

# Emotional Pain & Joy in The Christian Life

by James Jennings

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*This sermon delves into the emotional afflictions faced by believers in personal relationships, drawing insights from Paul's experiences in 2 Timothy. It explores the joys and pains Paul encountered from individuals who brought him joy and those who caused him emotional suffering. The sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, perseverance, and reliance on God's presence in the midst of relational trials.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 13:5, Psalms 94:14, 2 Corinthians 4:9, Psalms 37:28, Psalms 37:25, Hebrews 10:25, Romans 15:4, Psalms 71:11, 2 Timothy 4:16

**Topics:** "Emotional Afflictions", "Forgiveness and Perseverance"

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## Description

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## Transcript

We'll turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy. I want to speak to you about emotional affliction.

The pains, hurts, and loneliness, and joys the believer faces from their personal relationships. And if you know 2 Timothy, it's Paul's last letter. And he names a lot of individuals.

Some of them, he names them, and they gave Paul a lot of joy. He rejoices in them. This is Paul who said, I thank God in all my remembrance of you.

He said that about a lot of people. But Paul also brings up multiple names of different individuals who did not give him joy in the Christian life, but they gave him emotional pain, emotional suffering. And why is it even that we suffer emotionally, internally? Well, it's because we've been made in the image of God.

And created in the image of God leads us to be what type of creature? Relational creatures, right? It's right. We're relational beings. God's designed us utmost to have a relationship with Him.

But we have relationships with one another. The Lord even says, by our love for one another, the world's going to know that we're of Him. It's a powerful thing.

Relationships with people. And I was thinking about King David. When King David wrongly did the census, the Lord basically gave him three options of calamity that could come upon him.

Or three options of suffering, right? Three different things. I would ask ourselves this, what if you had three options this morning? What if you could face bodily suffering? Very severe physical suffering. But all your relationships, there's no major grief there.

What if you could face financial suffering? Have absolutely nothing, but all your relationships, there's a sense of stability and not hurt there. Or what if you could have all the money, you could have the greatest health, but be totally alone? Have all this trials in the emotional life. Which one would you pick? Which one would you rather have? I don't know about you, I would rather have physical suffering.

I'd rather have physical poverty in the financial realm. And have a sense of stability and relationships with brethren and not being alone. Because if you get all the money, if you get all the health, but you don't have real deep relationships and all you have is hurt and abandonment and desertion, then that is a more difficult trial to face.

And ultimately, what was the greatest trial Christ faced? Christ was forsaken, deserted, by His Father on that cross as His Father poured out His wrath upon Him. He said, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Deserted Me. That's what Christ went through as He bore that wrath.

He had a perfect relationship in all eternity past with His Father. And God so loved us as enemies that He sent His Son. And He didn't turn His back on His Son.

He turned His wrath upon His Son. So I want to look at some of the relational pains Paul suffered, some of the joys he suffered, and then I want to ask the question, how did Paul respond? And how do you respond? Because this is something we've all faced. And I know I've mentioned the example many times, but when I first came to the church, I'd just been saved a few years, and we made that church introduction video.

And I was the one who shot every one of those people. I went, videoed them. I got their line, and I edited it all together.

And honestly, at that point in my Christian life, as I'm editing that video and seeing all these brethren, I never could have imagined that some of those people would be gone. I mean, I had some idea in my limited understanding of Christianity at that point that it's just going to be one happy family all the way to the end. I had no idea.

The different people there who would deny the faith, right? That's hard. They deny the faith. And people who you had a sharp disagreement with and they went to another church, and praise God, they're still following Christ.

But all sorts of emotional hurt and pain happens. And one thing you want to remember here, we're going to look at 2 Timothy. Don't forget the context.

This is Paul, his last letter. He's in prison, facing execution. He even says in 4.6, he says, I'm ready to be poured out.

Already ready to be poured out as a drink offering. And the time of my departure has come. Paul recognizes he's at the end.

This man is going to die. One of the godliest Christians who ever lived is nearing the end of the race. And it wasn't just the opposition from the outside.

It's not just that Paul had all this persecution from the government. He had that. But Paul had all manner of hurt.

And let's just read some of these verses and then we'll look at them. So 2 Timothy 1. I'm just going to point out some of these. Verse 15.

