



A
His Company
Script...

An Exchange of Affections

**"No man is an Island, entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main."
John Donne**



a one-act play
by
David S. Lampel

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DO NOT PHOTOCOPY

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second sheet**

Note to the Director: This play, more than possibly any other His Company script, will benefit from a complete set. It certainly can be produced with only two actors on a sparse stage, but will nonetheless be enhanced by a set denoting the deck of a small ship and, most especially, sound effects of waves, wind, and creaking timbers. Extras can also be employed as deck hands moving about lashing items down for the storm, hauling in the dinghy, etc.

The ship pitches and tosses with the white-crested waves that batter its progress through the waters of the Great Sea or, to the Romans who now rule the world, Mare Internum.¹ Far astern, just visible through the gray haze, the isle of Rhodes—their last port—recedes from sight, diminishing against the horizon that is lost between the gray of the sea and the gray of the overcast sky. Ahead of the ship is only more gray, and night—as well as their next port of Myra, in Lycia—approaches.

Diomedes [die-ah'-mu-dees], clutching tightly to the wooden railing, glances back in time to observe two members of the ship's crew haul on board the dinghy that in calmer waters would be towed behind the ship. He knows then that the crew is expecting a strong gale to hit.

Hand over hand, stepping carefully on the wet deck, Diomedes makes his way forward to the hatch that leads down to the hold—and welcome shelter from the approaching storm. There he will enjoy some wine, and the companionship of the few passengers as they comfort each other against the unsettling movement of the waves.

The ship lurches to one side, and Diomedes grabs hold of the hatch's handle, eager to get inside, when he hears a low moan escape from what he had thought was just a large pile of rags collected at the base of the ship's central mast. Closer inspection reveals the cluttered outline of a man huddled against the wind and wet sea air.

Diomedes

Are you all right, sir? Do you need assistance?

(getting no response, Diomedes draws closer, touches the huddled figure where he would expect a shoulder)

Sir, can I help?

The figure inside the rags moves. Gradually a rather longish nose emerges through the folds, followed by a pasty-white cheek, a chin, finally an eye, then two eyes that gaze up miserably at Diomedes, who repeats...

Diomedes

(with greater urgency)

Can I help you, sir?

Paul

(weakly)

I—I'll be all right. I told them I'd be all right.

¹ Or, as we know it, the *Mediterranean*.

Diomedes

Them?

Paul

45 M—my friends. They're below.

Diomedes

As should be you.

(taking him by the arm)

Here, let me help—

50

Paul

(protesting wretchedly)

No! I'll do better up here. Need the air. Please, I'll be all right.

Diomedes

Yes, I understand.

55

(settles down next to him)

The sea sickness is suffered better up in the air. I'll stay with you awhile, but when the storm hits we'll have to go below.

Paul

You needn't stay. I'll be safe here.

60

Diomedes

Nonsense. What you need is to take your mind off your queasy stomach.

(pulling his outer cloak more tightly about him, against the chilled air)

I am Diomedes, from Paphos.

Paul

65

(brightening some)

Ah, I know your city. I was there... oh my, it must have been about eight years ago. We crossed almost the length of your island of Cyprus—from Salamis over to Paphos.

Diomedes

70 Yes, I'm returning now, and I must admit to missing my home.

Paul

How long have you been away?

75

Diomedes

I've been visiting my daughter and her family in Athens; conducted a little business in Rhodes. By the time I return home it will have been a year since I last saw it.

80

Paul, huddled in a heap at the base of the mast, presses the back of his hand to his mouth, belches quietly, and rolls his eyes heavenward in abject misery.

Diomedes

Is there anything I can do for you?

85

Paul draws fresh air into his lungs to counteract the rising bile in his belly.

Paul

I've been rude. Forgive me. This unsettled sea has made me miserable in both body and spirit. My name is Paul—of Tarsus.

Diomedes

90

Well, Paul, I do know how you feel. It took me many sailings to get over the sea sickness.

Paul

(impatient with his weakness; muttering)

It's so embarrassing. I've been on many voyages. So long as it's calm, I'm fine.

