

“Make Every Effort to Come”

II Timothy 4:9-21

II Timothy 4:9-21. I want you to think about this for just a second. What type of guy do you think Paul was? And what I mean by that is what type of personality do you think Paul had? If Paul was living today, if he was a modern day missionary or traveling evangelist preacher, and you had seen him, meet him, maybe heard him preach, followed some of his travels, what type things might people say about the Apostle Paul today? Just think in your mind. And I'm not thinking about a physical appearance, but more his personality type. And let me just throw out a few of the highlights of Paul's career, maybe as your mind tries to answer that question.

There's a time in acts chapter 13 where there was a false teacher that Paul didn't like very much, so he cursed the guy and instantly the guy was blind. That'd be a trick some of us probably like to do every once in a while, right? Acts chapter 14. He was stoned for preaching the gospel. They drag him out of the city, left him for dead. He got up. And you know what he did? He just kept on traveling and preaching. I don't know about you, and I've been stoned and sound very fun.

I think at least taking a holiday. Swung by the doctor or something. Acts chapter 15. Paul and Barnabas member Barnes, his mentor. The guy that had brought him in when nobody else really trusted Paul. And he's still a terrorist. I mean, they were thick as thieves, but they were going to go on another missionary journey again. And Barnabas said, I want to take Mark again.

And Paul said, no way. I got bailed out last time, not doing it. Such a sharp disagreement arose. They split ways. Acts 21. At one point there was a mob, a Jewish mob, trying to kill Paul, literally trying to tear him apart. Roman centurions came and got him and they picked him up, and they were carrying him into the barracks to protect him.

And Paul's right before they went insane. Hey, would you stop? Would you let me preach to the crowd? We're trying to save your life. He's like, well, I'd rather preach. First Corinthians five. You know, he's telling them about excommunication. He says, hey, I've already turned this guy over to Satan. Or like, I mean, technically that's what communication means, right?

Most people don't throw that language around the way that Paul seemed to first Corinthians 15. He makes almost a casual remark. I worked harder than everybody else, all the other apostles. He doesn't sound like he's bragging. It's just like a statement of fact. Everybody knows it. I just worked harder, traveled more, did more. A hard working guy. Galatians one.

He opens with a rebuke, really an anathema, a curse. You know, I preach the same gospel I'm preaching. You can go to hell. Acts chapter two. He tells a story of he and Peter went Antioch

together and Antioch. Peter quit eating with some of the Gentiles, and so did Barnabas. And so Paul says, I rebuked Peter to his face publicly.

So I ask a city in what kind of God was Paul? What kind of personality do you have? And Romans chapter 15, he says, it's my ambition to preach Christ where he's never been named. Now, I don't know exactly what Paul would get if he took the Myers-Briggs or something like that, but I don't think anybody would call him a wilting wallflower.

It's not like he was an overly passive, timid, careful, cautious guy. If he was alive today, we might say he's a man's man. He's a leader. He's an alpha man type A personality. He gets stuff done. He's driven, he's disciplined, he's bold. Now, with all that in mind, just I heard I heard one preacher say. And I won't even say the guy's name because I disagree with what he said, but he said, I think when we get to the judgment seat of Christ, the Apostle Paul is going to walk up there like John Wayne, I think.

I don't think that's going to happen. But because of some of the bold, confident things that Paul says about themselves in the gospel, sometimes you might think, well, he's a pretty confident guy. John MacArthur said this. Paul had no stomach for men who were lazy, cowardly, or uncommitted. Tell us what you really think, MacArthur. He especially did not want fellow workers who would not carry their share of the load, and who bailed out when things became too uncomfortable or demanding.

Now, in light of that little overview of Paul's personality, I want us to read the last recorded words of Paul in Scripture. Second Timothy chapter four, verse nine, talking to Timothy, probably his best friend, probably his most dependable coworker. And if you read the whole letter and my guess is most of us know it, he's in a Roman prison and he thinks I'm probably going to be executed soon.

I don't think I'm getting out this time. The end is near. He knows it's coming. Second Timothy four, verse nine. Do your best to come to me soon. I want to see you. I want to see you again. If you go back to the beginning, a letter, chapter one, verse four, he says, I long to see you. Who wants to see?

