



“HELPERS & HINDERERS”

2 Timothy 4:9-22

Theme: *No believer is irreplaceable, but all are indispensable.*

Introduction: Churches everywhere are calling for volunteers: ushers, children’s workers, nursery workers, committee members, set-up teams, clean-up teams, youth workers, deacons, parking lot attendants, greeters, prayers, Bible study leaders, teachers, and a host of other volunteers. The healthiest of churches constantly need people to “step up” and serve the Lord in helping the church function smoothly with staffing that is doing what they do to the glory of Christ.

Paul demonstrates the same notion as he says that he needed Timothy to come to him because only Luke was with him – many of those serving with him had, for one reason or another, left him. In our text, we see Paul’s appreciation for those who faithfully served alongside him, as well as noting those who had hindered the ministry. As Paul was preparing to die, we see an emphasis being made by him that *“No believer is irreplaceable, but all are indispensable.”* We have four points to consider: 1) **The Constant Appeal for Helpers**, 2) **The Current Antagonism by Hinderers**, 3) **The Consummate Assistance from the Helper**, and 4) **The Caring Acknowledgement of the Helpers**. Let’s begin with ...

I. THE CONSTANT APPEAL FOR HELPERS – 4:9-13

A. The Plea for Assistance - v. 9

1. Paul is now drawing his letter to Timothy to a close.
2. He begins this conclusion by issuing a call to Timothy to come to Rome to encourage and help Paul - *“Make every effort to come to me soon;”*
3. This appeal has a sense of urgency: *“make every effort”* [σπουδάζω] means to be diligent about it, to expedite the effort, to hurry with eagerness—cp. **2 Timothy 2:15**.
4. Of course, Paul personally desired additional fellowship, but the overarching priority was the need for servants of Christ to help him with the duties of ministering to the church in Rome.
5. He immediately talks about replenishing workers who are assisting him in the church ministry.
6. He speaks of how lonely he is to have only Luke, who would be occupied much of his time ministering to the Saints and unable to provide Paul the kind of fellowship he desired.
7. Hence, he tells Timothy I need you to come to me and satisfy my great yearning for fellowship, with you particularly.
8. He then begins to list several of those who had been with him but were no longer ...

B. The Partners' Activity – vv. 10-13

1. **The Deserter¹** – He begins talking about a man who had once been one of his partners **“... for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica;” - v. 10a**
 - a) *He was commended by Paul when he wrote to the Colossians – **Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24.***
 - b) *Paul declares that Demas had abandoned him in a time of need because he “loved this present world” – a sharp contrast to those who love [Christ’s] appearing in v. 8.*
 - c) *Demas here represents those who we thought were truly born again but who had never met Christ, and thus, their profession of faith was superficial—cp. **1 John 2:19.***
2. **The Departed** – **“... Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.” – v. 10b**
 - a) *We know very little about **“Crescens”** outside of this verse.*
 - b) *He was a faithful man who Paul trusted to minister to the believers throughout the region of **“Galatia,”** which is essentially present-day Turkey.*
 - c) *Additionally, **“Titus”** went to serve the believers in **“Dalmatia.”** – cp.*
 - d) *It is essentially Croatia along the Adriatic Sea opposite Italy.*
 - e) *Both of these men continued to serve the Lord but in places away from Rome, where Paul could not directly benefit.*
3. **The Doctor** – **“Only Luke is with me.” – v. 11a**
 - a) *Paul then mentions that “only Luke is with me” – a tribute to Luke’s faithfulness.*
 - b) *Luke was a physician whose life had helped so many of the early believers – consistently serving the Lord through his profession as a doctor – cp. as we saw in **Colossians 4:14.***
 - c) *Luke wrote major portions of the Scriptures, such as Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of Luke.*
4. **The Disciple** – **“Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.” – v. 11b**
 - a) *Next, Paul instructs Timothy to stop by and **“... bring Mark with you.”***
 - b) *At one point, Paul rejected Mark because of his unfaithfulness to Christ and His church. He had abandoned Paul and Barnabas when it got rough – **Acts 13:13; Acts 15:36-39.***
 - c) *However, Mark had been turned around, likely by Barnabas, his uncle, and became **“useful to me for service,”** demonstrating that past failures do not forever disqualify a person.*
 - d) *This speaks to the power of intentionally helping another to follow*

¹ Alliteration provided by John Phillips, Exploring the Pastoral Epistles, pp.446-451.

