

Friends And Foes #2

Introduction. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17). Some of those Paul mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:9-22 were old friends and some were new, some were consistent in their service and some were not, some were always ready to volunteer and some were never to be found, some were willing to make any sacrifice for the Lord and others were not willing. Yet as Paul faced the executioner's ax, many of these people were on his mind. In passing on the mantle to Timothy, he brought the young preacher up to date on the spiritual condition, activities and whereabouts of certain men and women.

Paul did not write this section as an afterthought; it was not incidental. The Lord wanted the rest of His church to know about these people in Paul's life and to learn from their faithfulness or their failure.

I. ***Tychicus, The Faithful Messenger***

- A. This man, whose name means "good fortune," accompanied Paul from Greece to Asia (Acts 20:4), and was with Paul in Nicopolis and Rome.
- B. He delivered the letters of Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:12), Colossians (Colossians 4:7) and perhaps delivered the letter to Titus (Titus 3:12).
- C. We do not know much about Tychicus but we do not that he was a valuable asset to Paul and a trusted friend. Churches who have brethren that are assets to the work are indeed richly blessed (1 Corinthians 16:15-18)!

II. ***Carpus, The Faithful Host***

- A. From the context it seems probable that Paul had entrusted him with the care of several valuable possessions. A cloak was a large, heavy wool garment that served as both coat and blanket in cold weather, which Paul would soon face. Books and parchments were also expensive and they were invaluable to Paul in his work.
- B. It may also be that Paul made the house of Carpus his home while in Troas. It is refreshing to see good hospitality among brethren (Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 5:10; cf. Acts 16:15; 28:2, 7; Romans 16:2; 3 John 5-8).

III. ***Alexander, The Faithless Enemy***

- A. Paul devotes almost as many words to Alexander as he does to all the other men combined whom he has mentioned in the previous four verses, and for good reason. Alexander the "metalworker" apparently fiercely resented the apostle and did him much harm (cf. 1 Timothy 1:18-20). Faithful to God's word (Deuteronomy 32:35), including his

own teaching of it (Romans 12:19), he left vengeance in the hands of God.

- B. Paul wants Timothy to be on the lookout for Alexander. Even worse than the harm Alexander caused Paul personally was the harm he had done to the cause of Christ by being vigorously opposed to Paul's teaching. More than an enemy of Paul, he was the enemy of God. We must be careful and cautious of those who teach false doctrine (Ephesians 5:11; Titus 3:10-11; 2 John 9-11).

IV. ***The Unfaithful Anonymous***

- A. "Answer" refers to a verbal defense and frequently was used as a legal term. The word "stood" was also a legal term, referring to official testimony in court. No one stood by Paul or testified on his behalf.
- B. The cost for such a stand could have been high. Because Paul was so well-known among Christians and Romans, some believe that Nero himself may have presided over this hearing. Although Nero was a ruthless man in persecuting Christians, this would have been no excuse for those who were told to take up their cross (Matthew 10:38; 16:24).
- C. Some may have rejected Paul, not Christ. Some may have been weak-hearted but not false-hearted. In any case, Paul prayed that this not be held against them. Like Stephen (Acts 7:60) and the Lord (Luke 23:34), the apostle had a supremely forgiving spirit.

V. ***Christ, The Faithful Lord***

- A. These verses form the apex of the passage. He stood there not only or even primarily for Paul's sake but that through the apostle the proclamation of the gospel might be fully accomplished.
- B. Paul was commonly in mortal danger, but the devil has no ultimate power over those who belong to Christ (Romans 6:11). Paul did not fear physical danger (Acts 21:12-13). In fact, once he had even been left for dead (Acts 14:19). Paul knew that to die was gain (Philippians 1:21). Although the apostle would not give up the battle, his loneliness, pain, deprivation and desertion made the glory of heaven even more appealing.

VI. ***The Faithful Old Friends***

- A. Priscilla and Aquila were very special friends to Paul. He had met them in Corinth on his second journey. They proved their worth to him over and over (Acts 18:24-26).
- B. Earlier in the letter, Paul expressed his appreciation for Onesiphorus (1:16). Because the household was mentioned in both places, it is

obvious that everyone in it was a Christian. Perhaps this is a wonderful testimony of the teaching of Onesiphorus.

- C. Erastus was probably the city treasurer of Corinth who sent greetings through Paul to the church at Rome (Romans 16:23). He also may have been the man whom the apostle sent with Timothy to work in Macedonia (Acts 19:22).
- D. Trophimus had accompanied Paul from Greece to Troas (Acts 20:1-6). He helped carry the offering to the church in Jerusalem, where he was the unintentional cause of Paul's arrest for presumably bringing a Gentile into the temple (Acts 21:29). On his trip to Rome, Paul had to leave him sick at Miletus. Paul made no effort to heal Trophimus, maybe indicating that miraculous gifts were coming to an end.

VII. *The Faithful New Friends*

- A. At the end of his life, Paul had very few important possessions, just like His Lord (Matthew 8:19-20; Luke 9:57-58).
- B. Final greetings are extended on behalf of Eubulus, Pudens and Linus. All three names were Latin, perhaps indicating that the men were from Italy and had been members of the church in Rome. We know nothing of these men or of Claudia.
- C. We may know the names of or even associate with well-known preachers and elders, but the majority of the work in God's kingdom is done by those known only to a few.

Conclusion. On June 21, 1986, Don Sutton became only the 13th pitcher to win 300 games. Although he was a veteran of 21 seasons, he only won more than 20 games in one season. He never pitched a no-hitter and only once did he lead the league in any category. His analysis of his success is worth noting. "A grinder and a mechanic" is what he calls himself. "I never considered myself flamboyant or exceptional, but all my life I've found a way to get the job done." Through two decades, six presidential terms and four trades, he consistently did what pitchers are supposed to do: win games.

This large group in 2 Timothy 4 included men and women, close friends and avowed enemies, the faithful and the deserter. In one way or the other, they all affected the work and preaching of the early church, especially the work of this great apostle. As always, Paul's concern was the Lord, whom he now asks to be with those special friends and coworkers. Most of them he would never see or hear from again. He left them in the Lord's hands and in His grace. Are you a friend or foe? How would Paul record your service? Can you get the job done?