

Helping – or hindering?

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Welcome and new coronavirus instructions.

Opening Scripture

Hymn mp 38 As we are gathered Jesus is here

Scripture Reading Matthew 13:1-23

Prayer / testimony Our Daily Bread

Reading 2 Tim 4:9

Hymn mp 423 Living under the shadow of his wings

Sermon Helping – or hindering?

Hymn mp 237 Holy Holy Holy Lord God almighty

Closing prayer /Dox.

**Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.**  
2Th 3:16

Close -----

Listen to today's sermon by clicking on the link at [www.knbc.org](http://www.knbc.org).

The audio file is [20\\_10\\_25.mp3](#)

Alternative ending MP 272 I have decided to follow Jesus

*Welcome, pray*

- There are six films in the Mission Impossible series. The IMF team works together to destroy giant syndicates who are bent on wreaking havoc and destruction in this world. The IMF (Impossible Mission Force) is headed by Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) Benji, Luther and some others, plus usually some CIA agents. It becomes harder because in all their attacks on the enemy they find that some who they suppose to be on their side - are actually against them. So this action packed film is full of surprises.

There were those for - and those against, so it is in Christian work. Some for – some against. Paul once hostile to the Gospel is changed, he has become its chief defender! Now he finds some against him who he thought were for him. So it is today as everyone involved in the Lord's work will tell you.

Some are for, and some are against. Today the penetrating question is: are you for the gospel of Christ – or against it? Are you helping – or hindering?

Jesus said we should expect opposition. Jesus warned that on this narrow road to heaven there would be those who pretend to be with you – and claim to be Christians - but are actually against you. Jesus warned us with these words: "**He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.**" Mt 12:30, Lu 11:23

- Remember Christian the Pilgrim plotting his route to the celestial city – he came across all sorts of people. He had to work out who was who.

Can you judge character? Pilgrim needed to be a good judge of character. Friend or foe? Which one is which? It is in the troubles and trials of life we see who is who!

How about the people around you? As you try to follow the Lord? Who is helping you? And who is hindering you?

Some help, some hinder, here this morning we will think about five 'D's' different responses Paul personally experienced in his work for the gospel.

- ✚ Some deserted, some disappointed, some were dependable, some were just plain dangerous, and One who was, however, fully dedicated.

Paul has faithfully carried the gospel across Asia minor and on to the heart of the Roman Empire. He has not been alone, he has had travelling companions, co-workers in the gospel.

In Paul's two letters there are 26 different contemporaries mentioned.

Paul knows this is not a solo work, Christian work is not a solo work where we beaver away on our own without submitting to, engaging with or sharing with others. We are in this work together. God sees us as a group, his body, and he desires that we work together - as all the parts of your body work together. It would be very strange if it were not so!

Paul, in standing for Christ, is now banged up in prison in Rome. He senses that this is the last time - and his end is not far away. Now where are those people he has been with? Will they, in his moment of need, rallying around?

How are you when someone you know well goes through great difficulty? It could be a bereavement, or they are going through severe treatment for Cancer or ...what those you know going through?

Do you show your friendship by standing with them? Filling in the gap, helping practically with their need? Or is it a pleasant word, a nice card, more for your own benefit than theirs and then nothing. After that you slip into the shadows with the excusing thought that there are those better placed to help than I am.

Well Paul is in his moment of need – and he is asking Timothy to help. Why? because those he depended on – have not been dependable, they've gone. "Timothy 9 **Do your best to come to me quickly.**

Now let's see just why he said it, and those Paul is thinking of.

✚ Remember those five categories: **deserted, disappointed, dependable, dangerous, dedicated.**

Let's look at these five people or groups. Who do you identify most with? If you were there who would you be?

✚ The first one in the list is Demas 10 for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.

*Demas has deserted Paul.*

Deserted is a strong word - the AV reads '**forsaken**' meaning: utterly forsaken or totally abandoned, leave helpless, to leave behind.

Demas though called by the Lord into his service - as you and I are - fell in love with the world. The lures of the world with all its comforts and entertainments were too much, they entangled him.

What happened to his first love to Christ and his gospel?