95

But my constitution has never acclimated to the acrobatics of an unsettled sea.

Diomedes

(eureka!)

Crackers!

100

Paul

What?

Diomedes

Crackers. I should have thought of it earlier.

(rummaging through the bag at his side)

105

An old sea hand once told me. Never sail without them. They work like magic.

He passes Paul a handful of coarse, unleavened crisps.

Paul

110 *(grinning for the first time)*
Looks like Passover.

Diomedes

(coaxing, like a doctor prodding his patient to take the medicine he has just prescribed)
115 Go ahead. Fix you right up.
Paul bites into the thin crusty bread, chewing slowly without enthusiasm.

Diomedes

(beaming)
120 There you go. Be better in no time.
The wind gusts, pushing against the two travelers huddled at the center of the deck, as overhead it whistles with a lonely whine through the ropes that pass up and through the sail, then over the top edge of the heavy yard. The cold mist presses in around them, and the ship's timbers groan under the relentless weight and thrust of the rolling waves.
125 *The gray daylight is quickly fading toward an early dusk. Though they are surrounded on all sides by miles of empty sea, the two men feel the dense atmosphere close in around them like a room with its walls drawing in on itself. And, not even aware they are doing it, the two strangers edge closer to each other beneath the creaking mast.*
130 *Suddenly the nearby hatch flies open, pushed from the inside, and a fair-haired young man pops his head out.*

Luke

Paul! Are you all right out here?

135 **Paul**

Yes, Luke. I'm fine. Go back inside.

Luke

We're worried about you. Silas thinks I should come out and sit with you.

Paul

140 Tell Silas that I already have a companion—
(motioning toward Diomedes)
—and that the Lord will protect us from the elements.

Luke

(greeting Diomedes)
145 Hello sir. Thank you for your trouble.

Diomedes

It's no trouble.

Paul

By the way, Luke, why didn't you prescribe crackers for my woes?

150

Luke

(twisting his face into a mask of frowning curiosity)

Crackers?

Paul

155

My new friend, Diomedes—whom, I might add, does not have your credentials as a learned physician—prescribed them as a remedy for my unsettled belly. And—praise God—they have indeed brought me relief.

Luke

(repeating; perplexed)

Crackers?

160

Paul

(his eyes twinkling with bemused affection for his young companion)

Yes, crackers. You may wish to make note of this miracle cure in your journal.

Luke

165

(hesitantly)

Yes, perhaps.

And with that Luke lowers himself back down the ladder and closes the hatch after him.

170

Diomedes

Every man should have friends with such concern for his well-being.

Paul

I'm most fortunate, yes.

Diomedes

175

Are they business associates?

Paul

(chuckling over the thought)

In a manner of speaking. You might say that we are about the 'business' of our Lord Jesus Christ.

180

Diomedes

(nodding his head)

Ah yes, I wondered. I've heard of this prophet—and those who are spreading his teachings.

Paul

185 Then you're not a believer in the Way.

Diomedes

The 'Way'?

Paul

The way to God through Christ. The way of the cross.

190

Diomedes

(pleasantly)

No. I am not.

Paul

(politely—but with a twinkle in his eye)

195 The night is yet young.

The two men laugh together like two old friends who have agreed to disagree.

Diomedes

And what is your destination?

200

Paul

Home.

Diomedes

Tarsus?

Paul

205 No, no. Jerusalem, and then Antioch.

Diomedes turns toward Paul and, quite unexpectedly serious, gazes upon his face for a long time.

Diomedes

You're a man of many homes, aren't you, Paul of Tarsus?

210

Paul

(after a moment's thought)

Yes. I suppose I am.

Diomedes

215 That can be a lonely life.

Paul gazes out past Diomedes, toward the cresting waves that continue to pester the boat, toward the gray distance in which no discernible shapes can be seen. When he finally speaks it is with the accumulated thousands of miles he has traveled since that momentous day on the road to Damascus²—it is with the accumulated knowledge and experience that had been poured into him since coming to know Jesus Christ as God, and Lord.

