

Do Not Be a Demas

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Well, take your copy of God's word and we're going back to 2 Timothy. We called this series "Beautifying the Bride" as we go verse by verse, chapter by chapter, through this New Testament epistle. The Apostle Paul is writing to Timothy. He's left Timothy behind in the city of Ephesus. He's now in prison in his second Roman imprisonment, that's where he wrote 2 Timothy from, and he's given Timothy instructions on how to get the church in better shape, um, something like he told Titus when he sent Titus to the island of Crete, and Miss Pam and I might take a trip over there to the island of Crete. It's not too far from where we'll be. But anyway, he sent Titus to the island of Crete and said, "Set things in order in the churches there." Well, that's basically what Timothy's doing in Ephesus. He's getting the church back on track. Now why would Paul want the church to be on track? So that God is glorified. When the church, the bride, is proper and true to God, then God gets glory through her, just like a wife is the reflection of her husband and the husband's glorified through the character and virtue of the wife. That's why it's used as a, as an analogy in Scripture for Christ's represent, relationship rather to the church.

Now we come toward the end of 2 Timothy. We're in chapter 4 and this morning we'll be in verses 9 through 15. 2 Timothy 4:9 through 15, and I'll just go ahead and give you the title, "Do Not Be a Demas." Do not be a Demas. Verse 9, 2 Timothy 4, Paul's writing to Timothy and says,

9 Make every effort to come to me soon; [why?] 10 for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. 12 But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13 When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 15 Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.

Now this is a personal letter. It's, it's very different from many of the books in the New Testament which were letters written to whole church families, and at this point, Paul shifts from this strong command to Timothy concerning preaching the word and he shifts to relating now to Timothy his personal situation.

Now, being a personal letter, we do not see the kind of a logical layout of this letter like we do in the books of like Romans or Ephesians or other New Testament books where usually there's a treatise on theology or doctrine and then there's the practical application that follows that. No, this is just like a personal letter. I mean, it's just stuff all mixed together as it comes to Paul's heart and mind, of course, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and a, a lot of things are there. So we get to the end of the letter and Paul begins to give some very personal remarks about people and his personal situation. Now, one thing that I think is very important here is we do see the absolute authority and full sufficiency of the word of God and that in this personal letter that's written from a person to another person and written like a personal letter, nevertheless, God has wonderful treasures and nuggets of truth for us that we can apply to our lives today.

Now I'm convinced that verse 10 is a proper starting point for understanding this section of the text. Verse 10 rightly divides the section of Scripture. It's a line of demarcation because, you see, all of us line up on one side or on the other side according to what we see in verse 10. Let's look at verse 10 again, "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica." And you say all of us are either like Demas or we're like Luke, or Timothy, or Mark who are faithful. You're either Demas-like or you're faithful. That's basically where Paul is coming from here as he talks about these various people and his own situation.

Now, Demas originally was a close and trusted associate to the Apostle Paul. In Colossians 4:14, he lists him along with, um, some of the other apostles. And then moving on to Philemon 1:24, he lists Mark and Aristarchus and Demas and he calls Demas one of his fellow workers. But it turns out that Demas had too much world love in his heart. Too much world love in his heart. And let me veer off my notes a little bit here. The only way to get a love in your heart greater than the world love that was there when you were conceived is if God changes your heart. But Demas had too much world love in his heart. You see, it's one thing to enjoy the common graces of this world that our God gives us: family and friends, nice set of clothes, a good meal, a car to drive, the sunshine, the rain and on and on we could go, common graces that God gives all mankind. There's nothing wrong with enjoying those, and when we enjoy them, we enjoy them giving thanks to God, we enjoy them with humility and gratitude that God granted so many good things, but enjoying God's good common graces, that that's an altogether different thing than loving the world.

1 John 2:15, "Do not love the world," this present world system with its values and ideas and philosophies, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The point is, if the crowning passion of your heart is to get all the gusto, if you will, out of this world, if that's the abiding driving force of your heart, you're none of God's. You're not yet one of his children. You've not yet received the new birth. You're not a new creature in Christ Jesus. I didn't say a Christian may struggle with that from time to time. I'm saying if that is the abiding passion of your life then you're not the Father's.

