

## **Lesson 16: Rest in God's Faithful Plan!**

### **Text: 2 Timothy 4:9-18**

Life takes unexpected twists and turns. It can become profoundly difficult to manage. Even to the place of wanting to give up all together.

How are we supposed to survive and even thrive when we continue to receive what I like to call,

**Left hooks out of nowhere.**

You didn't see it coming but, WHAM! It hit you and about knocked you out for the count.

Life hits us that way sometimes and you feel like everything is falling apart and you have no way to make it through.

But you do have a way. You do!

And that is the main idea of this message.

### **Main Idea: God Holds You Together When Life Falls Apart!**

How do we know this is true? Well, the Bible is full of promises and examples of how this is true.

We will focus on one of those examples today.

#### **1. People Will Leave You (vs. 9–15)**

This is a stark reality of life. Christians are not immune to such realities. Death, desertion, divorce, moving away, or just because you are standing for your faith in Christ.

And as Paul is facing the last days of his life, we see a vulnerable side of this great man of Christ.

He appeals to his friend and Son-in-the-faith, Timothy to...

#### **2 Timothy 4:9 ESV**

*Do your best to come to me soon.*

Paul writes from a Roman prison awaiting trial before Nero (1), and this passage reveals his urgent need for human support in his final days. He urges Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, but the reason for this desperation becomes clear in the verses that follow.

(1) Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 8:163.

As we go through verses 10 through 15, I want you to think about why each one left Paul...

#### **2 Timothy 4:9–15 ESV**

*Do your best to come to me soon. <sup>10</sup> For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup> Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. <sup>12</sup> Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. <sup>13</sup> When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. <sup>14</sup> Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. <sup>15</sup> Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.*

#### **Demas - Deserted Paul out of love for the world.**

Demas is one of the most sobering names in the New Testament. He was once a fellow worker with Paul, mentioned in Colossians and Philemon alongside men like Luke. But near the end of Paul's life we read these heartbreaking words: *"Demas has deserted me, having loved this present world"* (2 Tim. 4:10). He abandoned Paul in a time of suffering because he chose what was temporary over what was eternal. His story is a warning: not everyone who starts well finishes well.

#### **Crecens - Not a defection, but a departure for ministry.**

Paul says Crescens went to Galatia (v.10) with no negative comment. Unlike Demas, there is no rebuke. Most likely he was sent or relocated for gospel work. But he was gone from Paul's life, nonetheless.

#### **Titus - Sent on ministry assignment.**

Paul says Titus went to Dalmatia (v.10). Given Titus' trusted role elsewhere ([Titus 1:5](#)), this appears to be a strategic deployment, not abandonment.

#### **Luke - Faithful and still present.**

*"Luke alone is with me"* (v.11). In contrast to deserters, Luke models loyal companionship. This fits his long partnership with Paul (cf. Acts "we" sections; Col. 4:14).

#### **Mark - Once unreliable, now restored and useful.**

Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark because "he is very useful to me for ministry" (v.11). This is beautiful redemption when you remember Mark once withdrew ([Acts 15:38](#)). Grace rewrote his story.

#### **Tychicus - Sent by Paul, not lost by Paul.**

*"I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus"* (v.12). This is a strategic assignment. Paul often deployed trusted men for strengthening churches (cf. Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7).

#### **Carpus - A faithful associate holding Paul's belongings.**

Paul asks Timothy to retrieve his cloak and books left with Carpus at Troas (v.13). Nothing negative. Likely a trusted believer who had hosted or assisted Paul.

#### **Alexander the coppersmith - An active opponent of the gospel.**

Alexander the coppersmith appears as a dangerous opponent in Paul's final chapter. Paul writes,

*“Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm... he strongly opposed our message”* (2 Tim. 4:14–15). Though we do not know all the details, it is clear that Alexander actively worked against Paul and the gospel. Paul warns Timothy to beware of him, yet he does not seek revenge. Instead, he entrusts justice to God: *“The Lord will repay him according to his deeds.”* It is a sobering reminder that those who oppose the gospel will ultimately answer to God.

Ministry can be painfully lonely. Paul lets us see behind the curtain here.

Some leave because they love the world, like Demas.

Some are sent out for ministry, like Tychicus.

Some stay faithful, like Luke.

Some are restored, like Mark.

And some do real damage, like Alexander.

But no matter the category, **departure** still hurts.

Even when it is necessary. Even when it is understandable.

