

Introduction:

On May 17, 2014 Admiral William McRaven addressed the graduating class of the University of Texas in Austin. He shared ten principles that he learned during his SEAL training and what made him a great seal team member and what helped him overcome great challenges in life. I read the book and each chapter could be based upon Biblical passages. I share briefly one that ties in with today passage and objective to this sermon on Servers and Deserters. I read and quote from page 112 & 113 of U.S. Navy retired Admiral McRaven book “Make Your Bed”.

Paul had a band of men whose hearts God touched to serve. They labored together. They paddle the boat together as it were. Paul commends his friends in the faith. These friends were faithful servants and in this passage Paul mentions many of them. As Paul faces the last days of his life and closes out his last epistle, people are on his mind, people who made up his life, people who shared his ministry, people who were crucial and vital and critical and essential to everything that he did. I want us to learn that we are workers together in God’s local church and we must paddle together. If one deserts it affects all... Paul experienced the joy of working with servers but he also experienced the pain of deserters some of them he mentions because of the grief they brought him: Demas, Alexander, and a whole group of anonymous deserters.

I. Dedicated Servers (former verses)

1. **First** of course is Timothy, a faithful servant... **Second**, he mentions Crescens (kress-ens) (2 Tim. 4:10b), who is among the thousands of faithful men and women known to the early church but unknown to us. Every generation has its Crescens, whose name never appears in the bulletin, who never writes a book never appears in the spotlight, but faithfully serves the Lord behind the scenes. Such are some of you may God bless you.

2. **Third**, Paul mentions Titus (vv10b), to whom the book of Titus was written. Titus was an associate Paul had taught and who pastored struggling churches. He also delivered II Corinthians to Corinth (2 Corinthians 8:6, 17). It is good to know he had some faithful pastors who stood with him or were servers not deserters. They were not of us! **I John 2:19**

3. The **fourth** friend mentioned is Luke (4:11). These are the only three times Luke’s name is mentioned in the NT, though he wrote the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, which together make up more words than all of Paul’s epistles combined. When Luke travels with Paul, as recorded in the book of Acts, Luke simply says we, never mentioning his own name, carefully keeping himself out of the spotlight. Luke probably stayed with the aged and ailing apostle Paul to take care of his health needs. Remember he was a physician, he was a server!

4. The **fifth** friend Paul mentions is Mark, about whom he writes: Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry (2 Timothy 4:11b). This reveals the incredible change in Paul’s opinion of John Mark. Remember Mark had deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Barnabas wanted his cousin Mark to accompany them on the second missionary journey, but Paul didn’t. The disagreement between Paul and

Barnabas was so severe they parted company, never to travel together again in Acts 15:38. At some point Paul realized Mark was a worthy servant. This reminds us the Gospel is the gospel of the second chance. Sometimes our fellow brethren can disappoint us.

5. The **sixth** friend Paul mentions is Tychicus (2 Timothy 4:12), whom he is sending to Ephesus to take this letter to Timothy. Tychicus was a trusted messenger, who also delivered the letters of Ephesians and Colossians. He wasn't a preacher or a teacher, but he was faithful with the gifts God gave him. Apparently, Paul's arrest was so sudden he was not allowed to gather his personal belongings, so he writes: ... (4:13a).

II. Rebels & Deserters, vv. 16, 17

1. What we know about Alexander is that he was a coppersmith. The word means a metal worker; he worked in metal. Maybe he made idols at Ephesus like Demetrius did out of silver. Possibly, he too was an idol maker whose trade had been disrupted by Paul's preaching in Ephesus. He did Paul much harm, Timothy needed to be on guard against him, and Timothy at this time was in Ephesus. Paul will leave the retribution to God the punishment to God against whom all sin first and foremost is committed.

2. The people," he says, "who were here all deserted me." And he uses the same verb that was used of Demas in verse 10. They all left me in the lurch. They all abandoned me at a crucial point. They weren't there. They forsook me. Paul's attitude was a good attitude. Paul understood that some fail him because they lacked the power or strength to help. "May it not be counted against them"? They were weak hearted, not false hearted. Paul was on trial for his life, persecution of Christians has already broken out. He stands before the Roman tribunal and perhaps before Nero himself. He has been deserted.

Application:

Service and membership in the local church is God's intended platform for you to use your spiritual gifts, skills, and passions for the building up of God's church (1 Cor. 12:7). The local Bible Preaching teaching church was established and executed by Christians of that community to build the church and change its community. The New Testament teaches this principle but we have folks deserting their churches. Today we see an exit from the local church to churches outside one's community that better serve the believer. It again is the era we live in the "Laodicea church" where what others churches have better suit me because it is all about me.

Like having an established nursery, another's has a large choir, another has a food ministry, another has a large congregation and we can just get lost among them or hide might be more accurate. Yet another has a large young group and my kids can have friends there and another has more people my age so I can intermingle and find a mate. Please find me one passage that teaches we desert our local church for that mandate. You won't...God designed the church so the Christian populist can win the lost, reach and change its community and begin ministries that will aid the church to do so.

III Faithful Lord vv. 18, 19

1. We come to the apex of this whole passage in verses 17 and 18; it is the faithful Lord. ""But the Lord stood with me." Nobody else was there, nobody, they all deserted me. we come to the unfaithful anonymous, the unfaithful anonymous. But the Lord stood with me...the friend who sticks closer than a brother, the one who said, "I'll never leave you or forsake you." In contrast to the failure of his anonymous unfaithful friends, he proudly affirms the faithfulness of His Lord and in the Roman court the Lord was there.

2. Paul confirmed, "the Lord stood with me." but, he says, "and strengthened me." The Greek verb is the idea of infusing with power. "**And I was delivered out of the lion's mouth.**" What does that mean? Well that's just a proverb like saying I was delivered out of the jaws of death. It's used in Psalm 22:21 and Psalm 35:17. Paul leaned on the power of God and the power of God was there and he was delivered. And it gave him hope for the future.

3. Look at verse 18, "**The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and will bring me safely to His heavenly Kingdom.**" Paul had a complete assurance of being deliver...he was saved. He knew absent from the body was to be present with His Lord. The Lord will deliver me from all evil deeds, all sin, all temptation, and plots against my life. He was on to his reward!

IV. Closing Words vv.19-22

1. Paul gives a farewell salute to his favorite helpful couple Prisca and Aquila. Trophimus traveled and helped Paul on his missionary journeys (Acts 21:29) he was sick at Miletus which was tough because his home was Ephesus. He was only 36 miles from home but too sick to get there.

2. Paul asked him Timothy to come before winter (4:21) because he must endure the cold winter, and this was probably the only coat he owned. It could take several months for Tychicus to make it to Ephesus and for Timothy to return. We don't know if Timothy arrived before Paul's execution. Paul also wanted Timothy to bring his books and parchments (4:13b). Paul died by the sword as history records in "Foxe's book of martyrs".

Conclusion:

Joel Comiskey in his book "Leadership Explosion" makes a profound comment, "While the church has done a good job of training people to go directly to God, it has failed to train people to minister." Are you a Servers or Deserters? Too often folks are waiting for someone else to do it. That concept is implied by this short proverbial story.

There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. But Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it. But Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about it, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, and Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody and Nobody did the job that Anybody could have done in the first place.