Another way of saying do not love the world is do not love sin. Those, like Demas, who forsake a sound pastor and a sound church to unite themselves with as shallow or unsound pastor, and an unsound church, often they leave flying the banner of, "Well, I just don't believe that doctrine or my theology has changed, or intellectually I see things differently." Hogwash and slop. It's a sin problem. Demas probably left Paul with some high sounding argument of why it was okay. Paul said "you deserted me." That's sin.

Brother, sister, listen to me: men do not come to the light because their deeds are evil. They didn't get to the darkness and become evil, they were evil and went looking for the darkness. It's always a sin problem when men forsake God and forsake the truth and forsake a true church. It's always a love of the world problem when, when men forsake a sound pulpit and a sound church and a sound fellowship to go for something else. I'm not saying God didn't move people to other places, we know that's true, but not everybody that leaves us leaves out of love for God and the truth and holiness. A lot of them like Demas who have too much world love in their hearts. And casting out a little further to our world and our present cultural situation, I get so tired of hearing these vile indulgers and perversion and sin and wickedness raise their heads up with pomp and arrogance, like, "Well, I just intellectually believe this and that." You, you're not an intellect, you're a fool bound by your sin. Let's just be honest about it, amen?

Well, Paul said, "He deserted me." The word deserted used for Demas here means forsaken or abandoned is the idea of leaving someone in dire straits, leaving them in a desperate situation. Demas once was a man that Paul could count on, but not now. So verse 10 lays down this line, if you will, either you're for God and for the church and for the truth, or you're like Demas and you're heading in the other direction. So with that understanding in mind, we can see why verse 9 says what it says. "Timothy, make every effort to come to me soon." When Paul says "make every effort," it means "expend what energy you've gotta expend, but get to me, Timothy." Uh, we would say "do your very best, Timothy, to come see me because it's getting tough." That's part of what Paul's saying. "It's getting tough here. Timothy, I could use your help." It does something to me to picture in my mind this, the apostle to the Gentiles, locked in a Roman prison and he's coming close to his execution and he knows that, and he's penning these final words. We're getting the last written words of the apostle to the Gentiles and he's a human. "Timothy, I need you. I need your presence. Do everything you can to get here."

Now added to that is that Crescens, he says in verse 10, has gone to Galatia. Now he hadn't done anything wrong, he's just got a different assignment. Titus is gone to Dalmatian. Now Titus is mentioned 30, Crescens is only mentioned here in the Bible. Titus is mentioned 13 times. Titus has been on the Isle of Crete, evidently got the work done there, getting the churches straightened out. Paul spent his whole life working on these local churches to get them right. He'd get them kind of right, and then they'd slip back again. Then he'd come back by and get them right again. And now he's spreading out to let Titus and Timothy and others help him in that work. And so Titus evidently got through with the work in in in Crete. He's, he's been with Paul at the, in the Roman prison ministering to him, but now he's gone to Dalmatia the Bible says. So that puts Paul in a quite lonely situation, not completely alone, but as far as having the leadership, we might

say our minister of staff, he's quite alone. So Paul is there in that Roman imprisonment, his execution is impending, and I believe not only does he long for Timothy's company as true as that is, but he wants to sit down with Timothy eyeball to eyeball, heart to heart, and spend some extended time preparing Timothy to carry on this all important church planting work after his demise, after he is executed.

Now with that setting in mind, let's talk about "don't be a Demas." Don't be a Demas but, I.: do be a Timothy, one who's quick to obey and one in whom leadership can trust. Among other things, Timothy was definitely that. He was quick to obey and one that leadership, in this case the Apostle Paul, could completely trust. In Philippians 2:19 through 20, Paul writes to the church there, "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare." So Paul says, "He's a guy I can trust." So let's stop right here, and let's challenge your hearts. Are you a Demas? Are you a Timothy? Are you one when God-ordained leadership ask you or directs you, or suggest to you, are you one that just is, is by nature gonna question and contend? Are you like Timothy that's quick to be. I mean when Paul writes "make every effort to come," the assumption is Paul saying, "I know Timothy will come. I mean, I know he's going to do what he can to get here."

There's a parallel to this that is really the same basic truth of the godly woman in Proverbs 31:11. In Proverbs 31:11 it says, "The heart of her husband trusts in her." The point is, she's not doing her own thing. She's lined up under her husband, and she's a blessing to him and she's caring for the home and he knows he can trust her. He's got confidence in her. It's a wonderful thing to be married to a woman that you know her heart and you can trust her.

