

2 Timothy 4:6-22, How about someone who will always stand by your side?

What if everyone abandoned you? What if you felt like the whole world was breathing down your neck and you had nowhere to turn, no one to help you? At that moment, wouldn't it be nice to know that you had someone in your corner who would never abandon you, no matter the odds, no matter the circumstances? When everyone else leaves your side, Jesus says, "Don't worry, I'm right here."

4:6-8, [The reason Timothy must fulfill his ministry and use God's Word—which has thoroughly equipped him (3:16-17)—to convince, rebuke, and exhort is because] the Lord is about to take Paul home. Paul knew that his death was imminent, that the Lord was about to pour out his life as a drink offering (Genesis 35:14). And as he looked back at his life and asked himself, "Did I fulfill my ministry?" (as he's been urging Timothy to do throughout this letter, 1:6, 13; 2:2-7, 15, 22-26; 4:5), his answer echoes the repeated encouragements he's given Timothy: Paul has fought the good fight as the good and focused soldier he mentioned in 2:3-4. He has finished the race as the disciplined athlete he mentioned in 2:5. All in all, Paul has kept the faith; he remained faithful to God, he endured everything including what he's about to endure in his execution, which is why our Lord Jesus Christ will reward him with a crown of righteousness.

The concept of reward is something else Paul has mentioned previously, i.e., he encouraged Timothy to follow Onesiphorus' example, not Phygellus and Hermogenes. If Timothy does, then the Lord will reward him as He will Onesiphorus on that Day, 1:15-18. Paul talked about rewards when he discussed the soldier, athlete, and farmer who were rewarded for their endurance, 2:3-6. He mentioned the greatest example of endurance: our Lord Jesus Christ who was rewarded with resurrection and ruling the world, 2:8 (cf. Philippians 2:5-11). And his mention of a crown of righteousness which the Lord will give to him on that Day coincides with the reward of reigning with Jesus for keeping the faith, 2:12. Is Paul bragging here? No, his focus is not on himself but his Lord and his spiritual son Timothy: he's trying to keep Timothy from drawing back from the faith. Paul is urging him to keep the faith as he's done repeatedly in the letter, 1:8, 14; 2:1; 3:14-17.

But this reward isn't just available to Paul, it's available to Timothy and everyone else who follows suit, i.e., "all who have loved His appearing," will be rewarded with reigning with Christ. What does it mean to love Jesus' appearing? What was the focus of Paul's life? What did he live and breathe for? Jesus. Everything Paul did was with Jesus in mind (Philippians 1:21). What's the focus of your life; who are you living for? Who are you trying to impress, your friend, boyfriend, wife, kids, family, boss, co-workers, employees, the public? Who are you doing all of this for? If the focus of your life, if the reason you get up every morning is not Jesus, then your endurance, your ability to survive each waking moment will be as good as the god you're worshipping. If it's fame, it'll last as long as your fame does. If it's money, likewise. If it's love, affection, approval, then your ability to endure the heartaches of life will last as long as their good opinion of you lasts.

4:9-13, Paul asks Timothy to come to him quickly. Why was Paul so desperate to see his spiritual son? Several reasons: he missed him, 1:4. Everyone except Luke had abandoned him, 1:15; 4:11, and he wanted to see him one last time before the Romans beheaded him which was fast approaching (beheading was the method of execution for Roman citizens, which Paul was, Acts 22:25-28; they could not be crucified). As Paul requests Timothy's presence, he points out one of the individuals who had abandoned him, Demas. It's sad to hear this about Demas because he was once a useful team member of Paul's, Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24. Paul doesn't say exactly why Demas abandoned him but it was related to sin, i.e., Demas had turned his back on the Lord and chased after the sinful ways of the world.

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There were several others whom Paul had sent elsewhere to minister but out of the ones who could have stayed, only Luke stood by Paul's side. Next, he mentions Mark; he wanted Timothy to bring him because Mark was useful to him for ministry. This gives us hope concerning Demas because Mark had at one time also abandoned Paul¹ but now Mark had come back to the Lord. Paul mentions Tychicus, who was also part of Paul's team, Acts 20:4. About five years earlier, he had delivered the letters of Ephesians and Colossians to their respective churches (Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-8). He also asks Timothy to bring the cloak he left with Carpus, likely because winter was coming, 4:21. He also requests his books and parchments. These are not books as we know them; books hadn't been invented yet. And though we're not told what these books and parchments contained, they may have been copies of Scripture, either Old Testament Scriptures or part of what became the New Testament Scriptures.

4:14-15, Paul next warns Timothy about Alexander the coppersmith, who did much harm to Paul, though he does not give details about Alexander or what he did. He may have gotten Paul arrested. In any case, we do know that he opposed the Gospel Paul preached, 4:15, so he warns Timothy to beware of him so that what happened to him won't happen to Timothy. Paul also asks the Lord to repay Alexander for what he did, which doesn't seem very forgiving or Christian. But this doesn't mean that Paul is not willing to forgive; we know that he is, which is why he asks Timothy to reach out to those who have ears to hear instead of giving up on them, 2:24-26. However, some don't have ears to hear; they, instead, want to fight against the Lord, 3:1-5, so Paul asks the Lord to repay Alexander accordingly.

4:16-18, at Paul's first trial, no one stood with him, all forsook him. But in spite of that, Paul asks the Lord to forgive them, to not charge this against them, which reminds us of our Lord Jesus Christ when He turned to His Father, as He was dying on the Cross for us, and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:24). Paul understood the pressure that those who forsook him were under. Yes, they shouldn't have abandoned him, but Paul understood that they gave in to weakness and the Devil's snare, 2:26. So he asks the Lord for mercy on their behalf. However, though everyone abandoned him, there was one who didn't: Jesus. He never left Paul's side. Instead, the Lord gave him strength not only to face the judges who could take his life, but to give the Gospel to these judges and everyone else listening, 4:17. The Lord had delivered Paul out of the mouth of the lion, which is perhaps a reference to escaping the death penalty at this trial or escaping Satan's lion-ous attack (1 Peter 5:8). In fact, Paul was certain that Jesus would deliver him from all of Satan's evil attacks. Even if his life was taken by the Romans, Paul knew that the Lord would preserve his life for His heavenly Kingdom, which is why Paul wants to praise Him for ever and ever, 4:18.

4:19-22, in his closing, Paul wants Timothy to greet Priscilla and Aquila whom Paul first met in Corinth (Acts 18:2). Not surprisingly he also sends greetings to Onesiphorus and his family, who helped him while in prison, 1:16-17. He mentions Erastus who's serving in Corinth and Trophimus whom Paul left sick in Miletus, which shows that healing is ultimately in the Lord's hands and timing not in this or any other apostle who has the gift of healing (Acts 14:8-10). He sends greetings from others who are with him and he closes with a desire for the Lord Jesus Christ to be with Timothy's spirit, which is Paul's final encouragement to his spiritual son Timothy, i.e., Timothy must let the Lord's Spirit, faith, love, and favor guide him, 1:13-14; 2:1.

¹ Paul and Barnabas had taken John Mark (Barnabas' cousin, Colossians 4:10) on the First Missionary Journey, Acts 13:5. But Mark then abandoned the mission, Acts 13:13. This caused a rift between Paul and Barnabas when Paul refused to take Mark with them on the Second Missionary Journey; 15:36-38. Barnabas then took John Mark with him and being the Son of Encouragement, which is what his name means, Acts 4:36, Barnabas was able to turn Mark around so much so that he became part of Paul's team once again, Colossians 4:10.