

Closing Thoughts

2 Timothy 4:14-22

September 8, 2019 PM

HDBC

How does the great Apostle Paul summarize his life? How does he bring it all to a close? Find the answer in our text today. In completing this, his last letter, he reveals some of the **pressures** in his life, **people** in his life and finally the **passion** in his life.

1. The Pressures in Paul's Life (14-18)

A. The Abuse (14-15)

Alexander, the coppersmith. Mentioned in 1 Tim. 1:20 as one who had abandoned the faith and was spiritually shipwrecked.

Not only did he not agree with Paul, but fought against the apostle. Harmed the apostle. Bitterly protested the teaching of Paul. Was hostile toward Paul

Did me much harm – This phrase implies the action of hurting another person by making accusations. He succeeded in harming Paul's reputation by making all kinds of false accusations about him.

Paul is quick to remind Timothy that the Lord knows all the Alexander has done and will deal with him in His own time. I've reminded myself of that truth from time to time when I have been attacked by others. They are in God's hands. He can take care of them better than I.

Some theorize that Alexander was Paul's thorn in the flesh. I can understand that. I've known some people who could be describe that way. Paul warns Timothy to be prepared. Alexander apparently was a shrewd opponent of orthodoxy. Be ready. He is a hostile antagonist to the truth.

Paul's stay in Rome has not been easy. Not only the imprisonment, but his enemies have fought him.

B. The Abandonment (16)

Nero made it fashionable to persecute Christians. In doing so, it opened the door for Christians to be brought before all kinds of tribunals. They were accused of hating other people, of cannibalism, and even of atheism because they worshipped a God no one could see. Because they would not join their neighbors in ascribing deity to Caesar, they were accused of treason and sedition.

This is probably a reference to something similar to a grand jury appearance. Called in Latin legal language *prima actio*.

At this time Paul indicates that he had no defenders. They all deserted him. To Paul's surprise and dismay, no one came forward to speak on his behalf. This must have caused great grief to Paul, but he humbly seeks mercy from the Lord in their behalf. Rather than condemning, he forgives them.

C. The Abiding (17-18)

In contrast to the desertion by his friends, Paul's abiding defender was the Lord, Himself. The Lord's help and abiding strength brought three results:

1) The Gospel was Fully Proclaimed

Christ's presence enabled Paul to continue preaching, sharing, teaching, witnessing to those around him. Paul was able to use his imprisonment and his defense as a platform from which to spread the good news.

2) Paul Was Delivered From the Lion's Mouth

Literal lions? Doubtful but possible.

Nero? Doubtful. Paul was executed.

Danger in General? Possible.

Satan? Yes. He is described as a roaring lion. Satan's goal was to silence Paul. Snuff out his message. He did not succeed.

3) **Paul Had Confidence in the Future**

Paul was anticipating the glories of Heaven.

It makes a great difference when you can trust in Jesus. Though all those around you may desert, He will be there. You may not be able to see Him, but He will be there.

During the terrible days of the German bombing of London, a father, holding his small son by the hand, ran from a building that had been struck by a bomb. In the front yard was a shell hole. Seeking shelter as soon as possible, the father jumped into the hole and held up his arms for his son to follow.

Terrified, yet hearing his father's voice telling him to jump, the boy replied, "I can't see you!" The father, looking up against the sky tinted red by the burning buildings, called to the silhouette of his son, "But I can see you. Jump!"

The boy jumped, because he trusted his father. The Christian faith enables us to face life or meet death, not because we can see, but with the certainty that we are seen; not that we know all the answers, but that we are known.

2. **The People in Paul's Life (19-21)**

Before closing the letter Paul once more makes reference to the some of the important people in his life.

A. **Prisca(Priscilla) and Aquila**

Devoted Christian couple who planted churches and nurtured believers. He first met them in Corinth soon after Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome. They followed Paul to Ephesus and helped establish the church there.

B. Onesiphorus

Paul mentions the family of this man who had ministered to him so sacrificially in Rome. Onesiphorus had likely been killed or lost in the Roman persecution of believers. He had been a faithful encourager and supporter of Paul. **2 Timothy 1:16**

C. Erastus and Trophimus

Traveling companions and ministry partners of Paul and Timothy. These men were safe in other cities while Paul faced execution. Rather than being jealous, he sends them a greeting.

D. Eublius, Pudens, Linus, Claudia

After once again asking Timothy to come quickly, he mentioned four Christians in Rome. These are mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. These each send their greetings.

Once more we are reminded that Paul was not a loner. Warren Wiersbe has indicated that in the book of Acts and in Paul's letters there are over 100 names of people associated with him. He knew that he could not do the task alone. Neither can you.

Linda was traveling alone up the rugged highway from Alberta to the Yukon. Linda didn't know you don't travel that road alone in a rundown Honda Civic, so she set off where only four wheel drives normally venture.

The first evening she found a room in the mountains near a summit and asked for a 5 a.m. wakeup call so she could get an early start. She awoke to early-morning fog shrouding the mountain tops. Breakfast.

Two truckers invited Linda to join them, and since the place was so small, she felt obliged. "Where are you headed?" one of the truckers asked. "Whitehorse." "In that little Civic? No way! This pass is dangerous in weather like this." "Well, I'm determined to try," was Linda's gutsy, response.

"**Then I guess** we're just going to have to hug you," the trucker suggested. Linda drew back. The truckers chuckled. "We'll put one truck in front of you and one in the rear. In that way, we'll get you through the mountains."

All that foggy morning Linda followed the two red dots in front of her and had the reassurance of a big escort behind as they made their way safely through the mountains.

3. The Passion in Paul's Life (22)

In this last phrase we are reminded of the passion of Paul's life.

He first addressed Timothy, individually. *The Lord be with your spirit.* **Your** is singular, meaning this phrase was for Timothy, only. Paul was praying that the presence of the Lord would embolden Timothy and enable him to carry out His mission.

Paul then addressed the larger audience, including those now reading his words . . . us! *Grace be with you.* **You** is plural.

Grace! Paul was the great apostle of grace. It was the centerpiece of his message. **Grace be with you!** What an amazing statement. What a wonderful desire. That God's grace would accompany one.

Author Fred Smith writes: One of my treasured memories comes from a doughnut shop in Grand Saline, Texas. There was a young farm couple sitting at the table next to mine.

He was wearing overalls and she a gingham dress. After finishing their doughnuts, he got up to pay the bill, and I noticed she didn't get up to follow him.

But then he came back and stood in front of her. She put her arms around his neck, and he lifted her up, revealing that she was wearing a full-body brace.

He lifted her out of her chair and backed out the front door to the pickup truck, with her hanging from his neck.

As he gently put her into the truck, everyone in the shop watched. No one said anything until a waitress remarked, almost reverently, "He took his vows seriously."

I see in that story a picture of the grace of God. It is God doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He carries us through the difficult times.

Paul was passing off the scene. In doing so he was confident that the work would go on. As I read somewhere,

God buries his workmen, but the work goes on! A new generation would take up the banner as the apostle passed it on. The same God empowers each generation. The baton has been passed from generation to generation. How are we doing with it? Are we allowing the torch to burn brightly? Are we contending for the faith? Are we truly being light and salt?

Four takeaways that Charles Swindoll has shared:

1. When you're lonely, you need caring, close friends.
2. When you're hurt, you need loyal advocates.
3. When you're loved, you need to be grateful.
4. When you're needy, admit it.