Well, that's what Paul is saying of Timothy. "I know this man's heart. I know I can trust him. He's, he's quick to obey me and he's one I can put my trust in." Are you quick to obey and can church leadership trust you? Let me just be frank. All the time, all the time I'll be talking with one of our ministerial staff and they'll mention one of you, and they'll say, "You know, man, that brother's solid, you can just count on him. Oh, that lady, she is so faithful, you just count on her." That's Timothy-like. And a whole lot of you are like that. And I know it's not the charming personality of brother Matt. Or the charisma of Brother Jeff. Or the global esteem of Brother Steve? Or the scholastic superiority of Brother Tim. Or the wisdom of Brother David. You love Jesus and Jesus said to obey your leaders. Now I've got a 40 something year track record here, so you, you know I'm not going to charge you to do something that's off the wall. Now if I give you an exhortation to do something, we're going to have it thoroughly hammered out from this book.

Uh, can we put the wheel up there again, the wheel illustration? And we, we worked this out with over three decades ago and I, I wrote these purpose and strategy statements and we had them laid out so that we could kind of keep it in our minds and let me give you this, uh, prerequisite thought: every illustration falls apart somewhere, no illustration's perfect, but if you'll say, "I want to be a Timothy, I want to be quick to obey and be

faithful to the preaching of the word," that's the hub of the wheel. "I want to be quick to be obedient and serve my brothers and sisters through small groups," that's the wheel on the right. "I want to have a heart for local church-centered missions, personalized strategic world missions. I want to be faithful in home life discipleship. And I'm convinced based on the clear, systematic teaching and authority of the word of God." If you'll follow me and give yourself to those things, you can stand before Christ one day and I'm convinced here, "Well done, good and faithful servant." You may can articulate it differently and use different illustrations, but those primary things. Matter of fact, and I mean this, you get to heaven and you see the Lord Jesus Christ, you say, "Now Lord, You sent Jeff Noblit to be our pastor for a long time and he told me if I made a priority of the preaching the word, and I was faithful to serve my brothers and sisters in small groups, and I strove to have a heart for personalized strategic local church-centered missions, and we tried to be real at home in it, he told me that that that would please You." And if he says, "Nope, that's not enough," then it's on me. Then it's on me. But if you see the Lord and you said, "You know, our pastor, he laid out from the Bible preaching the word based, every members to small groups, local church-centered missions, home life discipleship but you know what? I just felt called to dogs for Jesus. I just thought I'd get me some dogs together and we'll go around the country and I'll teach them dogs to bark certain ways, and we'll just share the gospel through dogs barking." And I believe Jesus would look at you and say, "Did Paul have a dog? No, but he preached. He started local churches. He taught the principle of every member, ministry, body life. He continued in world missions and he expected every church he planted to help him in that world mission effort. And he taught it all to be real at home."

So now I say that very silly little dog illustration because there's a lot of stuff going on out there that doesn't have a half a thimble full of Scripture supporting it. But if you'll give yourself to these things and and why don't you this morning say, "Lord, I'm going to re-sign up to be a Timothy in small groups this year. I'm just going to be quick to obey and quick to get in on what needs to be done." You say, "Well, I, my small group, I don't know about my small group." Well you, there's somebody in there you can serve. Heard a man say just this last week, it's one of those basic things you kind of know but sometimes you hear people say it and it sticks deeper. He said, "You can't make happiness the goal of your life." Being happy cannot be the goal of your life, because a lot of times in life you're not happy. But you can make holiness the goal of your life. Pleasing God, the goal of your life. You know what you find? You'll actually find more happiness than if you started out for happiness. Maybe we used to say this a lot, Brother Nathan, we need to start saying this more again. I'm saying that because Nathan is now David's mouthpiece. He's like Moses and Aaron kind of thing. David's still here, he's just trying to pull back from a lot of that day-to-day stuff. We used to say, just strive that you won't miss more than 15 small group attendances in, in the calendar year. Just say, "I'm going. Hey, I'm gonna sign up for that." Now you might miss 17 but if you strive for 15, you probably won't miss 25. Be more faithful. Be more faithful.

Well, be a, don't be a Demas, be a Timothy, quick to obey and a man leadership can trust. That's why Paul says, "Timothy, come. You're the guy I need with me." Well, number 2: don't be a Demas, do be a Luke. Do be a Luke. Look at verse 11, "Only Luke is with me."