Paul

Before He returned to the Father, Jesus promised to send a comforter—the
225 Holy Spirit—who would remain with us. And He kept His promise. The Spirit is my constant companion, no matter where I am. Still, it is a lonely life—or can be—traveling around the world to tell others of Christ. But I serve a gracious God who sends others to help as well.

Diomedes

230 *(seriously)*
Other spirits?

Paul

Other people. You live on Cyprus, yet even on that island you've heard of
Jesus because He has followers there. There are, already, followers of the
235 Way scattered all over the world.

Diomedes

I can well imagine that a traveling preacher benefits from funds given by those who support his work.

Paul

240 Oh, I've learned from the beginning that we need the help of others in more ways than financial. When I was at the very beginning, at the point where Jesus first took hold of my life, I learned what it meant to have others extend themselves for me. The Lord stopped me just as I was rising up to strike down more of those I now call brothers.

245

² Acts 9:1-31

Diomedes

(surprised)

You mean, sir, that you were once opposed to Christianity?

Paul

250

(with some intensity)

I mean, sir, that I was once its worst enemy. I mean that it was my life's occupation—my unquenchable passion—to remove from this earth as many followers of Jesus Christ as I could. My hatred for them couldn't be turned, and it was acted out in unspeakable ways.

255

Diomedes

(diplomatically)

Then I'll not ask you to speak of them; I can see that this memory brings you discomfort. But what did finally 'turn' you?

Paul

260

Christ Himself.

Diomedes

You're an intelligent, well-schooled man; was it His rhetoric that won you over?

Paul

265

(laughing out loud)

While it's true my Lord could handily win any debate, it wasn't that skill He employed in my case. Instead, He drove me to my knees, face down in the middle of a dusty road, and, quite literally, blinded me with His holy brilliance.

270

Diomedes

Remarkable!

Paul

I spent three very long days in Damascus at the home of my friend Judas, wondering what would become of me. I was weak, helpless—and blind. But when I hit bottom, and reached out toward the Lord, He answered my prayer and showed me the name and the face of the one who would help me regain my sight.

Diomedes

280 I've heard of the doctors in Damascus. They've worked wonders—

Paul

(interrupting)

No, Diomedes. He was only a fellow pilgrim of the Way. He brought no miracle cure—only the word of the Lord. He didn't even want to be there;
285 Ananias was only too familiar with my reputation. He had no great love for me—only a love for the Lord. So he obeyed, and ministered to me, and restored my health. Like oases set at intervals in the desert, the Lord sends His people to help us in times of need.
I even depended upon the help of others to leave Damascus, as there were
290 those who plotted for my life.³

Diomedes

So soon!

Paul

I can't blame them. How were they to know the change that had taken place
295 in my life. In a very short time I went from being a zealot against the Christians to being a zealot for them. And Ananias had warned me.

Diomedes

Of what?

Paul

300 *(with wry amusement, as he thinks back to the man who was no immediate friend)*
It didn't trouble him at all to pass along what the Lord had told him. In referring to me, Jesus had told him, 'I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.'⁴ And so it began.

305 *The storm draws closer, the sky darkening into a somber hue that envelops the ship, but Paul and Diomedes scarcely notice the gathering dark and chill. Two strangers of disparate paths and intentions—so much to set them apart, yet even more to recommend them to each other.*

³ Acts 9: 23-25

⁴ Acts 9:15-16

310

Diomedes

I have great respect for your work, Paul. Not that I adhere to its tenets, of course, or agree with it all, but I do respect it. In a manner of speaking we have similar occupations.

Paul

315

(pulling his damp cloak more tightly around him)

How so?

Diomedes

I'm an agent for a consortium of copper dealers in Cyprus. I travel the Empire arranging their exports.

320

Paul

(staring at Diomedes; confused)

Pardon me, sir, but this intemperate weather must be clouding my reason. Tell me: where are the similarities?

Diomedes

325

It's my responsibility to enlist people in a cause—in my case the cause is to enhance the wealth of my clients. Your responsibility is to enlist new people in the cause of your God.

Paul

(irritation creeping into his voice)

330

Is that all you think it is, Diomedes?