And especially when it is harmful.

Shepherding people means opening your heart, and when people walk away, they rarely take nothing with them.

They take memories, trust, and pieces of your heart.

Faithful ministry will include seasons where you feel the ache of being left behind.

And yet, like Paul, you keep going, not because it is easy, but because Christ is worth it.

Paul ministered to people, not for himself, but for Christ.

This is the only way one can make it long term in the ministry. But it does mean your heart will be broken throughout your ministry.

Why? Because, while we do ministry for the Lord, it still requires love for the person. We must love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves.

*“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.”*

— *C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves*

People will leave you.

Some will die - don't get bitter at God about this reality. Death is a reality of the curse and a reminder of our sinful rebellion.

Some will move on - again, don't grow angry about this. God's providential hand is mysterious. But it is still good.

Some will deliberately harm you on their way out - Love and forgive them, nonetheless.

Some will stay like Luke.

I realize people leaving you is a hard concept, but in this life, you will lose people. It will happen.

The question you must grapple with is will you allow this reality to cause you to grow bitter, angry and reclusive in an attempt to protect your heart?

or

Will you offer your life up as Paul had done, as an offering to the Lord.

As he said in the last section of verses, that he poured himself out as a drink offering to Jesus.

The first option is focused on self and will only bring about emotional pain and suffering.

The second looks at life with God's perspective.

Trusting that God brings people in and out of our lives for our growth and His Glory.

Don't get me wrong, it still hurts, but with God's perspective we can see clearly that even those who are intent on our harm will be used by God in our lives to grow in dependance on Jesus.

God will hold you together when life falls apart.

Remember this sobering truth - People will leave you.

But...

## **2. God Will Stand By You (vs. 16–17)**

### **2 Timothy 4:16 ESV**

*<sup>16</sup> At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!*

When Paul says, "*At my first defense no one came to stand by me,*" he is likely referring to the preliminary phase of his Roman trial.

In Roman legal procedure, there was an initial hearing where charges were examined, and the case determined whether it would proceed toward final sentencing.

It was not yet the execution, but Paul already knew where this was heading.

Just a few verses earlier he said, *“The time of my departure has come.”* Paul understands his death is near. This trial will end in execution.

And when he stands in that courtroom, he stands alone.

No believers in Rome step forward.

No ministry partners stand at his side.

No friends offer support.

*“All deserted me.”*

Feel the weight of that. This is not a mild inconvenience. This is abandonment at the edge of death.

But what stands out most is not the loneliness. It is his response:

*“May it not be charged against them.”*

Instead of bitterness, Paul extends forgiveness. Even knowing death is near, he responds with Christlike grace. That is remarkable.

Sounds like his Savior as He hung on the cross.

How is that possible? How can a man facing execution, abandoned by friends, speak like that?

Verse 17 answers it.

**2 Timothy 4:17 ESV**

*<sup>17</sup> But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me...*

Here is the contrast.

Men deserted him.

But the Lord stood by him.

The phrase *“stood by me”* carries the idea of personal presence and active support.

Paul was not alone in that courtroom. The risen Christ was not absent. The Lord stood with His servant.

And not only stood by him — He strengthened him.

The Lord did not merely comfort Paul emotionally. He empowered him. The rest of the verse says:

*“...so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles might hear it.”*

The Lord strengthened Paul so he could keep preaching.

Abandonment did not silence him.

Loneliness did not paralyze him.

Fear did not shut his mouth.

Why? Because Christ stood with him.

This is the same promise echoed in [Hebrews 13:5](#) And this promise is for every believer!

**Hebrews 13:5 ESV**

*“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

Paul believed that promise. And that belief shaped his response.

He could forgive because he knew he was not forsaken.

He could endure because he knew he was not alone.

He could thrive because he knew Christ was strengthening him.

Ultimately, there is a Friend who sticks closer than a brother.

That kind of faithfulness finds its fullest expression in Jesus Christ.

And Christian, that same Lord stands with you.

Spurgeon once said,

*“If you lie long upon a lonely pallet, where few shall observe your suffering, he will not forget you. If you are drifted to some remote part of the world, far from all you love, he will be just as near.”*

— Charles H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 61

Spurgeon knew something about loneliness. He was criticized, abandoned by friends, and misunderstood by fellow ministers.

And yet he clung to this truth: Christ does not move away when people do. When others step back, He steps near.

