

Session 8

GOSPEL GOODBYE (GOSPEL CONVERSATION FOCUS)

2 Timothy 4:9-19

Memory Verse


¹⁷ But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that I might fully preach the word and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

– 2 TIMOTHY 4:17, CSB



Gospel Good-bye

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Christians can face great hardship in life knowing that God will be with them and He will ultimately rescue them.

 Begin today's discussion time by sharing God stories as a follow up to last week's application.

Today we see that Paul held to his relationship with Christ even through suffering. Many a soul has turned cold against God because they could not make sense of the evil that is present in this world. The confusion and chaos that seems to reign in this world is enough for some people to abandon any hope of the existence of a good and powerful Being. Yet, in the face of suffering, it is all the more important to seek hope in God. Many of our friends/neighbors have watched how we've held to Christ through the recent pandemic fears. Many of them also questioned God's existence.

Why is this so? Because apart from God, the world is senseless, but with God through Christ, even the most disconcerting aspects of this fallen world cannot dismay us. The holy and sovereign God of the Scriptures is directing all affairs of heaven and earth for His own glory and the good of those who are His. God even uses that which is terrible for the good of His children (Rom. 8:28). Affliction, for those who are in Christ, fetches out the fruit of the Spirit. Furthermore, the maturing power of suffering is very great.

What could bring God more glory than watching His children bless when they are cursed? God is glorified when His children bear up under suffering with faith, hope, and joy. They can do that, not by their own strength, but because of His power

working in them. God did that for Paul, God did that for Timothy, and He will do it for Christians today.

Session Summary

In today's passage, Paul concluded his letter to Timothy with a testimony of the Lord's faithfulness. He pointed to the Lord's faithfulness to wrest justice for the wrongs done to him, to uphold him in his weakness, and to bring him safely to his heavenly kingdom. Timothy needed to be reminded of the Lord's faithfulness more than ever because of the suffering that he faced.

1. The Lord Will Repay (2 Tim. 4:9-15)

We know Paul as a great missionary and theologian, but it isn't often that we get a glimpse into his personal life. In the first part of our passage today, we are given a peek at Paul's daily life and personal preferences. Remember, Paul was in prison, and he was no doubt aware that his time on earth was coming to an end. In verses 9-13, we see several examples of the ordinary means of comfort and grace that the Lord provided for Paul. Paul asked Timothy to come and visit him soon. Why? Because Paul loved Timothy and his presence would bring him encouragement and joy. Notice in verse 13 Paul asked Timothy to bring a cloak, scrolls, and parchments.

These simple, ordinary means of grace and comfort set an example for us. In gaining Christ, Paul had lost most of his worldly treasures. He had given all for the sake of Christ and the spread of the gospel. Notice what he asked for. Paul requested fellowship with a dear brother, copies of the Scriptures, and a jacket to stay warm. What an example of simplicity and heaven-mindedness! May we esteem the things of this world that lowly and Christ that highly.

Embedded in this request was a note that Demas had abandoned Paul. Demas's abandonment was particularly painful to Paul. The other co-laborers named in verse 10 may have moved onto other aspects of ministry, but Demas abandoned his service to the Lord. Demas had once been one of Paul's trusted coworkers along with Mark and Luke (Philemon 1:24). But he left because "he loved this present world." The last phrase stands in stark contrast to Paul's mention in verse 8 of those who have longed for Christ's appearing.

Following his request, Paul reported to Timothy also that “Alexander the coppersmith did great harm to me.” We aren’t told the details about this relationship, but we do know that this report was related to Alexander’s opposition to Paul’s message (v. 15).

? What can we learn about trusting God from Paul’s words regarding Alexander?

Paul told Timothy, “The Lord will repay him according to his works.” Evidently, this man lived in or near Ephesus because Paul warned Timothy to “watch out for him.” It seems that Paul believed this man was a danger to Timothy. Despite the wrong done, Paul made no plans to get back at this man. He didn’t concern himself with revenge. He simply trusted that Alexander would be brought to justice whenever the Lord saw fit.

God is a just judge. He upholds and executes His law perfectly and without fail. His Law is the absolute standard by which He measures all people, and He does so unflinchingly. God does not overlook sin and no transgression goes unpunished. Thus, Paul was confident that God, the just judge, would mete out the proper punishment to Alexander whenever he saw fit to do so.

? What gave Paul confidence to trust God, despite the wrong that had been done to him?

Paul knew that God would judge the sins of Alexander because the gospel tells him so. In fact, the very message Alexander opposed (the gospel of Jesus Christ) is the message that assured Paul that Alexander would be justly punished for opposing it and for the harm he did to Paul.

The gospel tells us that all people are rightly condemned for sin. “There is no one righteous” (Rom. 3:10), “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23a). But, “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). “If we confess with our mouth and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom 10:9-10). “For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13). “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom 12:2-3). These verses are known as the Roman’s Road and are one way of having a gospel conversation with people. Where do you stand today?



Application: Who are you praying for specifically that is not a Christ-follower?



Application: Share with those around you how Paul’s example and your experience help you understand God is present.

2. The Lord Stood (2 Tim. 4:16-17)

Paul faced a number of trials and tribulations throughout his work as a missionary, but it seems that one of the most difficult afflictions through which he passed were times of abandonment and loneliness. It seems that at times he felt deserted. In verse 16, he reported, “At my first defense, no one stood by me, but everyone deserted me.”