Christ more.

5. **The Dispatched** – *“But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.”* – v. 12
 - a) *“Tychicus”* was a man entrusted by Paul with specific assignments.
 - b) *“Tychicus”* had delivered the letters to the Philemon and the Colossian believers, as well as the epistle to the Ephesians – cp. ***Colossians 4:7; Ephesians 6:21.***
6. **The Dependable** – *“When you come, bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.”* – v. 13.
 - a) Finally, Paul mentions “Carpus,” a believer in “Troas” who was so trustworthy that Paul could leave some personal and ministry-related resources with him.
 - b) He tells Timothy to be sure he secures several things he had entrusted to Carpus:
 - (1) *“bring the cloak ...”* – a reference to a heavy poncho-like blanket that had a hole cut in the center for the head, and it would fall over the shoulders to keep a person warm. It also doubled as a blanket when one would go to sleep.
 - (2) *“... and the books, ...”* – a reference to papyrus scrolls (very expensive as they were made through an extensive process), which were used in place of paper until paper was invented, likely to Old Testament scrolls.
 - (3) *“... especially the parchments”* – a reference to vellum sheets made from animal hides—are extremely expensive and only used for the most important documents. This likely refers to Paul’s own writings or those of other Apostles, such as Peter.
 - c) *It seems that Paul desired to be able to continue studying God’s Word all the way to his death.*
7. It is evident that God’s work relies on many regular, faithful, ordinary believers who were willing to do God’s will with faithfulness and grace.

II. **THE CURRENT ANTAGONISM BY HINDERERS – 4:14-15**

A. **The Damage of Hinderers** – v. 14a

1. Upon thought of Timothy expediting his coming to visit him in Rome, Paul immediately thinks of his principal antagonist – *“Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm;”*
2. *“coppersmith”* [χαλκεύς] – originally referred to a coppersmith, but then was expanded to refer to any kind of smith – essentially a metal worker.
3. These were most notably idol-makers and thus Paul’s preaching likely was opposed with the same hostility as Demetrius, the silversmith displayed in Ephesus when he opposed Paul – cp. ***Acts 19:26-27.***

4. Whatever opposition he caused was effective since he *“did me much harm”* [κακός] – injury or wrong.
5. Perhaps he was a plaintiff in Paul’s trial before Caesar, we do not know.

B. The Deferring of Vengeance – v. 14b

1. However, much like the Lord Himself, who committed his well-being to the Father, Paul declares that he is more comfortable with God determining how Alexander is dealt with – *“the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.”*
2. This is how godly humility displays itself in the face of hostility—not returning evil for evil but leaving room for God’s vengeance—cp. *Romans 12:19*.
3. We lose much credibility as believers when we insist on avenging ourselves against those who mistreat us, but Christ Himself set the example – *1 Peter 2:23*.

C. The Discernment re: Hinderers – v. 15

1. Thus, he tells Timothy to watch out for Alexander, who is set on destroying the Gospel and those who proclaim it—*“Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.”*
2. Courage in serving Christ is not to be equated with foolish recklessness.
3. As we interact with Christ’s enemies, we must exercise prudence, discretion, wisdom, and shrewdness—cp. *Matthew 10:16*.

III. THE CONSUMMATE ASSISTANCE FROM THE HELPER – 4:16-18

A. The Fallibility of Human Support – v. 16

1. Paul again seeks to encourage Timothy, who might be intimidated by Alexander and those like him.
2. He implies that Alexander was opposed to him and everyone who had been supportive of him abandoned him – *“At my first defense, no one supported me, but all deserted me.”*
3. This is likely a reference to the portion of the trial that was the arraignment—the initial consideration of the charges.
4. As Christ Himself stood alone with no one advocating for him, Paul had been *“deserted”* [ἐγκαταλείπω] – a term that means forsaken and abandoned by a deliberate decision to leave his side.
5. Paul states, “I get it!” by saying, *“May it not be counted against them.”*

B. The Faithfulness of Divine Support – v. 17

1. Whereas Paul recognizes that no human companion can be relied upon absolutely – men will let other men down!
2. However, Jesus is not like that – *“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me ...”* – cp. *Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5*.