Listen to these words. You are aware, Timothy, that all who are in Asia turned away from Me, among whom are Philegius and Hermogenes. That is a pain.

That hurts to hear Paul write that. Then there's a joy. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Anesiphorus, for he often refreshed Me.

He was not ashamed of My change, but when he arrived in Rome, he searched for Me earnestly and found Me. May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. And you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

Then you look over. Verse 17 of chapter 2. Two men were not avoiding a reverent babble. They were getting in debates on their Facebook about different things that were not that important.

They were going into erroneous doctrine. And verse 17 says their talk had spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus who had swerved from the truth.

People are swerving on a road this morning. Different people are on the sides of roads because they slid on the ice. They're swerving, right? The same thing happens in the spiritual realm.

You're not careful enough as you're driving spiritually. You're not watching your doctrine enough, your conversations enough. You're not holding to a good conscience enough, and you swerve.

You can get in a wreck in the spiritual realm. And then you go to chapter 4. A bulk of it is right here. Verse 9. Do your best to come to Me soon, for Demas, a fellow worker, says elsewhere, in love with this present world, has deserted Me and gone to Thessalonica.

Deserted. Treason says gone to Galatia. That doesn't appear to be some desertion.

It's more of a relocation. Titus. Nothing to believe something happened to Titus.

Titus went to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with Me. Get Mark.

Bring him with you. For he is very useful to Me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.

When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas. Also the books. And above all, the parchments.

And here another name. Alexander the coppersmith did Me great harm. The Lord will repay him according to his deeds.

Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. And then listen to this. This is one of the most incredible statements in the Bible.

This is a man, one of the godliest men who ever lived at the end of his life, facing the greatest trial he has ever faced, you could say. The very end. Verse 16.

At my first defense, no one came to stand by Me, but all deserted Me. No one came to stand by Me, but all deserted Me. It's incredible.

And then that gives a contrasting statement that is actually more incredible. But the Lord stood by Me, right? And strengthened Me, so that through Me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

The Lord will rescue Me from every evil deed and bring Me safely into His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever, Amen. And then he has more greetings right after that.

But those are some of the verses. Paul's a man who could say, all in Asia have turned away from Me. Paul is a man who could talk about people who swerved from the truth.

Paul is a man who had people who caused him great harm. Paul is a man who had someone with him there in Rome facing the trial, and that man in love with the world deserted Paul. And then Paul has a trial there, and no one stood by him, all deserted him.

Have any of us ever faced that? No. No, we haven't gone through something to that extent. And think, was there anything about Paul's character that led to these individuals' responses? I say no and yes.

No, as far as there was no sin in his character. Yes, in that his character was such that he was so determined to honor the Lord, that he went to a path of obedience to Christ where everyone else got left behind in the dust. They did not go up to that level of trusting the Lord at that point in the midst of such a trying situation.

So Paul, what a hard situation. A hard situation. So let's consider a few of these first.

Let's go back and look at chapter 1 and just think for a moment about Onesiphorus. And I'm sorry if I'm not pronouncing his name right. I try to listen to an audio Bible before I preach so I know how to pronounce the names and I did not have time to do that.

How do you say it? Onesiphus? It sounds similar in Philemon. So first, with this man here, what even prompts Paul to bring all of this up? Well, look at 1 Timothy 8. Therefore, do not be ashamed, Timothy, about the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner, but share in suffering. So he's calling Timothy, don't be ashamed, but look at v. 12.

He's saying how he suffers as he does for Christ. And then he says in v. 12, but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed. So Timothy, don't be ashamed.

And Paul's saying he's not ashamed. And then what does he do? He brings up another person. In v. 16, Onesiphorus was not ashamed of my chains either.

In the midst of all these individuals being ashamed, being cowards, being afraid, being ashamed ultimately of Christ. One thing we want to realize is what does it mean that they turned away from Paul and were

ashamed of Paul? I mean, is there any connection with being committed to Paul and being committed to the truth? I mean, if you abandon Paul, does that necessarily imply you're at the same time ultimately abandoning the truth as well? Look at v. 8 again. Think of what he says here.

Don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, and Paul does not end there. He then says, nor of me, his prisoner. In Paul's mind, because of him so identifying with the truth and being an apostle of the truth, it's like he's putting it hand in hand together.

