

Forgive and Finish Strong

Last time we learned about Paul's exhortation to Timothy to be wary of false teachers who could come in and corrupt the believers with false doctrine. Paul warned encouraged Timothy to Preach the word, be watchful, endure afflictions and do the work of an evangelist to fulfill his ministry. Today we will be discussing Paul's farewell and those who abandoned him.

Paul's Farewell (Read Verses 6-8)

Drink offering

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

In verse six, Paul prepares Timothy for his imminent death by using the metaphor of a drink offering. The drink offering was the final offering of sacrifices under Jewish law in many of their feasts. In Leviticus 23 the Lord gave Moses directions for His Feasts. In reference to the Feast of Tabernacles in verses 37-38, the Lord says, "³⁷These *are* the feasts of the LORD which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and **drink offerings**, everything on its day— ³⁸besides the Sabbaths of the LORD, besides your gifts, besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings which you give to the LORD. John MacArthur states, "Paul saw his coming death as his final offering to God in a life that had already been full of sacrifices to Him."

Time of Departure

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Verse seven contains several metaphors for a life well spent serving the Lord. Paul had given his life fully to serving the Lord until his last breath. He certainly did "fight the good fight" considering he had been through some very difficult trials and tribulations in his ministry. He tells us in 2 Corinthians 24-28, "24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. How many of us would not have stopped after the first lashing? But Paul continued on like a runner who paces himself with his eye on the finish line. He pushed on until the very last trial and kept the faith. A beautiful example of what it means to live for Christ. He knew what was coming, but he did not waver because he knew what was on the other end of the suffering in this life.

Crown of Righteousness

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Paul endured being poured out through the trials and tribulations because he had the hope of heaven. His eyes were set on the life to come not the present suffering. In verse eight, Paul continues his metaphor and transitions to our final prize at the end of our race called life. Like athletes who competed in the Roman arenas, he was looking forward to his crown, but not one made of garland like those given to military offices or athletes, but one of righteousness. However, this is not a crown of righteousness grounded in his own efforts and hard work, this is a crown resting on the righteousness of Christ. MacArthur states, “the context here seems to indicate that the crown represents eternal righteousness. Believers receive the imputed righteousness of Christ (justification) at salvation (Rom. 4:6, 11). The Holy Spirit works practical righteousness (sanctification) in the believer throughout his lifetime of struggle with sin (Rom. 6:13, 19; 8:4; Eph. 5:9; 1 Pet. 2:24). But only when the struggle is complete will the Christian receive Christ’s righteousness perfected in him (glorification) when he enters heaven (see note on Gal. 5:5). the righteous Judge.” But this crown isn’t just for the best runner or strongest fighter, it is for ALL who have loved Christ’s appearing.

The Abandoned Apostle (Read Verses 9-12)

Despite all of his physical trials and sufferings at the hands of unbelievers, Paul had to face one of his final trials which was being abandoned by those he called friends and fellow believers. His heart was for the Lord’s people, so this final trial must have cut just as deeply as the physical ones. This also brings to light some of the reasons for his warnings to Timothy his close and dear son in the faith.

Demas Forsakes Paul

9 Be diligent to come to me quickly; 13 Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.

In these 9 and 13, we see the close relationship that Paul and Timothy have. Paul knows how far Ephesus is from Rome and that it would take a couple of weeks to arrive. ORBIS, The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World calculates that, “The Fastest journey from Ephesus to Roma in July takes 16.2 days, covering 1906 kilometers.” (<https://orbis.stanford.edu/>) This was not an easy journey either, Timothy would have to travel by road, river, coastal sea and finally open sea. (See Maps 1 and 2). But Paul says “come quickly” because he knew that his “departure” or death was near and wanted to see his closest friend and son in the faith before his death in addition to the fact that he was abandoned by Demas in verse 10.

In verse 13, we see the trust that Paul has in Timothy. He charges him with taking a short 3-day detour to Alexandria Troas just north of Ephesus to pick up a cloak, his books and parchments. Truly, this is the type of request only close friends would ask of each other.

10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. 15 You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.

In verses 10, 14 and 15 we see the examples of believers that Paul trusted, but who betrayed his trust and walked away from the faith. Demas had been with Paul throughout much of his travels in the ministry. He was a trusted friend and companion along with several others as we see in Colossians 4:14, “14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you” and Philemon 1:23-24, “23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, 24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.” It’s sad to think that in his last few days of life, Paul experienced the loss of trusted friend through abandonment. MacArthur says “Demas was a fair-weather disciple who had never counted the cost of genuine commitment to Christ.” But Paul, like Christ, did not let anything stop him from preaching the word.

We see a further example of Paul’s faith and determination to preach the Gospel through his experience with Alexander in verses 14 and 15. “Alexander opposed Paul’s teaching and likely spread his own false doctrine. He may have been instrumental in Paul’s arrest and may even have borne false witness against him.” (MacArthur Study Bible, 2nd Edition) Alexander may have been the reason that Paul was so emphatic in his warnings against false doctrine.