Or it could be that as Paul was about to depart this world. Demas didn't wish that for himself! He loved it here. He preferred his life and his safety here – than to live like Paul. For Paul this world was dead to him – and he to this world. Apostle John "**Do not love the world, or anything in the world**"

Love for this present world is often the cause of turning away from following Jesus Christ. Demas has gone off, He had deserted, he had *departed* – you can expect no help from him!

With Demas we know why, at least in the general. Jesus spoke of seed falling on ground, the heart, where too much else is growing up as well.

2a

Jesus describes these weeds as **the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.** Mr 4:19

Sadly he is not alone look down to v 16 - as Paul is being dragged through the courts he says 16 **At my first defence, no-one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. no-one supported, everyone deserted.** What a serious indictment that is.

*Deserted II*

**They too deserted Paul. Same word, same result, perhaps different motive.**

Both ran - Demas ran towards the world. These disciples were running – but running away from the trouble. Like an explosion they fled in every direction. Didn't Jesus warn: "**in this world you will have trouble**"

At Rome there were many Christians whose faith was spoken well of - but men are men - and although they welcomed Paul when he arrived, but when it came to the pinch, to the crunch, and they too might well suffer with him, they were off - they all forsook him. Rom 1, Acts 28

✚ "When the going gets tough the tough get going" is the world's saying I ask myself in this? "How deep is my commitment, what would I do?"

■ It makes me think back to those pub days. There they are all friendly, there's plenty of back slapping, but their friendship doesn't venture past the door, if old Joe is in hospital he need not expect a visit from any of them. Such are the so called "pub friends". They may well raise a glass in his honour and 'wish him well' but that is it. When trouble comes and you need them - they won't be there.

✚ So these Christians in weakness shrunk from Paul in his time of trial.

*Disappointed*

**Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia.**

We don't know why - here maybe there's a good reason, or maybe not. Without knowing we just take it on face value. In our minds we can cope with that, but in our hearts it leaves us feeling 'disappointed'

■ It is a bit like when you plan a church event, a mission week or a special evening and although you have given plenty of notice some come to you and says I'm on holiday that week or I've another arrangement I can't make it that evening.

2b

The Lord provides but it is discouraging, it is disappointing and of course they miss out as well. But then there are those who are:

### *Dependable*

In the dependable category we have two examples: First the one who cheers Paul by his faithfulness yes it is Dr Luke **11 Only Luke is with me.** How encouraging it is to see others stick with you when you are going through a hard time of it. **Luke** was that kind of man. Are you?

**Luke** but also **Mark**, here is the one who Paul thought would be so unreliable having deserted him already – that he was a complete liability - **Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.” They had such a sharp disagreement (a ding dong better put) that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus,”** Ac 15:38/39

Though Paul had once refused to take him with him because he had flinched and drawn back; now says: **Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.**

Paul has looked again - he has not given up on Mark, he has not written him off. What an example of a forgiving spirit; we must not give up on people – If Christ is in them we can and should expect change - for if they have the Spirit of Christ, then they are, by God’s grace, called according to his purposes – Love trusts – Let us expect them to turn out profitable and useful. That, however, is not true of the next man Alexander.

### *Now we have ‘D’ for Dangerous*

**14 Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. 15 You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.**

Who is he? Is he the one in Ephesus in Acts 19? Not sure. Paul describes him as the metal worker perhaps to distinguish him from the Alexander mentioned in 1 Tim 1:20 who is a believer who has gone off the rails, or hit the rocks to be more precise, and shipwrecked his faith. Here the impression is that he has no faith, rather he is in the world and acting in hostility to the gospel.

The main thing I suggest from this is to realise that Evil is active, there is an invisible force behind the hostility that comes to Christians.

- Chose to give time to the Gospel work or give time in visiting, or give money to the gospel work, - start to give priority to these things, - take a stand for Christ in the language and moral conduct in the home – and you will start to see who around you if for you – or against you.

When opposed Paul did not retaliate, he did not ‘repay him’ He left that to the Lord. That is a tough thing to do. **The Lord will repay him for what he has done.** How easy it is to give them what they deserve, to repay evil with evil. No Paul didn’t, remember he said in Romans 12 **Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.** Ro 12:19

We are to do good to all and live in peace with all men as best we can.