If you're going to renounce me, whether you initially admit it or not that you're renouncing my Gospel, that's where it's going to ultimately lead to. It's ultimately going to lead to that. Don't be ashamed.

You could think and just say about our Lord, but he also appeals, nor of me, the Lord's prisoner. In this Onesiphorus, this is a joyous occasion to think about this man. Look what he says here.

He says, he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my change. But when he arrived in Rome, he searched for me earnestly and found me. Well, why would he have to search earnestly to find Paul? Paul was probably not really in that much of a public prison.

Okay? Most likely. And then he says here, right before this, he says, all who are in Asia turned away from me. Well, that's not a joyous occasion, but what does Paul mean by that? All who are in Asia.

There's different takes on it, but this is what I think is most likely, this is what he means. Okay, Onesiphorus came from Asia because if you look at verse 118, he says, you know all the service he rendered at Ephesus. Okay, Ephesus is in Asia.

Onesiphorus has come from Asia. It's most likely multiple people came with him to where Paul is at. And all of them gave up.

They went home. They stopped trying to find Paul. Maybe they realized this is too dicey of a situation.

They turned away, and Paul then brings up, but this man, he didn't. He earnestly sought through this dangerous city and associated with me, and he found me. And not only did he find me, what did he then engage in doing? Visiting Paul one time? No, he often visited me and refreshed me.

He wasn't ashamed of my change. And one reason I say that is he says you're aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me. Well, Timothy right now is in Asia.

Did Timothy turn away from him? Does Paul mean all? Like literally every single Christian in this region of Asia has turned away from him? I don't think that's what Paul means. I think he's in some way referring to those who came from Asia. All of them left except this one man right here, Onesiphorus.

So whatever he means, it's clearly staggering for Paul to even say those words that all who are in Asia turned away from him. And then he names two people. Why does he name these guys? Biligias and Hermogenes.

I mean, imagine if you're reading that letter. Maybe they were notable men. You know how it is.

There's notable individuals that you hear their name and you know their name. You hear that name and you're like, I knew who they were. I imagine those in the church, they didn't hear these names and wonder, who are these guys? Who is he referring to here? I imagine they full well knew who they were.

One other thought on this man. It's interesting here how he says, may the Lord grant mercy to the household. To the household of Onesiphorus.

And then he says at the end of the letter in v. 19, greet the household. He doesn't talk about greeting this man. What happened to him? Greet his household as if he's not there, and then he's no longer with Paul either.

What happened to him? May the Lord grant mercy to him on that day. When judgment comes, may it be well with his soul. Most believe this man died.

He's dead. That's why Paul doesn't address him. Let's say he did die.

This man went like Epaphroditus in Philippians 2. It says he was near to death. And he risked his life to visit Paul in Philippians 2. Maybe something similar happened here. And here Paul, he asked for mercy as well to the household.

He asked for present mercy for the household of Onesiphorus. And then in v. 18, he interjects, may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. He's asking for future mercy for this man who maybe he has died.

He's asking that it all go well for him on that day. And then in the present, he's praying for mercy to the household of Onesiphorus. Is that Paul making a prayer for his kids to be converted? I don't know.

It's hard to know exactly. But here this man, he was singled out as a man who was not ashamed of the chains of Paul. And he arrived in Rome and he searched for Him earnestly and found Him.

Look, you hear about what's going on in Myanmar right now and different people getting cut and hurt and people are dying over there. I mean, imagine going over there and you're trying to earnestly search and find a Christian who's in the midst of all this suffering. I mean, that's how it was in Paul's day.

This is not a walk in the park if you were a Christian and you go into a city. Obviously, even in Peter's day, he was so scared of them asking if they knew Christ that he denied Christ three times. So that's a joy there.

There's this man. I mean, Paul says, he refreshed me. We've got the ability to refresh people.

Like a cold drink in the middle of a desert. We could be a refreshment to someone. Paul could mean here by, may the Lord grant mercy.

He could be asking for some sort of protection over his household. And if Onesiphorus is alive, he's asking for protection for him. Now, in contrast to him, all who are in Asia turned away from me.

Turned away from me. What might this look like for us? Imagine seeing men raised up in the ministry. They're planting churches.

They're going on mission trips. And then they cave in to pressures of the government. They do not want to associate with you any longer because of fear.