Verse ten? For Demas, in love with this present world has deserted me. And gone to Thessalonica. Crescents has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. So Demas, who had been one of his fellow workers, somebody in his inner circle, was like, this guy deserted me, loved the present world more than love me. Verse 11 Luke alone is with me of his inner circle.

That was the only guy left, and not because everybody had abandoned him, but because Paul's still sitting in prison in a sense, running the show, sending people out on missions. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. You know, Mark and I had a falling

out that was about 20 years ago when I didn't want to take him on a missionary journey, but at some point they had reconciled, and he's careful to say he's useful for me.

Make sure you bring him along with you. Ticket? Yes, I have sent to Ephesus when you can't bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, along with the books and above all, the parchments. Winter. Winter's coming. He's going to be cold. He wants to keep studying right up to the end. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm.

The Lord will repay him according to his deeds. I don't know for sure who this was, but it may have been somebody that had testified against Paul and even gotten him into prison. But Paul says, I'm not going to take vengeance on the Lord. I'll handle that.

Verse 15, beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. Just a warning to Timothy and my first offense. No one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them a lot of times. Roman trials back then, similar to ours, you would have a preliminary hearing. And it seems like when Paul went to his preliminary hearing that none of the Roman Christians showed up to support him.

Luke probably wasn't in town yet, but there was a persecution of the Christians in the city of Rome by Nero, and a lot of Christians had fled the city, and the ones that stuck around, they were in hiding. They were terrorized. But look at Paul's heart, middle verse 16, may it not be charged against them. Lord stood by me.

Strengthen me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. So Christ was with him. Christ strengthened him, and he probably did what he did almost every time he got on trial. We said that he just preached the gospel, and he's like, I'm in the heart of the Roman Empire, the pagan nations, this cosmopolitan city.

There's all these different Gentiles that were. And this was probably like a celebrity trial. And he got to preach the gospel to him. I'm delivered from the lion's mouth. I mean, that's like saying I was snatched from the jaws of death. I made it out this time. Don't think I'll make it out next time. But I got out last time.

Verse 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. And that's a little bit strange, especially in the context of the rest of his letter, where he's saying, I think I'm about to get my head chopped off. What does he mean by that?

He doesn't mean God's going to protect me from all physical harm from suffering, that I'm not going to die. What he's saying probably is nothing's going to happen to me that's going to make

me abandon the faith. Like Demas. I'm not going to do anything. I'm not going to sin and bring shame to myself or to my apostleship, or to the gospel, or to the glory of Christ.

God's going to preserve me spiritually and bring me safely home to heaven. Verse 19 Greek Priscilla and Aquila and the Household of Honor. Zephyrus. Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus who was ill at Miletus. Do your best to come before winter. So he reiterates Timothy, I really want to see you one more time, man I don't think I got much more time. And if you wait, you can't travel the Mediterranean winter. Please come quickly now I want to go through just a few applications that we can pull out here. All people were emotional and were relational beings.

No matter what your personality type is, if you take the Myers-Briggs and you're the biggest introvert and the biggest thinker off the charts, still, you're an emotional, you're relational being.

That's the way God made us. That's good. It's not bad. And that needs to be cultivated. It needs to be stewarded that we're in touch with our emotions. We can express in that we have feelings, that we love, people that we live in, community we need, that we need one another. That's the way that God made us two different times.

Paul is saying, I really want to see you and think about, wow, why did he want to seem it wasn't for strategy. Paul ported strategy through his letters. I'm sending this guy over here and that guy over there. I'm covering the bases, man. It wasn't for doctrine. Paul is all the time writing letters full of doctrine. It wasn't for warnings.

He's given warnings. The people that need to be communicated. He could do that in a letter to the only reason to say, I want to get face to face with you. I want to hug you, I love you, I like you, you're my friend. Big tough guy like Paul. Death's coming. He knows he's going to be the Christ.

But he's like. But I'm still close to you, Timothy. I still care. Affection, intimacy. But how? Easier said than done. Especially with the pressures of life. And I would say, especially with the pressures of ministry, because what happens in ministry is you get hurt and sometimes you get hurt by the people that you're ministered to. So how can we in a sense, stay tough to persevere in ministry but also say tender to the people that we're relating with a couple faults that come out of the text.