Diomedes

(quickly)

335

Don't take offense. It's just that I've heard others compare your religion to a gathering army—and those in your position to recruiters. Isn't it true that you seek to make converts?

Paul

(taking a moment to calm himself before answering)

It's true that my purpose is to show people the error of their way, and the truth of the Way of Christ.

340

Diomedes

There! You see—

Paul

345 But this mission involves so much more, Diomedes. God's purpose isn't to
add names to a list, but new members into His family. What fellowship is
there in the worship of Zeus, or Poseidon? In the one God we have no
distant, angry deity, but a loving Father who cared enough to sacrifice His
Son. And within the fellowship of believers we enjoy the relationships of
family: brother to brother, sister to sister, sister to brother.

350 In a way you're correct. You enlist buyers, and I enlist those who would care
to be adopted by the Father. But in the purpose behind these similar actions
our paths diverge. While your purpose may be honorable, it is nonetheless
temporal. My purpose—my calling—is eternal.

Diomedes

(bluntly)

355 Mine puts food on the table.

Paul

(pulling back into his cloak for warmth; quietly)

Let's not argue. The night's too miserable for such foolishness.

360

Diomedes

Agreed.

*Piercing momentarily through the clouded mist, low on the horizon behind the ship,
the setting sun briefly shows itself, sending angular streams of light across the broken
365 surface of the sea. Then, just as quickly, it is gone, and the swirling clouds of the
dying day return around the ship.*

Paul

Our journey hasn't been easy. We've met as many roadblocks as open roads.
370 There have been times, I confess, when I wondered why we bothered. Why
travel hundreds of miles, only to be locked out of an entire region?

Diomedes

But who would lock you out?

Paul

(simply)

375 The Spirit.

Diomedes

I thought you said the Spirit was your companion. Why would he prevent you serving?

380

Paul

The Spirit's our permanent connection to God. He serves the Father by translating His wishes for us.

Diomedes shakes his head, confused.

385

Paul

(after a moment's thought)

Here's an example: As their agent, you may think you know the wishes of your clients back on Cyprus. You've worked for them a long time, you're experienced in their ways of doing business. Even with that, when you're out on your own, there's still a lot of guesswork. But if they send you a handwritten message, then you'll know their wishes. The Holy Spirit is our 'handwritten message' from God the Father, delivering His specific wishes.

390

Diomedes

But Paul, when the message is 'No'—when your efforts are thwarted, how are you sustained? Here you are huddled against the cold and wet on the deck of a ship in the middle of a dark sea . . . How in the world do you make it past all the tough times?

395

Paul

It has been hard, but all along the way have been those ready to help. One's never a stranger when around other believers. In Antioch, after a disagreement caused me to lose my earlier traveling companion, the Lord gave me my friend Silas.⁵ In Troas, after we had been prevented to minister in Asia and Bithynia, the Lord brought our good physician, Luke, to us.⁶ And he has truly been an encouragement and help.

400

405

⁵ Acts 15:36-40

⁶ Acts 16: 6-10

Diomedes

(grinning)

Except for his forgetting to bring along the crackers, of course.

410

Paul

Except for the crackers. But there's more. When we preached the gospel in Philippi we were beaten and thrown into prison. In chains, Silas and I comforted each other by singing thanksgiving and praise to God—the rest of the prisoners loved it! The Lord heard our songs and miraculously opened
415 the jail, and that night a few more souls were added to His family. The Lord also brought to us a Thyatiran woman named Lydia⁷ who gave us the shelter and sustenance of her home. Do you see, Diomedes? That's what it means to belong to Christ: You're never alone!

Diomedes

420

It sounds more like it means you're never out of trouble.

Paul

Life in Christ doesn't mean guaranteed smooth sailing, but it does mean that when the storm hits, there'll be someone there to help. And that's what sustains me, Diomedes: People willing even to place themselves in harm's
425 way for us.

We had a good response in Thessalonica. When I shared the gospel with them in the local synagogue, there were both Jews and Greeks who were persuaded. And one of the members of the synagogue, Jason, opened his home to us.