They act in a cowardly way. And if you act in a cowardly way, I'll tell you this is very easy. If you're going to do that, it's very easy now to cave in in regards to your doctrine.

Right? I mean, one thing leads to another. You knock down that first domino and you give in to the fear of man, it'll be very easy for you to alter your beliefs and eventually, though subtly, you're going to start denying different doctrine about the Lord in order to protect yourself. So another sorrow.

Let's look at that one in chapter 2. In chapter 2, here he's talking about not being ashamed of how you handle the Word. Right? Verse 15, no need to be ashamed. Rightly handling the Word of truth.

Avoid irreverent babble. It will lead people into more and more ungodliness and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying the resurrection has already happened.

They are upsetting the faith of some. They're upsetting the faith of some. Now, one of these men is mentioned in 1 Timothy.

1 Timothy 1.20, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, who I've handed over to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. So most likely, this man right here who's going around and his speech is spreading like gangrene, he was a former elder in the church there at Ephesus because he was put out by Paul in 1 Timothy 1. And in Acts 20, Paul had said among the eldership would arise men speaking twisted things that would turn many away. And then you get to 1 Timothy 1. The elders don't put Hymenaeus out.

Paul with his apostolic authority comes in there. He puts this man out of the church, these two individuals, and hands him over to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. And one of the things that they were saying that is blasphemous, that is false, is that the resurrection had already happened.

Implying there's no future bodily resurrection. And that's of firstmost importance. You can't rip that out of the Word of God.

And these men are saying these sayings and it's affecting people. Right? They swerve from the truth. They're upsetting the faith of some.

Isn't that one of the difficulties? It's not just that it's difficult that you had to put these people out who you had run with, but here these individuals now are saying things in some situations that are now being divisive and affecting those who are still among you. And upsetting their faith. Upsetting that which they believe in.

And they're teaching, it spreads like gangrene. Here Paul, he's meticulously in his sermons and his doctrine, even in Galatians. He's trying to do surgery.

And he's trying to make sure they really understand the truth. And then all of a sudden, the next day he finds out that the patient has had an infection. And gangrene is spreading all over the body.

And there's this open sore. And it's because someone else came in after he did that surgery through the Word of God and they've started to corrupt it and they've started to twist it. That's hard.

It's hard. There's emotional suffering and hurt and pain there. And it shouldn't surprise us.

Look what Paul says in 3.1. But understand this, that in the last days, there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient, unholy. And he goes on and on in his list there.

And he says that they're going to be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. They'll even have the appearance of godliness. But they will deny its power.

Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households through the Internet and other means and they capture weak women burdened with sins, led astray by various passions. They're always learning and they're never able to arrive at the knowledge of the truth.

And then he says, just as Denise and Jambres, Pharaoh's magicians, opposed Moses. Isn't it amazing? There's nothing new under the sun. Moses' day, guess what? You've got people on the other side opposing the truth.

Same thing today. It should not shock us. It should not surprise us.

It should not cause us to be disillusioned that even one of the godliest Christians who ever lived at the end of his life, he's got a mass desertion and abandonment happening. People leaving with false doctrine. People leaving because they're afraid.

All these things happening. This has been mentioned, but our brother over there in China, he mentioned that for ten years, he trained one man like Paul did Timothy. And then that one man ended up going into error.

Ten years. Our brother poured into one man. And that man abandoned ship for some position with money.

It's incredible. The pain. The hurt.

But that hurt never justifies a sinful response. And then we've got right here at the end, chapter 4. Let's just think of these for a moment. You've got number 1, the pain here from Demas forsaking you.

Philemon 1.24, it says, "Demas, my fellow worker." Why did he desert and go back to Thessalonica? What does it mean that he was in love with the world? What aspect of the world was he in love with? The pride of life? Possessions? Desires of the flesh? What was it? Paul doesn't say. We could think, well, was there something specific in Thessalonica? He deserted and he's gone. He's gone.

He was in love with the world. In love with the world. Was it love of money? Was it the world? Was it women? What was it? You know what it wasn't? It was not verse 8. Look what verse 8 says.

"Not only to me, but also to all those who loved His appearing." What a contrast. You've got people who they love the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. They can't wait for that day when He comes to depart and be with Christ.

