

Departures, Desertions and Leadership Suffering

Dave Harvey

I. Surveying the Last Days of Paul

1. *How should we interpret departures from the church?*

"You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes." (2 Timothy 1:15)

"...and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus..." (2 Timothy 2:17)

"For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,..." (2 Timothy 3:2-4)

"...For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry." (2 Timothy 4:10-11a)

"Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds." (2 Timothy 4:14)

"At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!" (2 Timothy 4:16)

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2. "Where is God when people leave?"

"A cross stands in the way of spiritual leadership, a cross upon which the leader must consent to be impaled."¹

"One crushing stroke has sometimes laid the minister very low. The brother most relied upon becomes a traitor ... Ten years of toil do not take so much life out of us as we lose in a few hours by Ahithophel the traitor, or Demas the apostate."²

II. WE WILL WASTE OUR DEPARTURES IF ...

A. ... We Believe That God Has Not Ordained Them

1. God's sovereignty
2. Paul and Barnabas
3. Jesus and the Cross
4. Departures are not always a bad thing.

Whitfield once said, "God be praised for the many strippings I have met with. It is good for me that I have been supplanted, despised, censured, maligned, judged by and separated from my nearest, dearest friends. By this I have found the faithfulness of him who is the friend of friends"³

¹ J. Oswald Sanders, quoted in Alex Montoya, "Leading," *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, ed. John MacArthur, Jr. (Dallas: Word, 1995), 296.

² Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), 161.

³ Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), 345.

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B. ... We Conclude that Being Proven Right is More Important than Being Proven Faithful.

1. The quest for vindication
2. The importance of Judaizers in the leaders life
3. Our trust in God should be reflected in how we engage folks when they leave.

C. ... We Fall Prey to the Captivity of Closure

1. A broken world is inherently open-ended.
2. Heb 13: 7
3. A leaders confidence comes from:
 - a. Looking back
 - b. Looking forward

III. Conclusion

1. Be the father
2. "But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it." (2 Time 4: 17)