

**Text:** 2 Timothy 4:16-22

**Title:** Last Words

**Truth:** The Lord is with you.

**Date/Location:** Sunday October 16, 2016 at FBC

## Introduction

Our study of Paul's final chapter continues and concludes with his reviewing his near-end status and passing Christian greetings.

### I. All Forsook Him

#### A. First Defense

1. In *New Testament History: A Narrative Account*, Ben Witherington writes, "In this letter, Paul says that at his first defense, no one came to his support; rather all deserted him (4:16). This comports well with the desperate and fearful situation in which Christians in Rome found themselves during the period of reprisals for the fire in A.D. 64 through early 66. Probably, this is a reference to the Roman legal process whereby a preliminary hearing (*primo actio*) preceded a decision as to whether the trial would go forward or not. Apparently, the lack of support for Paul allowed the trial to go forward. The supreme penalty Paul could face was beheading, which is the likely outcome of the trial in A.D. 65 or thereabouts."<sup>1</sup>
2. This first hearing was part of the Roman legal process called *cognitio*, in which fact-finding was done. In it, the accused could make a defense (apologia) to help establish the foundation for the case. Paul was familiar with this, having been tried before and having given a defense for himself and the gospel (Phil. 1:7, 17). This defense may have been another precedent-setting one for the entire empire, as cases before our own Supreme Court often are.
3. The *secunda actio* was the second hearing at which guilt or innocence was determined. Then the sentence was passed. Paul's expectation, given the current hatred of Christians at the time, and how the first hearing went, was that he would not be long on this earth (4:6-8).

#### B. All Forsook

1. The idea of "standing with" Paul in court does not mean showing up for moral support. It means "coming to the aid of." Perhaps it means lawyers and witnesses. How Paul could have used a "dream team"!

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<sup>1</sup> Accessed through books.google.com, no page number.

All Scripture is from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

2. The fact that everyone forsook Paul and offered no help made it a very difficult situation for him. He needed help. It would be interesting to know more about what this looked like. But as we quoted earlier, if the government were bent on destroying Christians, we might speculate that any defenders of Paul showing up in court could also be arrested and sent to the same fate as Paul.
  3. Friends, our own U.S. government is getting closer and closer to declaring Christianity an illegal religion. It is already illegal in some ways; and its views are marginalized or declared outmoded, bigoted, intolerant, and even evil. The Washington Post reported on October 13, 2016: “Speaking to the 2015 Women in the World Summit, Clinton declared that ‘deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed.’”<sup>2</sup> And this is in service of promoting abortion! That doesn’t sound much like the first amendment, which says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”<sup>3</sup> And since Congress is the only true law-making body in the federal government, that applies to the other two branches. What I am saying is that we may come to a place sooner rather than later that we have to be making a defense of the gospel on every front just to stay afloat in our secular society. In any case, we should continue preaching it to everyone we can so that people can be saved.
- C. Forgiving Heart. See Acts 7:60 and Luke 23:34. These men provide us with a great Christian example of how to treat evil people and fellow believers who do not do what they are supposed to. If Paul can ask God (as he basically does here) not to charge their abandonment against them, then Paul is not holding it against them either.
1. Why does he mention it? It is a fact. It made his situation more difficult and precarious. You don’t have to tiptoe around things like that to be forgiving. You can still state the facts!
  2. What I have seen sometimes is that people read too much into what you say, because they have pride and seemingly *want* to be offended by something. Paul is not bitter; he is simply stating facts.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/hillary-clinton-is-a-threat-to-religious-liberty/2016/10/13/878cdc36-9150-11e6-a6a3-d50061aa9fae\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.1546b42fcc21](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/hillary-clinton-is-a-threat-to-religious-liberty/2016/10/13/878cdc36-9150-11e6-a6a3-d50061aa9fae_story.html?utm_term=.1546b42fcc21)

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Amendment\\_to\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution)