It's far better. And then you've got people who they were one moment saying, I love the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, but then by their actions they show, I love the world. I love whatever is in the world that's going to pass away.

It's going to count for nothing. And they go and pursue that to their own damnation. It's sad.

"For Demas, in love with the world, has deserted me." Meaning here Paul is in this situation, in prison, and Demas was there and Demas is gone. It wasn't like some past thing that happened. He's just letting Timothy know about this right now.

This fellow worker who is here with me he's gone. He abandoned ship in the middle of Paul's severe trial. That's hard.

That's hard. And then you've got some of his other co-workers that had to go to Galatia. And Titus.

You know from Titus how Paul left him in Crete and now here he's going to Dalmatia. Paul can't just sit there in his suffering and well, I need everyone to come over here and just nurse my wounds. You still have to press on with advancing the mission of the Gospel.

And then he says in v. 11, Luke alone is with me. What an encouragement Luke is. I mean, Luke is faithful.

And the Bible says a lot. What we have about Luke and what he recorded in Acts and what he recorded in Luke, thank God. That brother went through a lot with Paul.

And here, Paul's able to say Luke alone is with me. I mean, that brother, he was faithful. So you have a joy from a faithful friend.

And then it has been pointed out multiple times what an encouragement the very words are, get Mark and bring him with me for he is useful to me in the ministry. Why is that an encouragement? This is the joy of a restored relationship. In Acts 15-39, there arose a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas.

Barnabas wanted to take Mark. Paul, for different reasons, did not want to take Mark. And so Paul and Barnabas ended up having a split right there.

Clearly, Paul's perspective of Mark at that point was that Mark, you could even say rather than a restored relationship, that's probably the wrong way to phrase it. It's a man who grew up to a point where Paul could look at Mark and say that man is useful to me in the ministry. Because that's what he says elsewhere.

Mark is useful. And he's sending for Mark at this point in this trial. So, a person who used to be a lot of emotional pain or relational pain because of their immaturities and different things they had done.

They even led to sharp disagreement with your big co-labor Barnabas. But now at the end of your life, send him to me. He's useful.

That's an encouragement. It's not all hopeless here. It's not all dark and gloomy for Paul.

Luke is there. And there, Mark is now useful for me in the ministry. And then you have pain from administrative decisions.

Verse 12, Titchicus I have sent to Ephesus. It seems like Titchicus is going to be carrying this letter to Timothy and he's going to be passing on to Timothy and then Timothy, you need to get back here before winter. If you don't make it before winter comes, you probably won't make it and I'm going to end up dying.

And I'm not going to see you. So there's no guarantee Timothy's going to make it. But Paul sends Titchicus.

He had to send him. That can be hard, right? Who's someone we recently made an administrative decision to send somewhere? Right? Tim. You know, it's not like that was easy for everyone.

There can be emotional hurt. There can be pain as dear ones depart. But how much better when they depart to do the work of the Lord than when they depart because of love of the world? But you get some real faithful brethren, they get knit in, and then they get sent elsewhere.

That can be hard. And then Paul, he had the pains here. Consider v. 13 in a minute.

But v. 14, Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm. It's hard to know who Alexander is. Is he the one who was put out of the church? In chapter 1, if so, why does he now describe him as Alexander the coppersmith? I mean, trying to figure out who he is.

They obviously knew who he was. And they knew that this man was causing great harm. Such great harm that Paul is telling Timothy, beware of him.

Why would he even need to beware? I mean, you've got a man who strongly opposes the message, and he no doubt is on the lookout. Where is this man? I mean, is he there in Rome? Is he somewhere else? Is he somewhere between getting to where Paul is at that Timothy is going to go through and Timothy needs to be warned about the great harm? Was this man involved in Paul's arrest at some point? How did Paul even get here? Why does Paul not have his cloak and his parchments? Did he not get those when he got arrested and they got left behind as he was swept away? What happened? I mean, there's so many unknown details to us that we can only make assumptions. But here we've got a man who's actively seeking to harm Christians and the church.

And he opposes the truth. That's the enemy on the outside. Whether he was on the inside in the beginning or not, look, the fact is whether he was or he wasn't, we often get people who are on the inside, they end up on the outside, and they are trying to oppose us.