Paul made it clear that many people he had hoped he could count on had abandoned him. Although he undoubtedly felt the sting of betrayal, Paul experienced the presence of the Lord and was given strength in his time of suffering (4:17). We all experience seasons in life when other people let us down. Paul reflected the attitude of forgiveness, “May it not be counted against them” (4:16). When we count on other people and they disappoint us, we have the opportunity to trust God in a more intimate way—just as Paul did.

? What can we learn from Paul's words about the way God uses hardship for good in our lives?

God is working for the good of His people, even in what appears to be bad, negative, and even tragic. Many believers have testified that never have they grown in faith like they did when they were in the sickbed, yet we never pray for the sickbed, we pray for healing. Paul certainly didn't pray for desertion, but it was meant for his good. God bends even the most severe trials for the good of His children.

Thomas Watson wrote, "Desertion cures inordinate affection to the world. 'Love not the world.' We may hold the world as a posy in our hand, but it must not lie too near our heart. We may use it as an inn where we take a meal, but it must not be our home. Perhaps these secular things steal away the heart too much."¹

? What was Paul's comfort at a time when all people had deserted him?

Not everyone had deserted Paul. In verse 17, he said, "The Lord stood with me and strengthened me." Desertion teaches us to love not the world and to love God more. At his defense, when everyone else had abandoned him, the Lord was his comfort and the Lord was his strength. Is it possible that Paul's suffering was actually meant for his good and to make him more Christlike?

? Application: Where are you currently suffering? How might God be using this to shape you for His good purposes? Where are your friends/neighbors suffering? How can the Roman's Road and your God story help them see God?

3. The Lord Will Rescue (2 Tim. 4:18)

Finally, Paul concluded his testimony of the Lord's faithfulness by saying, "The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom."

? What did Paul mean by expressing confidence in his rescue and safety? How might this perspective encourage us as we face hardship in life?

These words did not mean that Paul would be spared physical harm. Paul suffered physically for the entirety of his ministry. Paul's statement in verse 18 had nothing to do with some sort of preoccupation for his physical well being. Paul wasn't promoting a theology of material prosperity. That false teaching has been around for a long time, but Paul eschewed it. In fact, his life was a potent counter-argument to that old lie of the serpent. God doesn't primarily want His children to be healthy and wealthy. Rather, He wants them to be holy and humble.

Instead, Paul meant that God would preserve him until it was time for him to enter heaven. He would continue to cling to Christ, trust in the gospel, and repent of sin. He would not forsake the faith or abandon Christ. He would not apostatize no matter how terrible the persecution became. Paul was confident in this because he knew that it was God who sustained him, not his own strength.

? How does God's preserving you bring Him glory?

God is a good, good Father and His arm is never too short to save; His care for those who are His cannot be thwarted. God is glorified when His children worship Him in the midst of suffering, sing praises in prison cells, and rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer as Christ. Furthermore, God's children don't accomplish incredible feats of faith in their own strength. They are preserved by God Almighty, and He will not let them fall.

? Application: How is God's eternal protection a great encouragement to you? With whom can you share this message this week?


Paul closed his letter by comparing the bleakness of his earthly circumstances with what awaited him in heaven. Like Paul, we can show that we are living the persistent Christian life when we recognize that the Lord will ultimately rescue us from every peril and evil thing in this world. We can move forward with faith and confidence knowing that no matter what our future holds, the Lord will stand with us and give us the grace and strength to endure our trials. We can experience hope as we face the end of our earthly life, knowing we have an inheritance in heaven.


Conclusion

Paul loved Timothy dearly, and he desired to see this son in the faith serving faithfully in Ephesus. This letter had one primary exhortation: preach the Word. Paul gave Timothy a variety of reasons and motivations that supported that primary emphasis. Paul chose to end his letter by turning the spotlight on the fact that the one true and living God, the God of the Word, is faithful and trustworthy. He wanted Timothy to know that he was to pitch his tent upon the ground of the power, goodness, and promises of God.

The Lord had proven Himself faithful in Paul's life, and Timothy could count on the Lord's faithfulness, too. He would be faithful to bring about justice for any wrongs done against Timothy. The Lord would stand by Timothy, even when no one else would, and strengthen him so that the gospel might be proclaimed. Finally, the Lord would bring Timothy safely into the kingdom.

? What ordinary means of grace and comfort has the Lord given to you? Are you content with what he has provided for you or do you demand more?

 Where do you feel deserted? How can Paul's words be an encouragement to you today?

 How have you experienced the Lord's preserving work in your life? If you don't yet know Him, reread the Roman's Road in your Bible and ask, "What is God saying to me?"

CHRIST CONNECTION: Because the Father turned away from Jesus on the cross, we can have confidence that He will never turn away from His people, the ones whom Jesus' work redeemed.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Christians are to show faithfulness to God through their entire lives, no matter what they face. Because of the sacrifice of Christ, we can live as faithful witnesses to the goodness of God to all we meet.



FOR NEXT WEEK

Impossible

Main Passages

- Matthew 28:16-20

Session Outline

1. The Commander (Matt. 28:16-18)
2. The Commission (Matt. 28:19-20a)
3. The Comfort (Matt. 28:20b)

Memorize

¹⁷ But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that I might fully preach the word and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

- 2 Timothy 4:17, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - 2 Timothy 4:9-19
- Tuesday - James 1:2-4
- Wednesday - 1 Corinthians 15:58
- Thursday - Hebrews 10:23
- Friday - Romans 8:37-39
- Saturday - Revelation 3:10-11

References

¹Watson, Thomas. *All Things for Good*. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1986.