The first is we need to be honest when we're hurt, when we're sad, when we're lonely, when we have negative emotions, we need to be honest about them. You know, I don't I don't know about all of you people here and specifically all of you men I know about myself. I can tend to be very honest about my negative emotion of anger.

That feels manly. I'm very angry.

But if I'm hurt, if I'm sad, if I'm lonely, that doesn't feel very manly. I don't to talk about that. Apostle Paul here at the end of life, he's not trying to put his best foot forward. He's just being honest. Man, I'm lonely. I'm cold. I want friends, I got Luke, but I want more. It's not enough. He's honest about it.

Okay. And then notice. Look back in verse ten again. He doesn't say Demas, in love with the present world, has deserted. Christ has deserted the gospel. He could have said that, because almost certainly that was true. He says. Demas deserted me. He took it personally. It hurt him. This is a strong word. The word desertion here means utterly abandoned.

Left. Leave out, leave behind, leave in a lurch. Neglect. Leave in dire straits, leave helpless. I mean, the implication is it was morally wrong for Demas to bail out on Paul like that. Okay. And then later he talks about people not standing in trial. Use that exact same word. I was deserted, I was abandoned, I was left alone.

Another thing, sometimes in ministry, even when you're trying to do the right thing, the best thing, you hurt people accidentally. You don't mean to. Paul never says that he sinned. And his argument with Barnabas, maybe he did. Maybe he didn't. We don't know for sure. Maybe Paul was right and Barnabas was wrong. Who knows? But later in life, Paul is careful to say, you know, last time, 20 years ago, I basically said, Mark is not useful to me in ministry.

I don't want him with me. Not just he's not useful, he's a negative. He's a net negative in my life. If I got to travel with that guy again, he will hold me back. That was the implication. And now he makes sure say, hey, I want to see Mark again. And he's very useful to me. It's very useful.

He's going the extra mile to make sure there's reconciliation. I mean, I wonder at some point, almost certainly Mark was able to hear those words, read those words. I wonder how powerful those words were to minister to Mark's soul, right? I mean, remember, imagine if Paul had gone to heaven and never reconciled with Mark, how that might have haunted heart Mark the rest of his ministry.

But Paul made sure no, we're good man. I want you back. Go the extra mile.

The thing I would say this is when people do hurt you, make sure you forgive them. Overlook it. Reconcile. Do what you got to do. You know, I don't know about you, but it's interesting to me. Go back and look again. Starting in verse 14. He's like, hey, Alexander hurt me and God's going to get him. That's my layman's translation.

And then he's like, and all these other Roman Christians, they deserted me. But don't hold it against them. What's the difference? Notice what really bugs him about Alexander is he says he

opposes our message. He's hindering the gospel going forward somehow. He's anti gospel. So watch out for this guy and I hope God takes him down.

And yet with these Christians who were genuine believers, they weren't against Paul. They just got scared. They were just weak. They weren't as tough as Paul. They weren't as seasoned as Paul. So they didn't show up for the trial? No, it hurt Paul. He says. They deserted me, just like Demas. Deserted. Hurts. But you know what? May it now behold, held against him.

God's not gonna hold against him, I hope. I'm praying that I don't want any of you in the church to hold it against him. He's merciful. And that's the way we as Christians need to be. Certainly, those of us in leadership. But again, this is easier said than done. To combine toughness and tenderness, the toughness to say, I'll stand strong for the gospel, I'll persevere.

I'll preach. I'll never give in. If I have to stand alone, I'll do it. I'll be bold, but in the exact same moment. To be tender, to be gentle, to be kind with the weak. A lot of times if we get hurt, especially by those we're trying to minister with, minister to one strategist hurt back. You hurt me, I'll hurt you back.

A lot of times, ministers are gifted with their words. And just like, oh, you said something about me. I'm a ninja. With my words. I can really hurt you with my words. I'll just lash back out. It feels good in the moment. You regret it later. Most of us know not to do that. They don't look good in the newspaper.

But the second strategy, and this is the one that a lot of us go to, is I'll just harden myself because it can feel like death by a thousand cuts. Sometimes in ministry. And so just harden yourself and then I'll never be hurt again. And that way I can persevere. That may seem like a little bit better strategy than tit for tat, off or off, but listen to this quote that many of you have probably heard from C.S. Lewis in *The Four Loves*.