How many of us would have backed down after facing such stark opposition? But NOT Paul. How many of us would have grown angry and bitter? But NOT Paul. He says, “May the Lord repay him.” Paul placed vengeance in God’s hands. I think this is a pay God now or pay God later, but Alexander would pay. Paul is faithful to his teaching in Romans 12:19, “19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” In accordance with God’s word in Deuteronomy 32:35, “ ‘Vengeance is Mine, and recompense;/Their foot shall slip in due time;/For the day of their calamity is at hand,/And the things to come hasten upon them.’ ” This is comforting to know that we don’t have to carry the pain from our past because of unforgiveness. We serve a mighty God who will judge everyone in the end. Let Him who has a better perspective make the final judgement.

11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. 12 And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.

In stark contrast to Demas and Alexander, there were those who remained faithful to Jesus, Paul, and the ministry. Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke, was Paul’s friend and personal physician. Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark, at one point abandoned Paul in Pamphylia and caused division between Mark’s cousin Barnabas and Paul. Acts 15:36-39 describes the event:

36 Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.” 37 Now Barnabas [a]was determined to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. 39 Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;

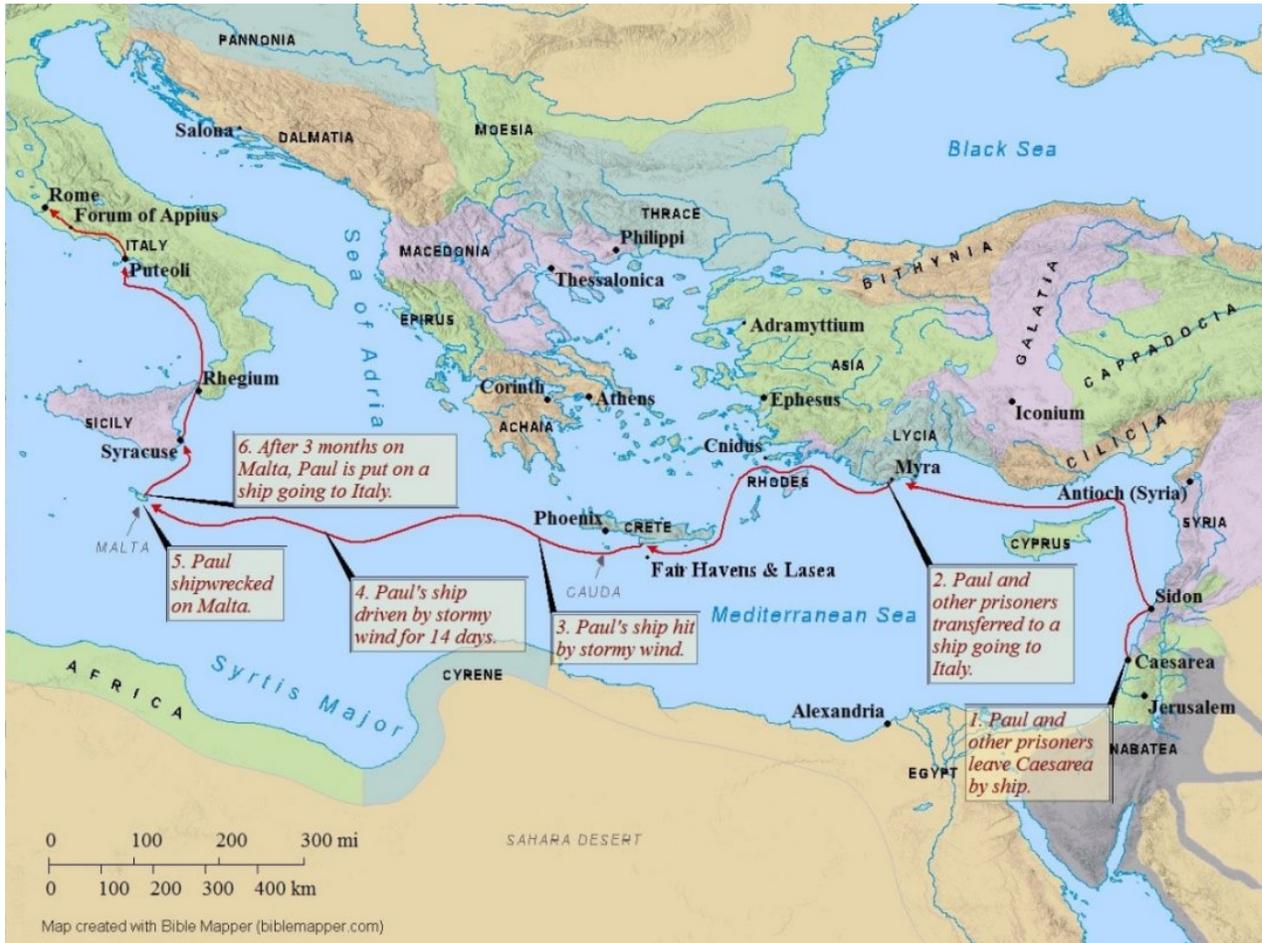
But at some point was restored and became a trusted and dependable friend to Paul exemplifying forgiveness and redemption.

16 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.

Just because you are doing the Lord's work doesn't mean that people will follow you. Sometimes, other believers will walk away from you because they aren't ready for the sacrifice and dedication the work entails, or they may be afraid. Even Jesus experienced this type of betrayal when all the disciples denied him after he was arrested. But Paul didn't hold it against them, and he prayed that the Lord wouldn't either. I pray that we have the same heart toward those who hurt or abandon us so that we may finish our race strong in the faith and confident in the hope of heaven.

Mark 11:25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."

Map 1



Map 2

