

Read 2 Timothy 4:9-22 in your favorite translation. I will print the NET2 translation.

9 Make every effort to come to me soon. 10 For Demas deserted me, since he loved the present age, and he went to Thessalonica. Crescens went to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is a great help to me in ministry. 12 Now I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 13 When you come, bring with you the cloak I left in Troas with Carpas and the scrolls, especially the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him in keeping with his deeds. 15 You be on guard against him too, because he vehemently opposed our words. 16 At my first defense no one appeared in my support; instead they all deserted me—may they not be held accountable for it. 17 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message would be fully proclaimed for all the Gentiles to hear. And so I was delivered from the lion's mouth! 18 The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

19 Greetings to Prisca and Aquila and the family of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus stayed in Corinth. Trophimus I left ill in Miletus. 21 Make every effort to come before winter. Greetings to you from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers and sisters. 22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

COMMENTS:

Today we come to the end of Second Timothy and on Monday we will begin Titus, the other Pastoral Epistle of St. Paul.

Now Paul outlines his final wishes for Timothy. To demonstrate how concerned about all this is he starts with a special plea: "Make every effort to come to me soon." His use of the word "soon" shows Paul doesn't expect to survive much longer.

Be clear on reading v. 10. Paul only accuses Demas of deserting him. He relates about the departure of Crescens and Titus to emphasize his loneliness. Only Luke was by his side. Notice how Paul's attitude towards Mark has changed from Acts 15:36-41 because now he desires Mark to assist him in the ministry (v. 11).

He has several other favors to ask of Timothy. He wants his winter cloak and some of his precious scrolls, especially those on parchments (animal skins) because they were more valuable and longer lasting than the papyrus (reed) scrolls.

He also warns him of a particularly dangerous enemy he may encounter, Alexander the coppersmith (or perhaps more accurately translated "metal worker"), who had harmed Paul greatly. We don't know if this was physical harm or spiritual warfare. Alexander is a popular name and we find references to Alexanders in Acts 19:33 and 1 Timothy 1:20.

Paul remembered his Jewish heritage and the teaching of Jesus when he says, "The Lord will repay him in keeping with his deeds. Vengeance belongs to God and God alone, not to us. A second disappointment for Paul was his lack of defenders in his first trial in Rome (v. 16).

Paul wants us to note two things. First is his prayer for forgiveness for those who deserted him then. His saying, "May they not be held accountable for it" is like Stephen who prayed in Acts 7:60, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" or Jesus' words from the cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

The second thing is his confession of how God never failed him nor abandoned him in this crisis. That is a good lesson for us today. Leaders in government can fail us. Friends can fail us, even those who are Christians, but God never forgets or fails. We can count on him at all times.

The reason for v. 21 Timothy to make every effort to get there quickly because when the winter storms begin, sea travel isn't safe in the Mediterranean and travel by land takes much longer. Knowing he be in prison he needs his warm coat.

Paul always makes a point of remembering those who have hosted and helped him. Words we use too seldom in are world is "thank you." We all like to have signals from others that we respected and remembered by friends and co-workers. Wisely, he closes with a prayer and a blessing. Always keep your focus on God.

REFLECTION QUESTION: I believe Paul has given us a good example here. He doesn't let his friends and co-workers guess about what he wants. He tell them. That doesn't mean you will never be disappointed by people, but you will be disappointed less often. As I tell people all the time, "I flunked mind reading. Tell me what you want or need." Not only did I flunk mind reading, I also am not a good guesser. Help me out by clearly identifying your wants and needs. Then I can decide if I am capable of fulfilling your needs and whether I believe your "wants" are genuine "needs."

On Monday we will begin our journey through Titus and following that we will study Daniel. Now is the time to start making suggestions about what you would like to study next.