They have an ax to grind against the church. Well, we're going to skip real fast to the end. A few more of those.

What an encouragement in v. 19 is. Prisca and Aquila. They're still married.

They're still loving the Lord. They're still pressing on. That is an encouragement.

You see them throughout Acts. You get different accounts of them. They're helping Apollos.

They clearly had good doctrine and were helping a guy who was less mature. And here they are. He's greeting them.

They're still in the race. Erastus remained at Corinth. I left Trophimus.

Oh, Trophimus. He had to leave him. Why? He was ill.

He was sick. Doesn't that hurt sometimes? Something's going on. It's a big trial and then the one brother doesn't show up.

He was sick. He had COVID. He had the flu.

I was hoping he would be here. He's sick. He didn't make it.

You see this? This is the Christian life. You've got pain from people trying to harm you, people deserting you, people abandoning you, people turning against you, people being sick because they can't be there,

people departing because they're in love with the world. Then you've got joys from people being consistent and faithful, from people seeking to refresh you and going all out to find you and not fearing man and not being ashamed of you or your chains.

I mean, you've got the pain and the joy all together. I mean, what Christian would not like to just have the joys? Like my whole life, just emotional joy. One big happy family all the way to the end.

Darren and Kelsey, you've just been converted. That's not going to happen. I wish it was.

And that's not lowering the view of church life. You know how we're scared that people lower the view of regeneration and they have too low of a view and they think we're just a bunch of wicked people living in sin? Look, I don't want to lower the view of the fact that we can maintain unity all the way to the end. And for the majority of us, I trust we will.

But there are going to be times where people will depart, people will turn against, people will oppose, and it should not shock us. If Paul had that happen, and this is not a unique situation here, his entire ministry of this is happening time and time again. It wasn't at fault of his character.

It wasn't at fault of his message. Well, it was. His message so offended people, but it wasn't erroneous.

So don't get disillusioned. When I first got converted, I had to ask myself the honest question that if the most godly men I respected, if they became atheists the next week, what would happen to my faith? I really thought about that. Would that make me doubt the Lord? And I read a verse around that time as a new believer where it talked about King Saul.

And it said, King Saul attached himself to every strong man. See, Saul was not saved. He did not have the Lord.

And yet, you can attach yourself to others who do. And it gives the appearance that God is with you in your life. But when push came to shove, the truth was out with Saul.

So look at 4.16. 4.16. Uh-oh, 10.49. It's supposed to end early, so we're in trouble here. 4.16. First defense. I mean, what happened here? Paul, he had a trial.

This preliminary defense. No one came. No one came.

It reminds you of Mark 14.50. It says, then they all deserted Christ and ran away. Christ was deserted. At that point when they seized Him in the garden, Christ got deserted.

And so desertion does not always mean someone abandons the faith. Obviously, many of those disciples, their desertion was not a complete desertion of the faith. Right? Because we find them later.

They clearly did not abandon the truth. But there was this momentary forsaking and desertion that happened. Well, let me make sure I get what I need to get before... Your question is did no one show up for Paul? Did no one show up? Who did make it? They weren't sick.

They had the ability to be over here and over there. It wasn't like five hours away. They were not fearful to stand by Paul.

Who was it? Who stood by Paul? It's incredible words. I mean, the contrast. See, at my first defense, no one came to stand by me.

But all deserted me. May it not be charged against them. Forgive them.

And in contrast, but the Lord stood. Does it mean Christ physically came down? But the Lord stood by me. There's a sense of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Paul was strengthened by Christ so that through Him, He might fully proclaim the message to all those Gentile Romans who were before that trial that they might hear it. And the incredible thing was He got delivered from death at that point. He didn't die yet.

He ended up having more time to live. He's able to write this letter to Timothy. He knows His death is going to come.

But the Lord will not forsake you. That is the greatest relational joy you can have. What a friend we have in Jesus.

Hebrews 13, verse 5, I will never leave you nor forsake you nor desert you. Psalm 71, God has forsaken Him. Pursue and seize Him, the enemies say.

The enemies say there's none to deliver Him. No, that's a lie. That's not true.

2 Corinthians 4 and 9, yes, we're persecuted, but we're not forsaken. We're struck down, but we're not destroyed. Psalm 94, for the Lord will not forsake His people.

