him, but she makes it clear, boy, I just can't understand why you would leave me.

I can't understand why you would go. I can't understand why you would take my grandchildren away. So I only see them every three years. A mother that was that. We understand a mother's love

for a child, but we must hold our companions loosely and be willing to let them go.

Or maybe a church unwilling to part with a beloved pastor who's been there for years who wants to move on and plant another church in the area. No, no, no, no. No. We want none of that because we're selfish and we want them for ourselves.

Or a church unwilling to send out a missionary. Or a church that's unwilling to give up a few families that will be the nucleus of a future church plant in the next town. Or too selfish to be one of those families.

[22 : 35] We've got to hold those things loosely and if we see they're useful for service somewhere else and God is calling them to them, we let them go with our blessing as Paul did with ease. Oh, then there's Luke, the only one left with Paul, the beloved physician and Paul's traveling companion.

What a faithful friend to remain by Paul's side encouraging him in his darkest hour. Maybe he cared for Paul's physical needs as well as his spiritual needs as a doctor and a beloved friend.

We don't know, but Paul is glad for his presence. And then, then there's Mark. I love this. I love that this is in our Bibles in verse 11. Get Mark and bring him with you because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

You know who he's talking about? You know who he's talking about? Read the end of Acts 15.

That's the Mark that Paul wouldn't take with him. Mark went with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but he bailed halfway through.

He deserted him. And so when the time came around for another missionary journey, Paul said, no, we're not taking Mark with us. Barnabas says, we're going to take him.

[23 : 44] And it got to be such a sharp division that Paul and Barnabas split up. I mean, it's just a sad moment in the history of the church. But God uses it for good because Paul chooses Silas and they go and Barnabas takes Mark and they go and two teams go out instead of just one and God takes what was evil and he turns it for good.

But here, years later, at the end of his life, what does Paul say? Get Mark. Pick him up is the word. You know, you pick somebody up on the way.

That's what the word is. Pick him up and bring him with you because he's useful to me for ministry, for service. What a remarkable thing. There's been some reconciliation there.

These two men patched things up. Mark repented somewhere and changed his ways. Otherwise, Paul still wouldn't have anything to do with someone who's not useful. Someone who's going to abandon him.

But Mark has changed his ways and Paul wasn't so proud as to say, I'm going to write you off forever, Mark. No, he receives him back. His one mistake in deserting them does not destroy his usefulness for ministry for the rest of his life.

[24 : 52] He learned, he corrected course, and now he and Paul can work together. That's only the fruit of the Spirit, work and reconciliation in these brothers. And so God can meet our need for help from the most unlikely sources.

Mark, that's not what you'd expect from Paul, but here it is. And I wish we had the story of what happened to make things right. Maybe Mark proved himself on the trip with Barnabas.

We don't know. But things were better now. And so let's not be holding unnecessary grudges or holding people to a higher standard than the Scriptures. When they demonstrate true repentance, they change their ways.

Let's not hold their sins against them when God has forgiven them. Have you ever done that? Somebody wronged you once way back. And man, you hold that grudge and you hold it and you nurse it and even when you hear other people talking about what a blessing that person's been, you say, no way.

Not after what he did to me. I can't believe that. Even when they've demonstrated repentance, God's forgiven them and you haven't. There's something wrong with that picture. Paul wasn't that kind of man.

[25 : 58] Mark demonstrates true repentance and he's forgiven. Let's not allow our ego or stubborn pride to be more important than the spread of the kingdom. Let's not be too proud to receive help from someone who has wronged us and hurt us in the past but has repented.

And let's be sure to seek reconciliation with those with whom we've sinned against and who have sinned against us. Well, we see some other companions in a different way.

Paul wants to give greetings at the end in verse 19 to several who've provided companionship and help in the past. Prisca and Aquila. Paul had worked with them together as tent makers. They had had a church that met in their home. They were faithful servants of Christ who labored together for the Gospel that never mentioned separate from one another. A marvelous husband and wife team who labored together for the cause of the Gospel in the early church. God met Paul's need for help and for friendship through this couple. And so he says, Timothy, make sure you greet them. You send them my love. And just a side note, they had nicknames in the Bible. [27:07] She's called Prisca here. The NIV gives us Priscilla, but that's not what it says. It says Prisca. Some places she's called Prisca and other places she's called Priscilla. Same woman, but they shorten names up just like we do with John and Jonathan and Ed and Edward.