And that is exactly what Paul is saying.

Friends left me.

But the Lord stood by me.

Christian, hear me.

When your life feels lonely, heaven is not. When the voices grow silent, Christ is not absent. When friends withdraw, your Savior is closer than ever.

He stands with you. He strengthens you.

Christian, one of the ways you guard your heart from bitterness and fear is by learning to practice the presence of God.

Paul did not suddenly discover Christ in the jail cell. He had walked with Christ long before he stood alone.

Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century monk who spent most of his life washing dishes in a monastery kitchen, wrote:

*“The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer... for in the noise and clatter of my kitchen... I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees.”*

He learned to live consciously aware that God was near.

That is what Paul did. He practiced the presence of God.

He did not wait for crisis to seek the Lord. He walked with Him daily. So when abandonment came, he was not spiritually shocked. He was already anchored.

Listen carefully.

If you do not cultivate the presence of God in ordinary ways, you will struggle to sense His presence in lonely days.

Practicing the presence of God is not mysticism. It is consciously reminding yourself, moment by moment:

The Lord is with you in that moment.

The Lord sees you and what you are enduring

The Lord strengthens you to meet whatever you are facing

The Lord stands with you and envelopes you in His sweet and comforting presence.

What can this look like in your life?

It means speaking to Him throughout the day.

It means turning anxiety into prayer.

It means preaching truth to your own heart.

And when the isolated jail cell moment comes — when you feel deserted — you will not panic.

Because you will already know: He is near.

And Christian, that same Lord stands with you.

Paul was not crushed by abandonment because he knew the Lord stood with him. And that confidence carries him into the final testimony of this passage — not just that the Lord strengthened him in the moment, but that the Lord would ultimately deliver him.

Let's look at that.

### 3. God Will Finish What He Started (v. 18)

#### 2 Timothy 4:18 ESV

*The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Do you know what can help a person face the darkest of circumstances?

It's a four-letter word spelled - HOPE

Hope!

Biblical **hope** is a settled, confident expectation that God will fulfill His promises because He is faithful.

Paul had this kind of hope.

Paul knew that God would finish what he started in his life and in the lives of all who believe.

Paul said this very same thing in [Philippians 1:6](#)

#### Philippians 1:6 ESV

*<sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

Notice the words Paul uses in the beginning of this verse.

#### 2 Timothy 4:18 ESV

*The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed...*

The Lord Jesus Christ came on a rescue mission. Before time ever began, the eternal Godhead planned the redemption of sinners. As Peter says,

#### 1 Peter 1:20 ESV

*<sup>20</sup> He [Christ] was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you*

And at the appointed time He came into the world, because, as Paul says...

**1 Timothy 1:15 ESV**

*...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*

Paul was no different than us! He needed rescue as well.

In [Acts 9](#):1-22 we see the story of Paul's rescue.

Saul began as a fierce enemy of Christ, breathing threats and violence against the followers of Jesus. But on the road to Damascus, the risen Christ confronted him, revealing that in persecuting believers he was persecuting the Lord Himself.

Blinded and humbled, Saul was led into the city where God used a faithful disciple named Ananias to restore his sight and affirm that Saul had been chosen by God to proclaim Christ to the nations.

The man who once tried to destroy the church was transformed by the grace of God and immediately began preaching that Jesus is the Son of God.

His life became living proof that the power of the gospel can turn even the fiercest opponent of Christ into His most devoted servant.

Isn't that amazing!

It is so good for us to understand what God did to save Saul and transform him to the man of God, Paul.

And here, the amazing God, rescued Paul so that he would be used powerfully to rescue other.

God didn't just clean up Paul...

Listen carefully. What Paul says here points us to the very heart of the **gospel**.

**2 Timothy 4:18 ESV**

*The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

This raises an important question.

How can a sinful man like Paul, be brought safely into the kingdom of a holy God?

The answer is the **gospel**.

God is perfectly holy and perfectly just.

He created us to know Him and live under His good rule.

But every one of us has sinned against Him.

The Bible says,

**Romans 3:23 ESV**

*<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

Because of our sin, we deserve judgment. Scripture tells us that...

**Romans 6:23 ESV**

*<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

And apart from God's grace that judgment is eternal.

But God did not leave sinners without hope.

From before the foundation of the world, the eternal Godhead planned a rescue.

The Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to save sinners. As Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:15.