Now, Luke was a guy who was faithful all the way to the end, faithful all the way through. That's a powerful thing. Uh, now when he says only Luke is with me, now there were probably other Christians but again among his staff, his leadership team, only Luke is remaining with him at this time. Now, now Luke was whom Paul called in Colossians 4:14, the beloved physician. He said, "I love this guy. I love his spirit. I love his service with me." Matter of fact, uh, Luke had been with Paul in his first imprisonment. Both men were well-educated and fully devoted to Christ, even though their ethnicity would have put them at odds in the natural world. One's a Jew, Paul, and one's a Gentile Greek, Luke. And so normally they wouldn't have gotten along, but you see in Christ Jesus all racial, ethnic and cultural divisions are removed.

And I'm sure it was a blessing to Paul that Luke was a physician because Paul had a lot of ailments. Something about preachers, they have a lot of medical problems. In every scriptural record, Luke is seen as faithful. Now, that, that's pretty interesting because the Bible doesn't pull any punches. How would you like to be Demas? What if, later on Demas got right with the Lord and got this all fixed? Well, the last we see, "Demas, you've, you've done, you've gone to Thessalonica to play in the world." So the Bible just lays it out there but in every record of Luke, he's seen as a guy who was faithful all the way through.

It's believed that Luke wrote the gospel that bears his name and the book of Acts while he was with Paul in Paul's first imprisonment. Listen to what an early historian wrote of Luke. He said Luke served the Lord without distraction, having neither wife nor children, and at the age of 84 he fell asleep in Boeotia full of the Holy Spirit." What a testimony. So according to the biblical record in church history, Luke was a man that was faithful all the way through. All the way through.

You know, a bunch of you guys are Luconian. You're Luconianites. When I came here long, long time ago, you were here, and you could be counted on and you were striving to be faithful, and you're still faithful. But my charge to you is don't quit now. Don't coast now. Don't give up now. Be a Luke. Make it faithful all the way through. Don't let any Demas-spirit come on you. Now I've, I've served hard a long time. It's time for some of these other folks to do that. Who told you that? Who told you that? Brothers and sisters, it's just our joy to serve our Lord. It's our joy to serve his body. It's our joy to go to that small group and see if there's someone I can encourage this week, someone I can pray for this week, someone we can covenant together to pray for that's not converted that we can help reach out to. That's Luke. Every time you see him, the record of Scripture or in church history, he's faithful and he was faithful, excuse me, all the way through.

God bless you folks who are like Luke. There's a lot of you out there. And I've been blessed to be your pastor. Some of you have been leaning a little bit toward Demas's house a little bit. Well, you need number 3: don't be a Demas, but do be a Mark. Do be a Mark. Look at verse 11, "Only Luke is with me." Interesting, "Pick up Mark." Yep, that's the same John Mark that Paul kicked out of the club a while back. But he's back, and that's what I like about Mark. He fell back but he came back and he stayed back and was on track. Ah, like a thumbtack. No, it's not.

I love that picture here and maybe some of us are like Mark. You fell back on me. You fell back on the Lord. You fell back on the church. Well, confess it and get back and we'll take you back, and let's all stay on track. This is what Mark did. Acts 15:36 through 40. "After some days Paul said to Barnabas," and by the way, Barnabas is John Mark's cousin so that gives you a little background here that's important. "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." Paul said, "Let's go back to all these churches we've started and let's help them get along and do even better." Verse 37, "Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia," that's the old Demas spirit there, "and had not gone with them to the work." So in that earlier missionary journey, John Mark got part of the way through and said, "This is a little harder than I thought it was going to be. I thought this would be exciting." You know, as a young minister, um, you soon learn that most local church ministry is more perspiration than inspiration. It's just work. It's one of the challenges we have in Anchored in Truth right now. They see Brother Jono Sims and they see me and some other brothers who've been down the road several decades and they want to have the blessings we have in our church ministries but so many of them don't want to do 25 years of hard work. That's sort of where John Mark was, I think. "I didn't know this was gonna be so tough."

So he bails out and Paul said, "He's not going with this because I don't know how his character, I don't know if he's really back yet. I know he hadn't convinced me yet." Verse 39 says, Acts 15, "And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord." But then sometime later, Mark made it right and we see him with Paul again during Paul's first imprisonment. Colossians 4:10, "Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark." Notice he brings out cousin Mark here. Barnabas couldn't let Mark go because they were blood-kin, even though Mark at the time wasn't qualified to go on this next mission journey. But now everything is okay.