To love it all is to be vulnerable. Love. Anything in your heart will be wrong 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 around 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. You will not be broken. It will become unbreakable and penetrable irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable. Christians have got to work to say, I'm going to stay soft. I'm going to stay gentle. I'm going to stay vulnerable. I'm going to stay open to being hurt even while I'm tough.

And I'll persevere in gospel ministry even when it hurts. Calling to ministry is a calling to be heard. So what's the better way if it's not to hurt back? If it's not to harden ourselves, it's to

humble ourselves. It's to humble ourselves. I think that's the way the Paul did it. Again, 2 or 3 things stand out from the text.

One, look back at verse 18. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed. And part of the implication is there. Paul's like, listen, I could fall away. I could shipwreck the faith. I could get so fearful I could prove to be a coward. I could bail out. But I'm hoping in the Lord to preserve me. So you're honest about your own sin.

You're honest about your own weakness. You're honest about your own propensity to sin in similar ways that other people are sinning, even if by God's grace you're not doing it right now. The second thing you remember, this is not all about me. It's not all me about my comfort, nor is it about my reputation. It's primarily about the glory of God and the gospel going forth to the nations.

I'm just a little messenger boy. I'm a steward. It's not about me. And then, third, I'm practically speaking, this will be the most important. We must have a real regular experience of the nearness of Christ, of his presence, of his smile. Look back at verse 17. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me. He's not talking there about the omnipresence of Christ.

He's talking about the manifest presence and experience, not just knowing the mere academic abstract truths, but tasting and seeing the Lord is good in a fresh way, in a meaningful way. In that moment. And it happens through prayer. It happens through meditation, happens through worship. Listen to what John Owen said. Get an experience of the power of the gospel in and upon your own hearts, or all your profession is an expiring thing.

Oh, matter how much you may Boston and profess the truths, the gospel that you believe. If there's not some real experience in your heart, the sweetness of the gospel, the profession will just eventually expire. Now, it's comforting to me to know why has God made human beings this way? Because he's made us in his image. God's a relational being.

I think there's even appropriate way to say God's an emotional being. God's relational. He's triune. He has a relationship within himself. He enjoys relationship. And he made us not because he needed us, but because he did want to enjoy relationship with us. He has feelings. Ephesians Paul says, don't grieve the spirit. We can greet him with our sin.

You know, there was this one strange, terrifying moment where the second person of the Trinity, the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, hung on the cross in this word, deserted this exact same word for forsaken. He was deserted by almost all his friends. And he was forsaken in that moment, even by his father. Because he was experiencing the wrath of God for all my sins.

All the sins of all the people that are in him, all of our pride, all of our hardness, all of our lashing out, all of our being too sensitive, sometimes not forgiving, holding grudges, whatever it

may be. He took it. He experienced a cosmic loneliness on the cross that we don't want to experience. But we all deserve as he suffered for us.

And then he rose again so we could be free. We could be forgiven. He fell into the lion's mouth so that we never have to, and think about even how he prayed. Then father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. He had mercy in his heart. And Paul had had such an experience of Christ. That's why he could pray in the same way.

Don't hold it against him. He was merciful. So I think if we, on a regular basis will be meditating on these truths, praying about these truths, worshiping our risen Savior in light of these truths, I'm not saying we're going to walk around all the time filled with an experience. It won't happen, but hopefully it become more and more the norm so that out of the overflow of our experience of that relationship with him, we can love others.

Will we can forgive well, we can confront and humility when we need to, but we can be gracious and relational in the way that we ought to be, even as we say, tough and persevering for the sake of the gospel.

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, would you please hear our prayers? Thank you that you are the ultimate example. Of a human being, of a man, of a missionary, of a leader. You are the perfect blend of toughness and tenderness. Thank you that you were tough enough to go to the cross to die, to stay, to persevere until it was finished. So we could all be saved. But thank you that you're so tender. You're so patient. You're so gentle. You're so kind. You're so warm. You're so forgiving. I really do pray for myself and everyone here in this that we. We go deeper in worship and prayer and added creation in meditation so that in deeper and deeper ways, we would taste and see the goodness of the Lord, and we would be changed from one degree of glory to the next. And we pray all this in Christ's name.

Amen.