**1 Timothy 1:15 ESV**

*<sup>15</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*

Jesus lived the perfect life we have failed to live.

He obeyed the Father completely and never sinned.

Then He went to the cross and willingly took the punishment our sins deserved.

**Isaiah 53:6 ESV**

*<sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

On the cross, Jesus bore the judgment of God in the place of sinners.

And three days later He rose from the dead, proving that sin had been paid for and death had been defeated.

Because of what Christ has done, God now offers forgiveness and eternal life to anyone who will turn to Him in faith.

When a sinner repents and places his trust in Jesus Christ, God forgives his sin, declares him righteous, and promises exactly what Paul is talking about here:

The Lord will rescue him

The Lord will bring him safely into His heavenly kingdom.

That is the hope of the **gospel**.

We are not good enough to enter God's kingdom.

But that Jesus Christ rescues sinners and brings them there safely.

Do you see the result of this truth?

**2 Timothy 4:18 ESV**

***18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.***

The result, the end all be all is not that you are saved (as nice and as wonderful as that is).

The result is that God receives the glory forever and ever!

What does this even mean?

To give God glory means that His **greatness** is recognized, His **character** is honored, and His **name** is praised.

In other words, salvation ultimately puts God on display.

The story of redemption is not primarily about how impressive we are. It is about how glorious God is.

He planned the rescue.

He sent the Savior.

He paid the price.

He preserves His people.

And He brings them safely home.

So, when Paul thinks about the Lord rescuing him and bringing him into the heavenly kingdom, he cannot help but erupt in praise.

***"To Him be the glory forever and ever."***

Because in the end, every saved sinner becomes another trophy of God's grace and another reason for God's glory to shine forever.

Listen to the wisdom of John Flavel

***"Did Christ finish his work for us: Then there can be no doubt, but he will also finish his work in' us." - John Flavel***

The last word Paul uses here to complete his amazing and powerful doxology is the word - Amen

**The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament 281. ἀμήν amēn**

*ἀμήν transliterated from the Hebr. 'āmēn.*

*Amen, to be firm, steady, trustworthy. Rendered also as “truth”*

The significance of finishing the sentence with this seemingly insignificant word?

It is capping off a profound, saving truth.

What is that truth?

God will finish what He started.

God will make all things right in this end.

God will rescue you.

God will deliver you from eternal Hell and you will enjoy Him forever.

He will get all the praise, all the honor, and all the glory forever and ever and ever and ever -  
This is **true!** This is the truest of the true statements ever to be uttered!

And everyone in this room said, AMEN!

What do you hold onto when your life is falling apart? You hold onto the promise that God will make all things right in the end.

Two things I think you should do in light of this passage.

Memorize verse 18. Memorize this profound passage. Meditate on it and when you feel like the floor is dropping out from beneath your feet, rehearse it repeatedly in your mind.

In addition to this verse, when life feels unstable, consider memorizing these other promises that remind you of God's faithfulness.

**Memorize [2 Timothy 4:18](#)**

**[2 Timothy 4:18 ESV](#)**

*<sup>18</sup> The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

**Memorize [Philippians 1:6](#)**

**[Philippians 1:6 ESV](#)**

*<sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

**Memorize [John 10:28](#)**

**John 10:28 ESV**

*<sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

**Memorize [Jude 24](#)**

**Jude 24 ESV**

*<sup>24</sup> Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,*

Fill your mind with the promises of God so that when fear rises, truth answers it.

Friends, this truth will hold you together when life is falling apart!

People will leave you

but...

God will stand by you

and...

He will make all things right in the end!

**Conclusion** (Land the Plane)

Life is hard, and it often feels uncertain and out of control.

If we live in fear, the uncertainty only grows heavier.

But if we truly believe God and take Him at His Word, we will have peace, the peace that passes all understanding.

Life is not always predictable.

Plans change. Circumstances shift.

The future can look unclear, and fear begins to whisper, *What if everything falls apart?*

But peace does not come from controlling the future.

It comes from trusting the God who already holds it.

Corrie ten Boom, who suffered in a Nazi concentration camp for hiding Jews during World War II, said it well:

***“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”***

*— Corrie ten Boom, The Hiding Place*

That is exactly how Paul lived.

His future was uncertain. His death was near. Yet he was not afraid.

Because he knew his God.

If you know Jesus...

**You may not know what tomorrow holds, but you know the God who holds it.**