

PAUL'S SWAN SONG

A Circle of Honor and Dishonor

2 Timothy 4:9–15



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Spiritual leaders often must bear their burden alone. When people close their ears to the truth, leaders must be like prophets at times, speaking as lone voices in the wilderness. Like Moses, they sometimes journey solo through storms of dissension as they lead a congregation of grumblers. How Joshua must have longed for a companion to watch his back while he conquered the land. Samuel, David, Esther, Daniel—all the great men and women of the Bible—spent time as solitary figures on the narrow mountain trail of leadership.

For years Paul had plodded leadership's lonely path, and now as he sat in prison alone, his shoulders slumped under the emotional strain. He longed for the warmth of friendship to brace him against the cold of his dungeon isolation. He was still the clear-thinking professor, rugged missionary, and powerful preacher . . . he was *Paul*, the brightest theological mind of his day. And yet, he was human. Just like us in times of trouble, he needed his friends.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Paul's pen put to paper the ache in his soul: "Timothy, please come as soon as you can" (2 Timothy 4:9), adding a postscript: "Do your best to get here before winter" (4:21). Let's join Paul in his lonesome cell and look closer at his urgent plea to Timothy.



Searching the Scriptures Study Tip

A technique in the *Searching the Scriptures* method is to use your imagination to enter a biblical scene. Take a moment to put yourself in Paul's place, physically and emotionally. Soon, Paul would appear in court to face his final judgment with no one to stand by him. The judge would set the date of execution and, with the bang of the gavel, the countdown of Paul's remaining time on earth would begin.

Quotable

*Leadership and
loneliness go
hand in hand.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Use your imagination to describe Paul's feelings and his deep longing for Timothy to be with him during the apostle's eleventh hour.

In the verses between Paul's request to Timothy to "come as soon as you can" (2 Timothy 4:9) and his urgent addendum, "come before winter" (4:21 NASB), Paul listed seven men—five of whom he wrote about positively and two negatively.

Read 2 Timothy 4:9–15. What do you observe, specifically regarding the names Paul listed in verses 10–15? Note whether Paul's comments were positive or negative, and observe the order. Which names "bookend" the others? From your first impressions of the passage, can you come up with a possible reason Paul may have listed the names this way?

Using our *Searching the Scriptures* method of *correlation*, let's compare Scriptures to discover who were these men. Their stories shed further light on Paul's emotional state and reveal four insightful principles about what to do when we're *lonely*, *hurt by enemies*, *loved by friends*, and *needy*.

Two Painful Memories

The two men who multiplied Paul's pain, prompting his appeal to Timothy, were Demas and Alexander.

Demas the Deserter

Demas has deserted me because he loves the things of this life and has gone to Thessalonica.
(2 Timothy 4:10)

Until this point, Scripture painted Demas in a positive light. With whom did Paul list Demas in Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24, and how did Paul describe him?



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What lured this former coworker to abandon Paul when he needed him most? Apparently, a love for “this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10 NASB) won over Demas’ heart. Chuck Swindoll explains how this may have happened.

Demas has experienced an inner erosion. He’s cooled off to spiritual things. The dynamic for Christ has somewhere slipped. Perhaps afraid of the dangers and risks of following Christ when Nero’s finger would one day point in his direction and he, too, would find his place in a cell. Perhaps he by now misses the comforts of home and desires the safety of anonymity. We don’t know. It’s possible that Demas never really counted the cost, and suddenly when the cost became great, Demas fled.

Even so, regardless of the pressures, Demas would have stayed true to Paul if he had stayed true to Christ. Unfortunately, the siren’s song of the world and its immediate pleasures seduced Demas away from Jesus and His kingdom’s future rewards. What insight do the following verses offer about the power of the world to capture our hearts?

Mark 4:14, 18–19

Romans 12:1–2

2 Corinthians 4:4

1 John 2:15–17



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2 Timothy 4:9–15

The present age has a strong, magnetic appeal that can grow stronger over time and draw us away from those who need us most. The desertion of Demas broke Paul's heart . . . but the opposition of Alexander shoved a knife in his back.