430

But then some of the Jews who hadn't been persuaded incited a crowd to take after us. My goodness, I've never had so many people angry with me—who had not even heard me speak! The rabble from the city took after us and we were forced to take refuge in Jason's house.

435

They banged on his door, demanding that we show ourselves out in the street. We were terrified, but were going to comply, when Jason stopped us.

⁷ Acts 16: 14-15,40

He insisted that we remain inside, while he went outside to confront the ill-mannered crowd.

(a painful memory)

They were rather physical in their abuse, and accused Jason and his friends
440 of harboring those who were preaching insurrection against Rome—
meaning us! Well, this dear brother not only received the physical
punishment intended for us, but even paid a promissory bond—an
expensive guarantee that we would leave and never return.

Diomedes

445 Where does all this animosity come from, Paul? Why do you think so many
are against the things you are for?

*The question took Paul's thoughts back to the trials and abuse Jesus had to put up
with—the Pharisees and scribes continually breathing down His neck; His own family
450 practically disowning Him; the Romans playing into the hands of the Jewish leaders,
and finally putting Him to death.*

Paul

(with a sigh)

455 As King Solomon wrote, Diomedes, there's nothing new under the sun. No
trial of mine will ever compare to what the Lord suffered.

Diomedes

But why is it necessary to suffer at all?

Paul

460 There's no simple answer. And, I'm afraid, it has little to do with religion.
Mostly it has to do with power. When I visit a city, it's usually the religious
leaders who fight against my teaching—not, mind you, for reasons of
philosophy or doctrine, but because they consider me a threat to their
positions of power—their standing in the community. They think I'm
465 challenging the foundation of everything they believe!

Diomedes

And aren't you?

Paul

470 Jesus said, ‘I’ve not come to abolish the Law or the prophets, but to fulfill them.’⁸ Remember, Diomedes, their faith is over two thousand years old; the traditions will not go easily.

When I preach Jesus Christ I’m preaching the one who came to fulfill the prophecies of the Jewish faith. But they reject Him. For hundreds and
475 hundreds of years they looked to God—searching, pleading—to send the Messiah, but when He finally did, they turned their back on Him, and killed Him.

The resistance that I meet is only an extension of the hatred they heaped upon the Lord. And I think He relied on others for support, just as I do. I
480 believe that Jesus was sustained through those trials by His disciples. He, too, had the Spirit; He had the Father; but in a personal, human sense, He had the twelve who brought Him encouragement and support against the trials He met.

Diomedes

485 *(with confusion bordering on disbelief)*

I’m sorry, Paul, but I just don’t see the point of it all. Where’s the percentage? You’ve described a miserable life. How do you stand it, dealing with one rejection after another?

Paul

490 Oh, Diomedes, I wish we were having this conversation at the top of a sunlit hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee. I wish the sounds around us were of the birds and bleating sheep, and the laughter of little children at play. But here we are, desperate for warmth on a cold, wet wooden deck, being tossed about like corks in a barrel. And the only sounds are of the unfriendly wind
495 whistling by our ears and the chattering of our own teeth.

Please don’t judge the Lord’s work by my precarious condition. Of course I have my troubles; preachers aren’t insulated from adversity. But there is no

⁸ Matthew 5:17

greater joy than the joy of serving Him—and of sharing that joy with His people.

500 Tell me, Diomedes, are you married?

Diomedes

(a proud smile lighting up his face)

Twenty years last month. We'll celebrate when I get home.

Paul

505 Would you say it's been a good marriage?

Diomedes

The best I know.

Paul

510 You're a fortunate man. So then for the last twenty years you've enjoyed perfect, uninterrupted bliss with your wife.

Diomedes

(quickly losing some of his beaming enthusiasm)

Well, you know how these things are. No marriage is that perfect.

Paul

515 I see.

Diomedes

There are good times and bad. You go through changes—ups and downs.

Paul

520 My friend, I think of our relationship with Christ Jesus in terms of a marriage—complete with all of life's good times and bad, changes, ups and downs. In the best marriages the two people invest themselves thoroughly in each other. They come to understand the likes and dislikes, subtle moods. They come to know each other completely—physically, emotionally, spiritually.

