

## “Only Luke Is With Me ...”

The last chapter of 2 Timothy lists the names of 17 different individuals which is not uncommon in Paul's letters, although the practice was not universal with him. Of those 17 names, nine are mentioned elsewhere, although there is no certainty it is the same individual which is mentioned. His dear friends, Aquilla and Prisca, are mentioned here as he sent greetings to them. Sometimes this couple was with him and joined in sending greetings to the addressed church (1 Cor. 16:19). Sometimes he sent greetings to them in the epistle he wrote either to an individual or congregation (Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:16).

He had sent Tychicus to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12). This brother in mentioned first in Acts 20:5 where he was apparently a messenger from Asia, bearing gifts to the poor saints in Jerusalem. He was mentioned in both the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7). Although Timothy was in Ephesus when Paul's first epistle was penned to him (1 Tim. 1:3) and presumably was still there when he received this second letter (his route from wherever he was would have carried him through Troas since he was to bring Paul's cloaks, books, and parchments from them, 2 Tim. 4:13), and other travels from Ephesus carried him through that same city (2 Cor. 2:12; Acts 20:7, 11), there is no absolute certainty he remained there until he received this second letter from Paul.

*“Demas forsook me, having loved this present world”* (2 Tim. 4:9). Demas was Paul's companion when he wrote Colossians (Col. 4:14). Although many castigate Demas as loving wicked practices who forsook Paul that he might engage in them; such an accusation is not demanded by the expression *“having loved this present world.”* The phrase could also mean Demas was afraid of facing execution if he remained with Paul and thus the expression *“forsook me,”* not *“forsook the Lord.”* Still, to have forsaken Paul in this hour would have been equivalent of having forsaken the Lord. Whether wicked, or fearful, John's words are clear: *“But for the fearful and abominable ... their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”* (Rev. 21:8).

Not less certain is given the departure of both Crescens (found only here) and Titus, repeatedly found in Paul's company. Although Paul stops short of saying these two forsook him, he offers no explanation for their departure from him, as he did in the case of Erastus, who remained at Corinth (possibly the treasurer of that city, 2 Tim. 4:20; Rom. 16:23); of Trophimus, whom he left sick in Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20); nor again of Tychicus whom he

sent to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12). Yet, while he offers no explanation for their departure; neither did he indict them.

Timothy was warned of one "*Alexander, the coppersmith, who did me much evil.*" The man (or another of the same name) was said to have "*made shipwreck of the faith*" and he, along with Hymanaeus, had been "*delivered unto Satan that they might be taught not to blaspheme*" (1 Tim. 1:19f). If these two references are not references to the same man, they had the same spirit and Timothy would do well to be wary of him.

"*Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering*" (2 Tim. 4:11). Whatever had been the cause for the breach between Mark and Paul (Acts 13:13; 15:36-39), it was now repaired. Trust had been restored and he asked for him in his last hours, just as he wanted Timothy present.

"*Only Luke is with me.*" Faithful Luke. He had been constant in attending Paul and even now was in Rome ministering to him. Was he a "*tentmaker*" by practicing medicine to take care of himself and Paul (he was the beloved physician, Col. 4:14)? Silence answers. However, he was there for Paul in his dark hour. What comfort Paul derived from his presence, for after all, Paul was a human who needed comfort, just as he had been a comfort to many others!

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