And notice what Paul, note, note how Paul affirms Mark here, "If he comes to you, welcome him. You may have heard about the skuttle we had. You may have heard about the fact that I wouldn't let him continue on that first missionary journey, or at least come back and go on the next one because he bailed out on the first one. But he's back now and he's regained my confidence." I like Mark. He fell back but he came back and he stayed back on track. Paul says, "Now he's useful."

Now in 2 Timothy 4, this same Mark in our text is mentioned again 22 years after the first offense. Paul said, "He's still on track. Timothy, when you make your way to me," about a six month's journey and he had to get there before winter, you couldn't journey across the sea in the winter, too rough, "When you journey back to me, pick up Mark. I need the guy. He's a blessing to me." God is the God of the second chance. And the third chance. And the fourth chance. Now, not all of us are outward Mark's where outwardly we left, but some of you your hearts have left. Your zeal has left. Some of your devotion

has left. It's time to get it back and get back on track, especially talking about your service to God in small groups. Let's do a better job this year. I'll be honest, we've slipped some, but the pandemics kind of put the whammy on us, But you know, I, I proclaimed a pastoral edict that the pandemic part is over. I say that tongue in cheek because I can't give edicts. I can only give this book, but this book says we need to be back on track and need to be faithful.

Don't be a Demas. Demas fell back and stayed back as far as we know. Do be a Mark. He came back and stayed back and stayed on track. If you draw a line in the sand this morning and say, "Lord, it's time, it's time to get with it." Can I, can I, can I say something to you, brother and sister in Christ? You know I love you and we can't judge each other, one family is not gonna do it just like another but you don't balance church with the world. Did you hear me? You don't balance God's work with the world. You fit the common graces of the world in after God's commitment to the church is settled. And I'm telling you, you'll be, you'll be shocked at how well God blesses that, how wonderfully that will work. Sometimes it's just a heart attitude. But I, I know it's, it's the cool going thing today to offer people at church where it's just fun and games and happy days and exciting services and, boy, I just can live in the world and come in on Sunday for about an hour and a half and then that's all I need. That's not the church. The church is visiting the elderly. The church is counseling somebody going through divorce. The church is dealing with the mom and dad whose child's in rebellion. The church is loving each other, caring for each other. You can't do that for 100 people, but you can do it for seven or eight, 10 people in a small group. If you've been off track, let's get back on track. Don't be a Demas.

Well, number 5, the last one: don't be a Demas, but do be a Paul. Do be a Paul. You'll not be surprised by this, but Paul had a fierce commitment to God's local churches. Now study all of missions in the New Testament, you know what you're going to find? Local church. Local church. Local church. Local church. Local church. He preached the gospel. He won the lost. He formed local churches and then he used that one to help form others, and he kept working with and trying to get them all more mature. He ate, slept, drank and lived for God's church.

He says in verse 12, "But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus." Now Tychicus is, he accompanied Paul on his last journey to Jerusalem. He carried the letters to the Colossians and Ephesians that we have as books of our Bible, of our Bible today. He's honorably described in the letters that Paul wrote and mentions him. Perhaps he's, he's even the one bringing this letter, 2 Timothy, to Timothy in Ephesus. Don't know that for sure but perhaps he is. Most certainly, though, he's sent to Ephesus because Timothy's leaving Ephesus because Paul didn't want that local church without leadership because he cares, he has a fierce commitment to the local church.

"So Tychicus, I'm sending, or rather, I have sent to Ephesus," because Paul's journey is going to be to go to Paul and Paul's sending, sending Tychicus to take his place. You know, when we talk about the fierce commit to the local church, so many today have this upside down. They're upside down. They think, they think the church exists to help the

individual. That's the weakness of Charles Stanley's ministry, and I appreciate Charles Stanley, but he's totally consumed with individuals doing better. That's upside down. You ought to be consumed with the church. You see, God's not just about saving individuals, God's about forming a people. You, you miss it, you're terribly incomplete if you don't emphasize people are saved to be a part of the church. The church is not...how can I say this to keep it in balance? The church is not primarily to win the lost. We win the lost to primarily make them part of the church. Don't misunderstand me, the church is very much committed as a priority to preaching the gospel and winning the lost but to the end that God has a people. God forms of people. And for now, that's local churches.