525

Diomedes

But what does this have to do with your being shut out of Asia, beaten and jailed in Philippi, almost lynched in Thessalonica?

530

Paul

Diomedes, I believe that all of life consists of an exchange of affections. In every city where we preached and ministered, there was a constant flow between us and the people. Just as in a good marriage, there were people investing themselves in each other. We would invest in them God's teaching, and they would give back their appreciation, their encouragement, protection and, yes, love.

535

Diomedes

And that's enough?

Paul

540 What more is there, man? What more is there than people of like mind and spirit helping each other—making a contribution into each other's lives? As if that weren't enough, they're doing all this in the name of Jesus Christ, whose life and sacrifice made it all possible in the first place!

Let me tell you, it was in Athens I was at my lowest. We had moved on from Thessalonica to Berea. Because of the Jews there, we stole away in the middle of the night, just like in Damascus, save that this time it was on my two feet, instead of being dropped down in a basket.

545

Things went well in Berea. The people were receptive to our message—in fact, eager to hear it. Many believers were added to the family there. But in no time the Jews from Thessalonica invaded—yes, it felt like an invasion, like invading hordes from the north. They immediately began stirring things up, causing the kind people of Berea to turn against us. Because of this, the decision was made for me to proceed to Athens alone, while Silas and Timothy remained behind.

550

555 Never has a man felt more the alien than I in your daughter's city. All around me—it seemed they lined every street and byway—were statues and images of false gods. I honestly believe every pagan idol from every known culture from the beginning of time was dutifully represented. They even—on the off-chance that they had forgotten one—had a statue for the 'UNKNOWN GOD'!

560 I tell you Diomedes, I felt like a German in a Roman bath. For the first time in my journey, I just wanted to go home. I had no consolation from friends, and felt very much alone.

But somewhere I found the determination to go on. I reasoned with them in the local synagogue and in the agora.⁹ I held conversations and debates with
565 the leading Stoics and Epicureans—though some ridiculed me, referring to me as some lazy rag-picker. But I kept on. Then one day I was invited to speak before the Areopagus—the council of distinguished city leaders who met at Mars Hill. I knew very well that I had been taken there more in jest than for any serious consideration of my words, but I was determined to do
570 my best. The Lord placed me there; He was counting on me.

(re-staging the speech)

‘Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD”. Now what you worship as
575 something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

‘The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men,
580 that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. “For in him we live and move and have our being.” As some of your own poets have said, “We are his offspring.”

585 ‘Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the

⁹ Centralized marketplace, where public dialogue, as well as shopping, took place.

world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to
590 all men by raising him from the dead.¹⁰

Diomedes

(after a respectful moment of silence)

I commend you, Paul! Though I know well that your purpose is not to garner
personal praise, I still must say: a most eloquent dissertation worthy of the
595 masters.

Paul

Thank you, my friend. I don't reject your appreciation. It is a healing balm
upon my soul.

600 *The two men burrow down into their cloaks against the chilling night air that cuts
across the exposed deck. Darkness is fast approaching; soon they'll have to retire
below—something Paul dreads. He continues the conversation, hoping to delay his
time in fresh air above decks.*

605

Paul

Good Diomedes, have you yet grown weary of my stories?

Diomedes

Quite to the contrary, Paul, I've found them to be invigorating. The people of
your faith have long been a fascination of mine, yet I've never had the
610 opportunity to hear of them and their ways first hand. Your tales have made
this awful voyage bearable. Have you more?

Paul

I have one more, maybe the best. You are, of course, familiar with Corinth.

Diomedes

615

(erupting with glee)

Aren't we all! Don't we all know the manners and customs and, uh—delights
of that city!

(quickly recovering; soberly)

Uh, not, of course, first hand...

620

¹⁰ Acts 17:22-31

Paul

(diplomatically permitting his new friend the privacy of his memories)

Oh, of course.

(continuing his story)

625 The Athenians, in their sophisticated snobbery, politely conducted me to the
gates of their city, but they may as well have done it with a boot to my
backside. By the time I arrived in that cosmopolitan, albeit immoral, city of
Corinth I was weary and low in spirits. The Athens episode, save for a few
converts, had been a failure—and the only thing worse than failure is having
630 to suffer it alone.