Whatever your name is, though, I hope that you provide hospitality to God's servants like this couple did. Or that you'd open your home to a Bible study or church plant like they did. That you'd be a help, an encouragement to those in the ministry like they were to Paul. And then Onesiphorus and his household, we talked about him back in chapter 1, he went and sought out Paul in Rome and he had to sacrifice and his family had to sacrifice to do that. They had met Paul's needs. They were humans that God had used to meet his physical needs and his needs for friendship. And he lets Timothy know about a few other workers that he might be interested in.

Erastus had worked with Timothy in ministering to Paul. Paul, he's in Corinth, Timothy, and Trophimus, one of Paul's traveling companions, had to be left sick in Miletus. And we read right over that, but Spurgeon has a short sermon on it.

[28:14] It's great. And it's instructive for us that Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus. Paul had healed sick people.

He had made lame people walk. At one point in his ministry, if a handkerchief touched Paul and was taken back to somebody that was sick, they were made well. Paul had the power to heal. Why didn't he just make Trophimus better?

So he could keep traveling with him. Well, it would appear that at that time he didn't receive divine power to do that.

The Holy Spirit didn't let him heal Trophimus. Paul's thorn in the flesh was not healed and neither was this man healed. And Spurgeon says there were ends to be answered by his weakness which could not be compassed by his health.

There were things for him to learn in sickness and to benefit and to profit from that he couldn't have learned when he was well. I don't know that there's any other good answer for God not allowing Paul to heal Trophimus when he had had that power before.

[29:24] And so if you are struggling with sickness or weakness we may not know or understand why but as we continue to pray for healing also pray that God would make it plain to you what he wants to do for you.

What he wants you to learn how he wants you to grow how he wants to bless you. Pray that he'd open your eyes to see it. I can't speculate as to what Trophimus needed to learn or how God was going to bless him through his sickness because we're not told.

But at times God allows us to be sick without granting healing that he might accomplish some greater purpose than our health would. Pray that he would make it plain to us while you pray for your healing.

And then there's some others. Some guys want to greet Timothy Eubulus and Putins and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers likely people Roman Christians that had at least visited Paul maybe not consistent companions or friends but had likely been used to encourage him at some point.

The point is Paul needed companionship and God met that need through different people like the ones we've talked about. We're not we have the same need.

[30:36] We need fellowship. We need friendship. We need companionship from brothers and sisters in Christ. We're not designed to walk alone in this hostile world. J.I. Packer says it this way we should not think of our fellowship with other Christians as a spiritual luxury and optional addition to the exercises of private devotion.

We should rather recognize that fellowship is a spiritual necessity. For God has made us in such a way that our fellowship with Himself is fed by our fellowship with fellow Christians. We need it.

That's how God made us. And so thank God for providing it and the people that are sitting around you tonight or others that aren't here tonight. Friends that you've had in your past or present or that are far away or that are near.

You praise God for people like that tonight. And you make it your goal to be that kind of people. We need companionship but we also need help. We need workers. I'm going to apply it with respect to the church here.

Not just formal ministers. The church needs that. But we need you. We need you to help us by teaching Sunday school and teaching on Wednesday night and helping with Vacation Bible School. [31 : 42] And we need you to pray for the ministry. Do you know that you enter into the labors by praying? You read through Paul's letters and he's always glad that somebody's helping him in the ministry by praying for him. We need that.

We need you to house visiting pastors and missionaries and to feed them and to feed others who are in need and to visit people who are sick and shut in and can't get out of their homes. And we need you to clean the church and to do the sound and to greet people and to set up and tear down before and after fellowship lunch and to put out the food and to clean up afterwards.

We need those things. And we need workers in the nursery and we need people to help people move and we need people to disciple new believers and we need you to volunteer in other ways. We need help. Are you offering yourselves as servants? I know that you are. Thank you. May God give us grace to excel still more. You say, I don't know how, I don't know where.

We've got ministry opportunity forms. One for men and one for women. And all of you should have filled one out if you're regularly here. If you missed that somehow, come see us and we'll get you one.