He will not abandon His heritage. Psalm 37, I have been young, and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or His children begging for bread. Psalm 37 goes on to say, the Lord loves justice.

He will not forsake His saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. Psalm 37 goes on to say, the Lord will not abandon Him to His power or let Him be condemned when He is brought to trial.

Here Paul is. Long later, brought to trial. And the Lord did not abandon him even though all the brethren did.

God did not abandon him in the person of Jesus Christ. As Corrie ten Boom said, never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God. We don't know what our future's going to be, but we do know who God is and therefore we can trust Him.

And the Lord did not just strengthen Paul so he could survive the trial. The Lord strengthened Paul so he could do good works and proclaim. This isn't just about survival when emotional hurt happens.

It's about going above and beyond and honoring Christ and living for Him. So how did Paul respond? He forgave, you could say. Don't let it be charged against them.

How did Paul respond? He said no one came in Rome and at the end of the letter in 421, he includes people from Rome. He says, Eubulus sends greetings to you as do Pudens and Linus. These people are in Rome.

Apparently, they didn't come to the trial and Paul doesn't omit them from the letter. That proves he didn't charge them with something if he's willing to do that at that point. Now Paul, his response with Alexander is different.

Alexander is opposing the teaching. It's not loving to forgive him and not warn the people. Just like with church discipline.

It's a loving act towards individuals. Another thing you don't want to forget here. Paul says, here Paul is in the midst of all this emotional trials and this hurt and this pain.

Look what he says in verse 13. He asks for the books and the parchments. Now what those books and parchments might be, you've got to imagine something's got to deal with the Old Testament Scriptures.

Something's got to deal with God's Word. My point is simple. When you're facing a situation and a trial, what do you want? You want the Word of God.

You want to hide the Word in your heart that you might not sin. Or you want to finish transcribing and writing something down of his own writings. Maybe these were some of his very letters that he's asking to get.

Keep working. Study. Meditate.

Romans says through the Scriptures you find great encouragement that you might have hope. So how do you respond? Do you think your situation is unique? It's not. This is the whole testimony of the Bible.

Those of whom the world is not worthy were wondering about in deserts, mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth were in a spiritual war. You know what happened in the civil war? Hundreds of thousands of people deserted. Hundreds of thousands deserted in the civil war.

How many, when we get to judgment day, are going to find out totally abandoned the faith? And one person in the civil war, they deserted and said this, those who had volunteered, they never intended to be gone for as long as they were. And brethren, there's a lot in the Christian life you did not intend and plan on happening, and it's probably going to be more difficult than you anticipated. Don't be like those in the civil war and desert.

You want to fight the good fight of faith? You want to suffer just as Paul did? No matter who's unfaithful to you, Christ will be faithful. Friends, as one said, they can still be your friends, but that will depend on how you respond. Jesus said to the disciples, you are those who stayed with Me in My trials.

And you know what happened shortly after He said that? Peter deserted Him. It's incredible. And yet, what did Christ say to Peter? I prayed for you that your faith not fail.

Well, may none be able to say no one from the church supported and stood by Me, but at the same time, may none be able to say no one from the church supported Me, so I'm out. It's a very cheap thing to point to others' lack of love for you as your reason to abandon ship, abandon the church. We've got to be focused on our ability to go and to love others.

We don't want discontentment and false expectations to cause us to be bitter. I mean, if anyone could have been bitter, it would have been Paul with everything that he faced. And it's interesting, in Hebrews 10.25 when it says, not neglecting to meet together in the habit of some, that's the same word for

deserting.

Not deserting to meet together as in the habit of some. When others abandon you, don't abandon the church. Don't abandon the meetings.

Don't abandon the truth. It doesn't matter what type of suffering you're going through. You can be refreshed through the comfort of the brethren.

That is a means God has given for us. Well, I probably should end. Father, Lord, You know everything about us, our situations.

Lord, even I felt rushed in this message here and did not say all I wanted to say, but Lord, I want to trust You. You're good. You're faithful.

Lord, help us be with us today. Strengthen us. Lord, I pray You'd help the brethren who have different hurts to respond correctly.

Lord, I didn't even get to look at a lot of that application there, but Lord, help people to think right. To respond in a way that honors You. Lord, no matter what others do to us, Lord, help us to not sin against You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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