So here Paul is imprisoned, lonely, awaiting execution, and I'm sure he still feels like he felt in 2 Corinthians 11:28 when he says, "I've got all these external problems but then there's a continual pressure of concern for the churches." Do you have that kind of passion for the churches? Do you have that kind of passion for your church? I mean, does it occupy your heart and mind that they want Grace Life to do well? I want them to do well. I want to be a part of that. I want to bring my tithes and offerings. I want to minister to the saints. And you know what I look at there, you know what I see when I look out there? I'm seeing a lot of tired people. Oh, you don't look bad. I don't mean that. Ladies, you look okay. What I mean it's not an every month struggle, it's not an every week struggle, in this world today it's an everyday struggle to say, "I'm going to say no to a lot of the world's call so I can fulfill God's call to be faithful to his church. I want a fierce commitment like Paul."

Now it's interesting what Paul says here. He says in verse 13, "When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments." Now the cloak, um, some say the cloak was a chest which had the books and the parchments in them but that's a real stretch. I mean, that's a real stretch. It's obvious the cloak here meant a cloak. An outer garment. Later on he's gonna say, "Timothy, get here before winter." Because winter was just around the corner, he needed the cloak. An outer garment usually had a hole in the top and you'd put it over and it would shelter you from the cold and from the weather. One early writer thinking about Paul specifically mentioning the cloak and that God included in Scripture, said, "We must not deny our humanity or pretend that we are more than dust." And I got this wrong for so long and a lot of you do, and that was, I thought, if God calls you in the ministry, you have this Superman ability to carry emotional, psychological, and physical loads that the average man can't carry. You're one of the Supermen of God. That's a lie. Paul said, "I'm cold. Bring my cloak."

And but what God does do, is he tells the men of God how to conserve themselves and save themselves and care for themselves, not to think they somehow have this capacity to be expended beyond what anybody else can be expended and be okay. Where do you get that biblically? You don't get it biblically. It's one of those meaning notions that sound spiritual and it's not. That's why very clearly Paul tells Timothy in these letters, "Timothy, exhaust yourself in preaching the word, which means there's other things you may not do, but you have to do that." But you do not have the emotional, physical, mental capacity to carry all these loads. Preaching the word is a load. You can do other things,

but you may not can do many of them. But brothers and sisters in the church are gifted so that they can help you with those other loads, but if you're called to preach, nobody else is going to do that the way you're going to do it.

"Bring my cloak." Then he says, "and the books." Now I think it's probable he says, "Go to Troas and, uh, Carpus has my cloak and the books and the parchments." And it's likely that Paul was arrested in Troas and hurriedly said, "Carpus, keep my cloak, keep the books, and I'll send somebody for them later," and they took him off and incarcerated him.

Now the books here meant papyrus rolls. Papyrus was invented by the Egyptians about 2500 BC. We get our word paper from this word papyrus. It was a plant that grew in the marshes. They would cut it in thin strips. The strips would be overlapped to form a sheet of papyrus paper. Then they would dry the sheet in the sun and then would, uh, the sun as it dried would bond those strips together and it would form a scroll. And that's where we get the idea of rolling the scroll out.

But he said, "Bring those books, those papyrus papers." But then he also said, "especially the parchments." Now, parchment is a different word, and it means a different thing. It means a dressed animal skin. They would take a skin of a goat or sheep, or a young calf and they would take that leather and they'd remove all the hair, the fat and the meat. They would soak it in lime water. They would scrape it. They would stretch it on a frame, dry it out and smooth it by rubbing it with a pumice stone and chalk until you had this beautiful polished piece of leather. Then they would write on that piece of leather. It was a more beautiful, more, more expensive. The important things were saved to be written on parchment.

"Well, pastor, what were these papyrus rolls and what was the parchment?" I'm glad you asked. No scholar knows, but I think I know. My speculation is the papyrus rolls were Paul's writings. Perhaps other New Testament writers. Perhaps some of the books of the New Testament. But the parchment, the more expensive, was Paul's copy of the Old Testament. Paul's saying, "Timothy, I'm here in this squalor. I'm desperately lonely. My execution is coming. I need the book. I need the book." And I've told you this before: if I get in a place and I can't move or I can't think or I can't care for myself, when you come to see me bring the book. I want to hear the book. Now I treasure you. Paul says, "Timothy, I need you but whatever you do, bring the book."