[32 : 48] Or if you don't remember what you filled out, we'll get you another one and you can do it again. We need help that you can provide by God's grace. So God meets our needs sometimes through humans, but sometimes humans fail to meet our needs.

And that's abundantly clear at the end of this letter as well. Humans let us down as Paul found they fail in meeting our needs for companionship, for help, or for other physical needs.

And we begin to find that some of the things that Paul has described here in 2 Timothy have names on them. Some of the difficulties that have come, Paul's thinking about particular people and now he names some of them to Timothy.

There's Demas. He had been with Paul as a fellow worker. He's called a fellow worker. But the final word on Demas is not good.

This is sort of the opposite of Mark. Mark failed him at the beginning, but at the end he's useful. Demas was useful, but then he failed him. You see, Demas loved this world. He loved this present time.

[33 : 56] It's a contrast with verse 8. There are people who love the appearing of Jesus. They've longed for it. They love it. But Demas, he loved this present world. Paul writes about the grace of God to Titus in Titus 2.12 and he says, the grace of God, it teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled and upright and godly lives in this present age.

That's our word. In this world. The problem was that Demas had said yes. He had said yes to ungodliness and worldly passions instead of no.

He loved money and pleasure in himself rather than God. You remember how Paul talked about how people will love pleasure rather than God. Money in themselves.

And that happened to Demas. And so he forsook Paul. He failed him as a companion and as a helper in the ministry. And we learn that service to the Lord does not guarantee a good finish.

Demas was a fellow worker, but when he died, maybe he said, Lord, Lord, did I not prophesy in Your name? And cast out demons in Your name and performed many miracles. And yet was cast out of the presence of the Lord.

[35 : 11] Let me tell you that I don't have assurance tonight because I'm a pastor. That's some shaky ground to stand on. I've got assurance tonight because I have Christ. And so don't you either trust in your good service to the church, the fact that you work in the nursery or you take meals to people when they're sick or you teach Sunday school, you trust in Jesus.

And you don't ever let anything come before your love for God. Demas loved this present world too much. And love for God grew dim.

It's what we saw back in chapter 3 and we're not going to labor that point again. But when love for something else comes before love for God, we're in deep trouble on our way to departing the faith like Demas did. Alexander, another one who failed to meet Paul's need for help in the ministry, might or might not be the same Alexander from 1 Timothy 1 who shipwrecked his faith and was handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

I tend to think they are the same person. He had strongly opposed Paul's words. He did him much evil. And if he's the same one as in 1 Timothy, he hadn't always been that way. He was a believer at the time.

He professed faith and had been helpful and useful to Paul, but then turned away. And he simply warns Timothy that he's not going to find any help from Alexander. In fact, he'll find the opposite.

[36:32] He's not going to meet any of Timothy's needs. And that man is going to be judged for his works. The Lord will repay him for what he's done. And the Lord will repay you for what you've done.

And if you've lived a life of wickedness and opposition to God and His Word, you can expect to receive an eternity of suffering and torment. But what a blessing for Timothy.

He's getting a heads up. We might not always know someone's character. We open our hearts to them and anticipate help or companionship only to find them unfaithful, to find that they oppose us and desert us. But if others have been burned, don't play with the same fire.

He's getting a warning. Alexander, he's not good for you and he hasn't shown any signs of repentance. Don't go there, Timothy. And we learn not just to learn from our own mistakes, but to learn from the mistakes of others.

Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it. That's true in the Christian life. You just pick up this book and there's all sorts of people that failed to obey God. Learn from that. See what happened to them.

[37:34] God gave us this book for a reason. Look around at the history of the world. There are people around you every day who disobey God and see what comes of it. And it's nothing good. And learn the lesson.

Don't go down that path yourself. Timothy, I've learned, you be warned as well. Don't mess with Alexander. Don't trust him.

And then he was failed by everyone. In some ways, in verse 16, at my first offense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.

I think this is a reference to his first trial back in Acts 28. Paul was in prison before the time where he's in prison now. And we believe that he was released and went on to travel and do more ministry.

And now he's in prison again. But back at that first one, the one that's talked about in Acts 28, Paul says that no one came to his defense. May it not be held against them.

[38:34] Many had visited him in prison during that time. You can read it in Acts 28. But none were willing to stand with him at trial. Maybe for fear that they too would be arrested and tried like Paul and imprisoned.