### *Lastly there is the Dedicated one - the faithful Lord*

Paul’s said in his trials **17 the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.**

Here is the one who is **our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble** Ps 46:1

- I remember one man when I was talking about Jesus being ‘in me’ said “how can he be in me if he is standing at my side“?

Well the Bible says that when we become a Christian Christ indwells, He lives inside of a believer, that is what make that person belong to Christ. No Christ within – no salvation. Not only does the Bible speak of it in very clear terms but it is also what every true believer experiences, feels and knows. It is his presence in me that make me sure: I know him, am at peace with him and that I can call him my father.

No what he means here is quite different, to stand at Paul’s side is to stand by him/stand for him as an advocate, as a lawyer would do in a court of law to defend you against the charges -and we can see this from the context

**16 At my first defence, no-one came to my support,**

All deserted, but not Christ. Christ does not walk away, He does not give in, or hand us over, he stands for his people.

Jesus is the great defender of God’s people.

It is a wonderful picture of the Gospel

Every man or women boy or girl is guilty before God. But not every person stand guilty before God. How is that? How the difference? Jesus Christ the

righteous one pleads before God on my behalf that I may, though guilty - be declared 'not guilty'.

- There's less legal aid available these days so more people are deciding to defend themselves in court. The result? often they make a mess of it.

To do that in God's court is disastrous. You will be sent down. You need more than a good defense Lawyer - A defense Lawyer can hardly persuade God you are not guilty, nor can he seek a more lenient sentence based on some hidden mitigation- none of that counts for anything. What you and I need is someone to have already carried the sentence, then the advocate can say, as Christ can "it is already paid, I have paid it."

So here in this room, we are all guilty before God. Yet some are declared 'not guilty' Isn't that the key question?

The CROSS is the place where Christ paid the price for sin. That one off event is then made effective forever in the lives of those who come to Him and having repented of their sin seek forgiveness. To do nothing, walk past as it were, in your heart is to remain guilty. To resist the Saviour God has given for you is as we read, to **despise the LORD's word and break his commands, that person must surely be cut off; his guilt remains on him.** Nu 15:31

Or as we read in John 3 **Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.** 3:36

If you have yet to the Lord, then do so now. He will turn to you and commit to you

Job said: **Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high.** Job 16:19 - **we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.** 1Jo 2:1

Paul now languishing in prison had before been in court. Yet the Lord was with him. Paul as he stands in the dock turns it into a pulpit **so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.** The emperor himself and the great men would never have heard Paul preach if he had not been brought before them.

So too with you - The Lord protects you so you can continue the work of making Christ known amongst your neighbours and the people you meet.

We live in strange times - when it is easy to speak of Christ publically much of the church is silent. But Paul who is up against the wall, with evil powers frothing at the mouth – he presses on. He is proving the Lord's power and declaring **I was delivered from the lion's mouth.** Was that Nero? Or some other evil?

The best way to be sure of the Lord's power is to step out boldly. The best way to be confident is to look back and see how He has delivered you protected and kept you so you will know he will deliver and protect and keep you.

So Paul says 18 **The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.** And for this he gives glory to God. **To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

*So finally*

So many had left him Paul he wanted Timothy's company and help, how sweet that fellowship will be. "Timothy I know you will not shirk the hardship." And 13 **when you come, bring the cloak..., and my scrolls, especially the parchments.** These words only occur here and there is some doubt as to their meaning however they make sense. The human need of warmth - 21 **Do your best to get here before winter.** And the Christian's food – God's word. You need that everywhere – at all times.

Paul is thinking of Timothy as he leads the church there in Ephesus don't worry you can come he says 12 **I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.** The faithful brother **Tychicus** who is always spoken well of he will lead in your absence

✚ *Jonathan Edwards* says: **The Christian is encompassed around with enemies on every side. Being a pilgrim and a stranger in the earth he is, as it were, in an enemy's country. There are thousands of devils that are bitter enemies to the grace which is in the heart of a Christian, and do all in their power against it. And the world is an enemy to it. It abounds with persons and things that make opposition to it.**

But 'Though all *men* forsook me, yet God will not.' This expresses an universal truth in regard to the faithfulness of God. **Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.** Ps 27:10 Job 5:17-19 Isa 43:1,2.

**Let us take all this to heart, take comfort and stand firm for the Lord**

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