

2 Timothy 4:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

Analysis

Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. Paul updates Timothy on other coworkers. "Erastus abode at Corinth" (Erastos emeinen en Korinthō, Ἐραστός ἔμεινεν ἐν Κορίνθῳ). Menō (μένω) means remain, stay. Erastus, mentioned in Acts 19:22 and Romans 16:23 (possibly as Corinth's city treasurer), remained in Corinth, apparently on ministry assignment or personal responsibilities. His staying doesn't suggest unfaithfulness but legitimate reason for absence from Rome.

"Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick" (Trophimon de apēlipon en Milētō asthenounta, Τρόφιμον δὲ ἀπέλιπον ἐν Μιλήτῳ ἀσθενοῦντα). Apoleipō (ἀπολείπω) means leave behind. Astheneō (ἀσθενέω) means be sick, weak, ill. Trophimus, Ephesian Christian who traveled with Paul (Acts 20:4, 21:29), fell ill at Miletus and couldn't continue. Paul left him there to recover. This detail is significant for several reasons:

1. It shows Paul couldn't heal all illnesses at will—apostolic healing was sovereignly given by God, not on-demand power.
2. It reveals pastoral realism—ministry involves sickness, setbacks, and limitations.
3. It demonstrates care—Paul didn't abandon sick Trophimus but ensured he received care.

These mundane details humanize Paul and early Christianity.

Ministry wasn't constant miracles and success but involved ordinary challenges: sickness, travel limitations, personnel constraints. Paul's matter-of-fact reporting without embellishment or excuse models healthy realism. Faithful servants work within human limitations while trusting God's sovereignty. The letter's preservation of these details encourages believers facing similar frustrations: sickness, limitations, and setbacks are normal Christian experience, not signs of faithlessness.

Historical Context

Miletus was port city about 30 miles south of Ephesus. Paul had met Ephesian elders there during his final journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:15-38). Trophimus's illness occurred during Paul's travels between final imprisonment periods. The inability to heal Trophimus challenges claims that apostles could heal anyone anytime. Apostolic miracles were genuine but sovereignly distributed, not magician's tricks performed on demand. Early Christians accepted sickness as part of fallen existence, trusting God's purposes whether healing or allowing continued affliction. This balanced view avoids both cessationism (denying God's healing power) and health-wealth theology (demanding healing as entitlement).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when God doesn't heal sickness despite faithful prayer—with faith in His sovereignty or doubt about His goodness?
2. What mundane limitations, setbacks, or frustrations are you facing that seem unspiritual but are actually normal aspects of faithful service?
3. How can Trophimus's illness and Paul's realistic acceptance encourage you when ministry doesn't proceed smoothly or miraculously?

Interlinear Text

Ἑραστος ἔμεινεν ἐν Κορίνθῳ Τρόφιμον δὲ ἀπέλιπον
Erastus **abode** **at** **Corinth** **Trophimus** **but** **have I left**
G2037 G3306 G1722 G2882 G5161 G1161 G620

ἐν Μιλήτῳ ἀσθενοῦντα
at **Miletum** **sick**
G1722 G3399 G770

Additional Cross-References

Acts 20:4 (Parallel theme): And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

Acts 19:22 (Parallel theme): So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

Acts 21:29 (Parallel theme): (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

Acts 20:15 (Parallel theme): And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus.

Romans 16:23 (Parallel theme): Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.