But again, we see that humans failed to meet his need for companionship, for help. And he doesn't hold it against him. He understood their fear in that moment.

These weren't people that have left the faith. They had a temporary lapse in judgment. And do you see parallels with Christ here? At his trial, all forsook him and he prayed for forgiveness for those who mistreated him.

As Paul says, may it not be held against them. And so may we be those who are faithful, who stand by our friends, that are not the kind that desert in the midst of trouble. We're around when things are going well, but when things get difficult, all of a sudden, we're nowhere to be found.

Don't be that kind of friend. What a discouragement to be abandoned in your time of need. Maybe you've experienced that. You've been going through deep trial, maybe not imprisonment, but some sickness, some suffering, the death of a loved one.

[39:38] And when you most needed someone to lean on, there was no one there. Maybe you felt that, experienced that. Don't ever be the cause of that to someone else. Like Paul's companions were for a time.

But should all your friends fail you, at your time of need, there is one who will never fail. Verse 17, the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.

We're going to talk about, we're going to look at verses 17 and 18 more next time. But understand that though friends should all fail you and foes all unite, one thing secures us.

Whatever be tried, the promise assures us the Lord will provide. Christ will not fail you. He will not abandon you. And so may God give us comfort in Him. May He give us grace to trust in Him.

May He give us wisdom. Let's choose our companions wisely. Let's be careful. We say, well, Paul, as an apostle, who could have chosen companions any better than he did?

[40:43] And he didn't always make the best of choices apparently because some of them abandoned him. Well, it's not a call for us to abandon discernment. We still use discernment and we choose carefully our friends and our helpers.

We'd be foolish to befriend someone who's warned us or we've been warned about in Alexander. Don't make that person your most trusted advisor in hope and time of need.

Use your wisdom that God has given. And don't give up. Have you been disillusioned by poor friends in the past?

You've been let down and forsaken. Don't give up on human companionship. You see, Paul didn't. He had been let down multiple times. And he didn't give up.

He didn't just say, you know what, Timothy, forget it. I don't care. I've got Jesus and that's all I need. And I said, Timothy, come. I still need that. Don't give up on friendship.

[41:46] Some people give up on love because they've had their heart broken once and they're afraid to give that heart to someone else for fear that the same thing will happen. That happens in friendship too. People get burned. They say, you know what, it's not worth it.

I'm going to clam up and I'm not going to entrust my heart and my innermost feelings to anyone else. They become reclusive. Don't let that happen to you. Understand that people are a means that God has ordained to fulfill needs, a need that He has put in us.

Paul didn't give up and we shouldn't either. Well, one last look at Christ tonight. maybe you're thinking that's all well and good, but what about when Paul didn't have any human companions? What did he do? Well, of course, Christ didn't leave him. And he was there. And you've been there all alone, without friend, without help, and much need.

What then? I can tell you tonight that there's a friend who will not fail you. Amen. One whose love is better than a brother. One who will never leave you or forsake you, though all earthly friends should.

[42:53] There's one who, though he was forsaken by all of us and by all of his earthly companions, didn't fail us. He didn't come down from the cross and say, it's not worth it for this bunch of people who's not faithful to me.

There's a friend who died in our place to forgive our sins and our shortcomings and his name is Jesus. He's the friend of sinners. He stood by Paul. When he is all alone, he will stand by you in your deepest need.

We'll see next time how he does that for Paul and how he does it for us, but don't wait till then. Turn to him tonight. Cling to him tonight. Run to him and find your hope fulfilled in him. Amen.

Well, let's take our hymnals and turn to hymn 285 and sing of that blessed time. Amen. Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you that you have given us humans to meet the needs that you have placed in us.

And we thank you for the blessings of dear Christian friends and companions that draw near to us, that sustain us during our darkest moments. And we thank you most of all for Christ, the friend of sinners who never leaves us or forsakes us, even though friends sometimes, because of our sinful, fallen human nature, do forsake us.

[44:05] We thank you for Christ. We thank you for the fulfillment of our needs and our brothers and sisters in Christ. May we go from here delighting in both and taking comfort in it. And if there are some here that aren't hoping and trusting in this Christ who have no sure and guarantee of a friend when all others fail, we pray that you would send them fleeing to the Savior, that they might hope and trust in Him.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.