

Friends And Foes #1

Introduction. Charles Spurgeon said, "True friendship can only be made between true men. There can be no lasting friendship between bad men. Bad men may pretend to love each other, but their friendship is a rope of sand, broken at any convenient season."

A business, government or large organization cannot function properly or survive without their suppliers, customers, employees, stockholders and many others that are necessarily involved. There is no better illustration of this principle than the human body with its wonderfully varied and intricately related parts (1 Corinthians 12:14-27).

It is therefore no surprise that the last part of Paul's last letter focuses on other people, the many friends and a few foes, who influenced his work in one way or another (2 Timothy 4:9-22). Even the great apostle of the New Testament could not accomplish his great work alone.

I. *Timothy, The Faithful Son*

- A. Paul had no other earthly friend who was so dear to him (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2). Nor did he have a coworker who was more dependable (1 Corinthians 4:16-17; Philippians 2:19-20).
- B. The apostle longed to see Timothy because he knew the possibility of seeing him again in this life would soon be gone. It was therefore imperative that Timothy make every effort to come to him soon.
- C. Many strong Christians have had someone to look up to, someone who has taken great care in teaching them the word and in setting a high example. From Hebrews 13:23, it is apparent that this young man followed in the footsteps of Paul, even to the point of being put in prison for boldly proclaiming and refusing to compromise the gospel.

II. *Demas, The Unfaithful Deserter*

- A. Paul moves from the most faithful to the most unfaithful. Demas is first mentioned by Paul in Colossians, which was written shortly after 1 Timothy and about five years before 2 Timothy, during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. At that time, Demas, along with Luke and Epaphras, was one of the apostle's closest associates (Colossians 4:12-14; Philemon 24).
- B. At that time any friend of Paul, especially a coworker, risked sharing his persecution and prison. As the risk increased, Demas' resolve decreased. He loved the present world more than he loved the Lord, the Lord's people or the Lord's work (1 John 2:15-17).
- C. The word for "deserted" is a strong one meaning to utterly abandon and leave someone helpless in a dire situation. He was a fair-weather disciple who had never considered the cost of genuine commitment to

Christ (Luke 14:28, 33). Whatever Demas' specific cause for desertion, he brought great disappointment and anguish to Paul.

III. ***Crescens, The Faithful Unknown***

- A. Except for what little can be inferred from this brief mention, we know nothing about Crescens. Because he was sent to Galatia and did not flee, he obviously was a faithful and dependable servant of Christ.
- B. Paul had worked in Galatia on each of his three preaching trips, and Christians there held a dear place in his heart. He would not have sent them a man in whom he had less than full confidence.
- C. Here was a dedicated man sent to dedicated churches. Although he is unknown in church history and is unknown to us, his life and work were an open book to the Lord (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 20:12; 21:27), and we can be sure that he will receive a full reward in addition to the gratitude of Paul.

IV. ***Titus, The Faithful Known***

- A. Titus, on the other hand, was both known and faithful. Paul's letter to him was written several years after 1 Timothy and about a year before 2 Timothy. Besides here and in the book that carries his name, Titus is mentioned by the apostle nine times in 2 Corinthians and twice in Galatians. Titus was a man the apostle fully trusted to teach and help struggling churches (Titus 1:4-5).
- B. Paul asked Titus to meet him in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). It may have been from Nicopolis that Titus went to Dalmatia, probably at the request of Paul in order to strengthen the church there and build up its leadership.

V. ***Luke, The Faithful Companion***

- A. Luke is mentioned by name only three times in the New Testament, of which he is the only Gentile author. Yet he wrote the longest of the four gospels as well as the lengthy book of Acts (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24).
- B. Luke had been a longtime companion of Paul, accompanying the apostle for many years and over hundreds, perhaps thousands, of miles. He was with Paul at Troas and Philippi during his second trip (Acts 16:10-17), he joined him again at the end of the third and went with him to Jerusalem to face arrest and imprisonment (Acts 20:5-21:18). He accompanied Paul to Rome during both of his imprisonments (Acts 27:1-28:16).
- C. Because of Nero's persecution, many Christians fled the capital. Those who remained were in constant danger and needed guidance and encouragement more than ever. Luke shouldered alone the burden of

work while the apostle languished in a dungeon with no prospect of release.

VI. **Mark, The Unfaithful Restored**

- A. We do not know where Mark was at this time, but it seems evident that he lived somewhere on the route Timothy would take from Ephesus to Rome. Mark, who sometimes was called John, was a native of Jerusalem and one of the first congregations of Christians met in his house (Acts 12:12; cf. Mark 14:51-52).
- B. He was chosen to go with Paul and Barnabas as they set out on their first journey but he returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). When Barnabas wanted to give Mark a second chance, Paul refused and it caused a separation (Acts 15:36-39). Paul did not want men who could not carry their share of the load and bailed out when circumstances became uncomfortable. An old proverb goes, "Prosperity makes friends, adversity proves them."
- C. By the time of Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, perhaps twenty years after the two had parted company, this young man had proved himself to Paul (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24). Mark also spent time with Peter (1 Peter 5:13), from whom he may have received information he recorded in his gospel.
- D. It is a great disappointment to see talented servants of the Lord become disinterested in His work and shirk its demands. On the other hand, it is a great satisfaction to see such a person turn from his fears and selfishness and return to God's faithful service (Acts 8:24).

Conclusion. Two friends were out hunting in the northern United States when suddenly one yelled and the other looked up to see a grizzly charging them. The first started to frantically put on his tennis shoes and his friend anxiously asked, "What are you doing? Don't you know you can't outrun a grizzly bear?" The other replied, "I don't have to outrun a grizzly. I just have to outrun you!" Henry Durbanville said, "A friend is the first person who comes in when the whole world goes out."

Everyone wants friends who are faithful. Paul had many, but he also had to deal with foes too. We want to be on the Lord's side. Are you ready to obey, do His will and be His friend? You can today by taking opportunity during the song that we will sing.