Isn't it interesting, Paul in this situation basically says three things he needs. "I need fellowship. Timothy, I need you here. I need material provision, bring my cloak. And I need the word of God." You know, back to small groups, that's what you can do in the small group and care for each other if there's a physical crisis or need, we do that a lot in our church through the small groups. We're there just to say, "Brother, I'm with you I'm praying for you. I'll be interceding for you. I'll help you with that." Or sister or whoever it might be. And finally, always and here's what the book says, let me give you some encouragement, some instruction from the book: that's what Paul said he needed.

Well, verse 14. He throws in this line of Alexander the coppersmith. He says, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds." We don't know exactly who this guy is. He's probably the, the Alexander from 1 Timothy 1:19 and 20 where he talks about people who've gone shipwreck according to their faith, and he said people who've gone shipwrecked are guys like Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I've turned over to Satan so they will be taught not to blaspheme. So if it's that Alexander, that is a man who's apostatized and he's become an enemy of the church and an enemy of Paul.

Interesting phrase here, Paul said, "This guy did me much harm. Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm." Now the Greek scholar says, says that can be translated "he charged against me. He brought charges against me." That would make good sense in this context. I think what Paul is saying here, "He's the guy that would not let it go. He kept going to the Roman authorities charging me of crimes before the Roman authorities until finally they arrested me. They found me guilty. They've incarcerated me and sentenced me to execution. He brought the charge. He's done me much harm." That's my view of what he's saying here.

And Paul says something very interesting at the end of the verse, verse 14, "the Lord will repay him according to his deeds." So Paul's not writing from a perspective of personal vengeance. I think what he's saying is, "Timothy, first of all, I want to protect you from him. You gonna may run into him, and if he finds out you're preaching the gospel I preach or you're my associate, Timothy, he'll try to ruin you too." I think that's why he's saying, "Timothy, be careful about Alexander the coppersmith or the metal worker," means. And secondly, I think Paul is saying, "He's tried to pervert our doctrine and we need to protect the gospel and the truth from his perversions." Matter of fact, he says that at the very last of verse 15, "he vigorously opposed our teaching." Paul said, "This is bigger than me. He's against the Lord and the truth of the Lord that we're about bringing to the people to save their souls and build local churches."

But I'm impressed with the fact that Paul says, "the Lord repay him." Maybe this context is helpful. In Acts 7, a godly deacon by the name of Stephen is preaching the gospel, and the more godly deacon Stephen preaches the gospel, the more the Jewish crowd is enraged against him. So much so that they rush upon Stephen and begin stoning him to death. You know who's there that day? Paul. Paul was there. They called him Saul before his conversion. His name was Saul, after he's converted his name is changed to Paul. Paul was there that day and the Bible says in Acts 1:8, Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. Here Paul is, in effect, bringing charges against Stephen before his conversion. In effect, bearing witness, "This is just. He deserves this punishment."

So perhaps the key reason Paul does not seek a personal vengeance against Alexander the coppersmith is because Paul could say, "I was just like Alexander before I found grace. I was just like him. I stood there and bore witness against godly Stephen because I didn't know his God or his Christ or the forgiveness that comes through grace." It's a good lesson for all of us, is it not? There go I except for the grace of God. Doesn't mean, now

he's condemned Alexander is wrong, but he says, "I'm leaving him in the Lord's hands. Who knows, maybe grace will find him too."

But everything Paul has said to Timothy all reverberates around this one central theme: Paul's fierce commitment to the local churches. "I'm here to build up churches. I'm here to start churches. I'm here to mature churches. I'm here to bring God's gospel, to save more souls, to begin more churches." It's all about the commitment to local churches.

So, don't be a Demas. Be a Timothy, quick to obey and a person leadership can trust. Be a Luke. Many of you are on the Lucanian road. Keep going. Luke was faithful all the way through to the end. Don't be a Demas, be a Mark. Even though Mark fell back, that's over. You can get back and then stay on track serving the Lord in his church. And don't be a Demas, be a Paul. In the priorities of your life, say, "God's church is my priority." One simple reason, the church is God's priority. Are you kidding me? He sent his Son to die for it and you think it's one of many things? The church is not one of many things God's doing, it's the thing God is doing. You may not have your spouse later on but you'll still have a church. You may not have a family, but there will still be a church. Everybody may forsake you, but I guarantee you somewhere somebody's gonna open a Bible and worship Jesus and you can get together and be a church. That's why the Bible says when you get to heaven you'll not be husband and wife, parents and children like you are here, you'll be one big glorious church. Don't be a Demas.