Alexander the Antagonist

Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm, but the Lord will judge him for what he has done. Be careful of him, for he fought against everything we said. (2 Timothy 4:14–15)

The New Testament lists several men with the name Alexander. This Alexander may have been the same blasphemer in Timothy's church in Ephesus whom Paul disciplined by throwing him out and handing him "over to Satan" (1 Timothy 1:20). If so, Alexander retaliated with a two-pronged assault. Alexander slandered Paul—"did me much harm" (2 Timothy 4:14)—and impugned Paul's words—"he fought against everything we said" (4:15).

Compare these two forms of opposition by filling in the following chart. For additional insight, consult a commentary and look up the key Greek words in your concordance or online at <https://lumina.bible.org>.

	"Alexander . . . did me much harm" ¹ (4:14) (<i>endeiknumi</i> , 1731]	[Alexander] . . . fought against everything we said" (4:15) (<i>anthistēmi</i> , 436)
Method of opposition		
Target of opposition		
Goal of opposition		
Paul's response to opposition		



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Application

What principles can you glean from Paul's response to Alexander to help you respond to those who oppose you?

Five Faithful Friends

Unlike Demas (who left Paul) and Alexander (who Paul *wished* would leave him), five friends in Paul's circle of honor remained faithful to the end: Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, and Tychicus (2 Timothy 4:10–12).

Luke, Paul's "beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14 NASB), stands center stage in this list as the only friend who was physically present with Paul. Luke most likely brought him daily rations of food and doses of medicine. **Read 2 Timothy 4:10–12.** Where had Crescens, Titus, and Tychicus gone? Locate these regions on your maps in the back of your Bible or in an atlas.

Crescens is not mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament, but you can discover more about Titus in these verses: 2 Corinthians 7:13–14; 8:6; Galatians 2:1–3; Titus 1:5. Record what you learn.

Tychicus served Paul as a courier, delivering his letters to Ephesus (Ephesians 6:21), Colossae (Colossians 4:7), and probably Philemon (Colossians 4:9). Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus to relieve Timothy and allow him to come right away to see Paul.

Paul asked Timothy to bring Mark, adding, "he will be helpful to me in my ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). Read Mark's story of failure and second chance in Acts 13:13 and 15:36–39. What is the significance of Paul's end-of-life endorsement of Mark—the defector who found his courage? Note: Mark would later write the first account of Jesus' life, the gospel of Mark.



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Some Timeless Reminders

To wrap up our study, let's identify some key principles. Based on Paul's example of expressing his pain and his need for Timothy, how might you complete these sentences:

When I'm lonely, I need to _____.

When I'm hurt by enemies, I need to _____.

When I'm loved by friends, I need to _____.

When I'm needy, I can request _____.

Bring It Home

Have you been wounded by a “Demas” who deserted you in your hour of need? Or an “Alexander” who spreads false information about you and attacks what you say? What encouragement and advice might Paul give you?

Who are the people in your circle of honor—people like Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, Tychicus, and Timothy? If you've been trying to make it on your own, perhaps it's time to reach out to them in your time of need. What can you do to reach out to your friends in the days ahead?



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Whether or not you are in a leadership position, you may journey alone at times. Don't hesitate to ask your "Timothy" to come to you before winter falls. We all need friends to walk the perilous trail of life together.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for meeting my needs when there was no one else to do that. Thank You for being my Friend, my Advocate, and the One who has loved me all the way to the end. How grateful I am for You. May I learn to say "I love you" to the friends You have given me. May I admit my need without any pride or self-sufficiency. And may I, Father, live with vulnerability and openness before a watching world that continues to look for authenticity and hope. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. The little word *did* in Greek is *endeiknumi*, from which we get the word *indictment*. It means "1) to point out 1a) to show, demonstrate, prove, whether by arguments or by acts 2) to manifest, display, put forth," as an informant does when smearing a person's reputation with a false testimony. See lumina.bible.org, note on 2 Tim. 4:14, <https://lumina.bible.org/bible/2+Timothy+4>, accessed Sept. 6, 2017.



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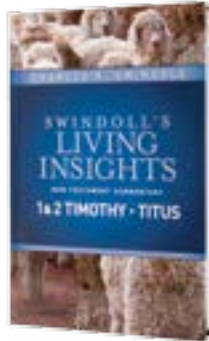
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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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