## II. God Stood By Him

- A. Presence. God is omnipresent. We can only speculate if there was some special manifestation of His presence to Paul, as there was at other times, like the angel who spoke to him on the storm-tossed ship (Acts 27:23-24) or while he was in Corinth (Acts 18:9-10). But we know that Paul knew God's presence. We can know it as well, through faith (Hebrews 13:5).
- B. Strength. This presence of God was strengthening to him, in a time when nerves, weakness, fear, trembling, and similar negative emotions would be overwhelming. Life was at stake for him!
- C. Preaching. The strength was in part so that he could preach the message even as part of his defense before the Roman judge! He had done it before. The Lord promised that he would give help to speak in such situations (Luke 12:11-12). Paul viewed his public court appearance as a way to preach the gospel to a wider Gentile audience.
- D. Deliverance. Paul was rescued out of the mouth of the lion. I have taken this literally, meaning that he was delivered from the fate of being thrown to the lions. The preliminary exam set the parameters for the trial—the ground rules and worst outcome. It could have found Paul to be a Roman citizen and thus the worst penalty could be death by beheading instead of by lion or crucifixion. Either of the latter penalties were real possibilities for anyone accused of high crimes such as treason. Christians by definition in that general era of Roman law were considered guilty of high treason for worship practices, refusing to worship state gods, for assembling at night, and other practices.<sup>4</sup> This is why I take 'lion' very literally, and do not make it a metaphor for death.
- E. Preservation. Paul was thankful for being delivered at least to some extent in the preliminary exam, but he was also looking forward to a future deliverance in which he would escape the results of every evil work and be preserved for the heavenly kingdom.
  - 1. The evil work may be wrought upon Paul, but all it could do in the end was to kill the body. It could not kill the soul (Matthew 10:28).
  - 2. Ultimately, Paul knew he had a place in God's heavenly kingdom. He is not specific in this passage as to whether this is the millennial kingdom or the eternal heaven, but it matters little to a condemned

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<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damnatio\\_ad\\_bestias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damnatio_ad_bestias)

man. He trusts God will bring him into the right place at the right time. That kingdom will result in glory to God forever and ever.

3. The world conditions during the millennium will be far better than Paul experienced in Rome. There will be no need for Christians to give a defense of their position, for it will be manifestly seen by all to be truth. And then, the saved society's subsequent existence in heaven will be nothing short of perfection.

### III. Greetings and Final Words

A. Greetings. Paul sends greetings to a number of friends.

1. Among these were Priscilla and Aquila, long time partners in the gospel. They had traveled with him, and stayed in Ephesus a while (Acts 18:18-26), and were in Rome at some point (Romans 16:3).
2. He also greeted the household of Onesiphorus, who was not ashamed of Paul's chains (2 Timothy 1:16-18). These folks were likely residing in the Ephesus/Colosse region of Asia Minor.
3. Paul mentions Erastus, who was in Corinth. An Erastus is known from an inscription found in 1929 in the ruins of Corinth, but it is not 100% certain that this is the biblical Erastus mentioned by Paul.
4. Paul then mentions Trophimus who was sick and stayed in Miletus. He must have had a fairly bad illness, and Paul was not permitted by God to heal it at that time.
5. Paul then passes greetings to Timothy from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers there in Rome with him. We don't know these people from any other places in Scripture.

B. Travel Plans. Paul asked Timothy again to come quickly before winter. He needed the cloak before the cold set in (4:9, 13), and wanted to see Timothy before he died. Maybe he had a little bit of time because the wheels of justice were a little slow in Rome like they are sometimes today in our land!

C. Salutation. The final words of Paul were centered around the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace. He wished Christ and God's grace would be the ever-growing portion of Timothy. May it be so for us! Grace is a free gift of God to us. He extends it to all who believe in Him. Please ponder this for a while after hearing this message and thank God for his favor in Christ to a sinner such as yourself.