3. As we faithfully seek to represent Jesus Christ Himself, our ever-present Helper attends to us and stands with us so that we might fulfill His purpose for our lives—*“so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear.”*
4. He is faithful to protect us from literal and figurative perils – *“... and I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth”* – a phrase common in the first century for an insurmountable, ostensibly inescapable peril.

C. The Faith in Divine Support – v. 18

1. Paul then declares that the Lord's faithfulness was complete in dealing with both real and physical dangers as well as spiritual ones—*“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed ...”*
2. Essentially, Paul is teaching us that the safest place to be is in the will of God regardless of what perils, threats, persecutions, or dangers into which His will may lead us.
3. This extends even to the most significant evidence of the Lord’s faithfulness – *“... and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom;”* -
4. Paul has been assured of this ultimate gratification from long before this – it was a formative precept of great influence in Paul’s heart and mind, as it should be ours – cp. [*Colossians 1:13*](#).
5. The thought of finally gaining what he yearned to gain brought him to impromptu worship – *“... to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”*
6. Paul knew this world was not his home, but he looked for the celestial city where His Lord stood, interceding for Him until He welcomed him home— cp. [*Hebrews 11:16*](#).

IV. THE CARING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE HELPERS – 4:19-22

A. The Greetings Given – vv. 19-21

1. Paul sends his greetings to notable companions in ministry – people who have served the Lord together with him throughout the region.
2. *“Greet Prisca and Aquila ...”* - He begins by sending greetings to Prisca and Aquila – a married couple who had befriended Paul as tentmakers in Corinth and who had believed and served alongside Paul in various locations – cp. [*Acts 18:1-2*](#).
3. Next, he sends greetings to *“the household for Onesiphorus,”* – who lived in Ephesus but had been in Rome ministering to Paul during a season in Paul’s imprisonment – cp. [*2 Timothy 1:16-18*](#).
4. He then provides an update to Timothy on two brothers:
 - a) *“Erastus remained at Corinth...”* – was a city treasurer in Corinth who had ministered alongside Timothy in Macedonia – cp. [*Romans 16:23; Acts 19:22*](#).
 - b) *“... but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus”* – was an Ephesian who

traveled with Paul and was one of the Gentiles that has been at the center of the riot in Jerusalem – **Acts 21:29**.

c) Interestingly, Paul couldn't heal him, demonstrating that miraculous sign gifts were being eliminated toward the end of the completion of the New Testament.

5. As a transition in his greetings, Paul emphasizes to Timothy the urgency of his coming to Paul before Paul is executed – **“Make every effort to come before winter.”**
6. Now, he sends greeting to others who Timothy could relay:
 - a) **“Eubulus greets you ...”** – clearly a leading layman in the church in Rome who would be familiar with Timothy.
 - b) **“... also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren.”** -
 - (1) **“Pudens”** – another leading layman in the Roman church
 - (2) **“Linus”** – according to Tradition, he was the first bishop of Rome
 - (3) **“Claudia”** – Tradition states she was the wife of Linus
 - (4) **“all the brethren.”** – this would refer to all the believers in the Roman church.

B. The Grace Granted – v. 22

1. Paul is facing imminent execution, and Timothy and the other believers would not have his influence any longer.
2. Hence, Paul closes this marvelous letter by focusing their attention on the only One they truly needed for spiritual vitality and power – Lord Jesus Christ – **“The Lord be with your spirit.”**
3. He left them in the Lord's hands – **“Grace be with you.”**
4. The same Lord who had empowered Paul for a faithful ministry would likewise provide Timothy and all other believers with the grace needed to remain faithful and true.
5. With this, Paul's ministry was completed, and he was ready for death ... his ministry was finished, and the curtain of His life fell.

So What?

1. If I stopped doing what I am doing, would the church be impacted ... how?
2. When have I felt abandoned by all except Christ?
3. Upon what is your confidence that God will deliver you safely to His Heavenly Kingdom based?
4. Is my life centered upon Jesus Christ and the grace He provides to remain faithful to Him?

No believer is irreplaceable, but all are indispensable.