I had no interest in the flashy distractions of the Corinthian metropolis,
neither the companionship of one of its infamous temple prostitutes. Instead,
I simply needed a place of rest and restoration with people of like mind and
Spirit.

635 People like Priscilla and Aquila. Diomedes, I know you can identify with my
predicament—being so terribly far from home, bereft of even traveling
companions; bone-weary from being constantly challenged, ridiculed, and
pursued; now in a strange and alien city, where licentiousness is not only
permitted, but the official religion.

640 Evening was approaching, and the dying sun was turning the streets of
Corinth a deep orange. Strangers bumped my shoulders, shopkeepers
beckoned me closer with their winking allurements. The evening air was
filled with the disorienting stench of this alien culture. Nothing was familiar,
nothing comfortable.

645 Out of desperation, I asked a street vendor where I might find a prosperous
tentmaker in the city; you see, Diomedes, I am of that trade and, frankly, I
needed the money. He waved me off to go down this street, then that street,
until I reached a house that looked like this...

I wound my way through the darkening streets and alleyways, until at last I
650 stood before the address. I rapped against the heavy, wooden door; loud
voices and angles of lamplight seeped through the cracks that divided the

door's timbers. Suddenly the gate swung open, and before I knew it, I was standing in the midst of friends! —brothers and sisters to whom just moments before I was unknown. Diomedes, in my moment of despair I found not only
655 fellow tentmakers, but the open arms of fellow Christians!¹¹

My time with Priscilla and Aquila was like enjoying a holiday at the seashore after tramping through the desert. Their company, their willingness to let me work with them at my trade, their pleasant and restoring encouragement of my ministry were a precious gift that renewed my spirit as well as my body.
660 I'll always be grateful to them—as well as to my God for bringing me to them.

Diomedes sits silently studying his deck companion and newfound friend, letting the rhythmic splash of the ship through the waves be the only dialogue between them. Finally he speaks.

665

Diomedes

Paul, my new friend, a little while ago—only moments, it now seems—I happened upon a quivering pile of rags braced against the salt spray and heaves of the ship. At first, I now confess, I felt nothing more than pity for
670 you, so helpless and ill. You seemed to be a most pitiful sight.

But it's taken no time at all for my wholly erroneous first impression to be replaced by a profound respect and—dare I say it, even envy.

Paul

(astonished)

675 Envy?!

Diomedes

Yes, it's true. Envy. What a wonderfully rewarding life you have! You have a God for whom you happily suffer; I don't even have a god who asks such things of me. You have brothers and sisters scattered throughout the world
680 who are ready at a moment's notice to help you, feed and clothe you, even suffer for you; I have a handful of friends and acquaintances who will give me assistance—so long they have nothing better to do. I have wealth, but

¹¹ Acts 18:1-3

you have riches beyond my comprehension! Yet instead of spending it on
yourself, you spend it on others—and they spend theirs on you! How
685 marvelous!

Paul

(quietly)

Diomedes, there's nothing remarkable about my life—except the presence of
God that directs it. There's nothing remarkable about the people I consider
690 my brothers and sisters—except that it's the same Spirit that binds them as
much to each other as to me.

Diomedes, it's our God who is remarkable—not us, or our lives. It's His Spirit
that courses through us, binding us to each other. If we're prepared to give
our lives for each other, it's only because we've already given our lives to
695 Him—to our Lord Jesus Christ. He, my friend, is the remarkable one.

Now, since land is still a long ways off, would you care to hear more about
Jesus?

Diomedes

(with a newfound interest)

700 Yes, I think so, Paul. Indeed, tell me more about Jesus.

*The waves still pound against the wooden ship, and the icy wind still blows across its
decks. The large, square sail still flaps noisily above them as if it will be ripped from
its yard and mast. But off the heaving stern, just for a brief moment, the fading sun
705 shows itself one more time before silently slipping into the sea.*

[approximately 37 minutes]

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