

2 Timothy 4:9-22

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Preacher: Rev Murdo Alex Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Let us turn now to the chapter we read in God's Word, the second epistle of Paul to Timothy, chapter 4, and we'll deal with the final passage in this chapter from verse 9 to the end of the chapter, perhaps paying particular attention to verses 17 at verse 16.

At my first answer no man stood with me but all men forsook me. I pray that God may not lay to the charge, notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, that by me the preacher might be fully known, that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered at the mouth of the lion, the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, for whom be glory forever and ever. So on.

I mentioned last Sabbath evening that this would be the concluding address on our attempts at studying together the second letter of Paul to Timothy. As I mentioned, it has taken three months with one break, one Sabbath evening break, the first Sabbath of the year. And I must say that for myself, it might not be the case with you, but for me, I didn't feel it all that long really. And in many respects, I have found it very rewarding.

Let us remind ourselves that this letter was written by Paul as he waited in prison in Rome, waiting for what seemed to be and what turned out to be his death by martyrdom.

Paul was in a very perilous situation. And knowing that the burden of directing the affairs of the church would fall upon the shoulders of this young man, Timothy, he wrote a letter to him to encourage him and to warn him the other people of the need to be faithful to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 0 8] And now, nearing the end of the letter, he reviews, as it were, thinking of his own imminent departure from this life into the next. He reviews his past life as an evangelist, as a preacher, as a minister, as a believer.

And he says of it, I have fought a good fight. I have run the race. I have kept the faith. And then he assesses his present situation. And he says, I am on the point of being poured out.

My life strength is ebbing away. My energies are ebbing away. I am being poured out like an offering, like a sacrifice in the service of God. And then he anticipates the future, the eternity to which he is going.

And he looks forward with great anticipation to that day where he says, a crown of righteousness is laid up for me. It awaits me as I get ready to depart this sin, as I leave this life, and as I set sail for eternity.

The time of my departure is at hand. And I look forward to what awaits me. And I suggested to you last Sabbath that this may be, this would be a wonderful way for any one of us confronted with the inevitability of death, as we all are. It would be a very wonderful way to look forward with anticipation, with an element of excitement to the journey from time to eternity.

[5 : 1 3] Have you ever wondered, for example, at the sheer wonder that must flow into the spirit of a man who goes from time into heaven?

The sheer wonder that must fill his soul as he contemplates the glory and the blessedness of the place for which he has been preparing in his life and at which he has now arrived.

Well, I think that's the way Paul looked at things. But then there's another side to this. Actually, in that prison, as he wrote this letter, and as he thought of the death that awaited him and the heaven that beckoned, was he a man without any problems, without any difficulties, without any anxieties?

No, he wasn't. This final section of the letter reminds us of the very humanness of this man.

We are not to think that when a person, if a person longs for heaven, that he has escaped all the difficulties in his life, this passage makes it very clear that Paul had not escaped these difficulties.

[6 : 52] He is a man who is aware of real, temporal and spiritual needs. He is a man who feels very keenly the cold of that dark and dank dungeon in Rome.

He is a man who is not looking forward to an approaching winter, with not a sufficient clothing, an adequate clothing, to keep him warm.

So he asks Timothy to bring a heavy cloak to him to keep him warm in the winter. He is a man who is experiencing the agony of loneliness.

Do thy diligence to come to me as quickly as you can and certainly trying to come before winter. And if you can, take Mark with you, because only Luke is with me here.

He is a man who felt the pain of being stabbed in the back. One of his very trusty companions in the Christian faith, Dimas, had forsaken him, having, as he says, loved this present world.

[8 : 17] Together with that, he has reminded Timothy and us in chapter 1, all they who were in Asia have forsaken me. And when I stood, he says, here to defend myself from the presence of the Roman authorities, no man stood by me.

I was on my own. He felt loneliness. He felt the pain of being stabbed in the back.

He was left in the lodge by the friends whom he had in Rome, because he did have Christian friends in Rome, as he tells at the end of this chapter, Eubulus greets thee, Pudence and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren, all the Christians here in Rome, send you greetings.

But none of them came to my defence when I had to appear before the Roman authority. And then, of course, he felt the pain of a man like Alexander the coppersmith, a man who, like himself, had preached the gospel and defended the faith, who had abandoned the faith, who had become a sort of, who had grasped on him, who had informed the Roman authorities about Paul, and who was probably responsible for the second arrest and the second imprisonment.

He has done me, he says, much harm. He now opposes the truth. You watch him, he says. When you come to Rome, you be careful. If you come across that man, Alexander the coppersmith, be on your guard against that man.

[9 : 57] Well, you see, as you look at the passage and as you discover these things, you recognise that he was a man who was confronted with the problems that you and I have here tonight.

And I'm sure that, in some way or another, we can identify ourselves with these problems as we look at them and apply them in the course of this service.

First of all, the problem being stabbed in the back, being left in the lurch, caused by the defections of two men who are mentioned here in verses 10 and 14 and 15, Demas and Alexander the coppersmith.

Now, Demas was a man, as I said earlier, who was a very close companion with Paul in the work of the gospel. And Paul felt the pain of his defection.

We know from the epistle to the Colossians and from the letter to Philemon or Philemon that he had assisted Paul in the gospel ministry.

[11 : 03] Twice, we are told, he had visited him in Rome during his first imprisonment. He was very spiritually favoured and very active in the work of the gospel.

Yet, that did not make him immune from the danger of making shipwreck of the Christian testimony. You see, Christian friendship and Christian fellowship are no guarantees of infallible protection from the evil of this present world.

And that's how he puts it. Demas, he says, hath forsaken me having loved this present evil world and has departed unto Thessalonica.

Now, that's a very solemn statement indeed. You see, what had happened to Demas was this. He had been overtaken by the spirit of the age, the love of the world.

And those of you who know that the order of which the New Testament places the three great dangers confronting us in this life, the world, the flesh, and the devil, will recognise that it's not without reason that they're put in that order the world, the spirit of the world, the spirit of the age, the allurements of this world, the enticements of the world, the materialism, that's so much a part and partial of the make-up of each one of us.

[12 : 42] This thing in which we are always grabbing, grabbing, grabbing, wanting to get as much as we possibly can of this world, what this world offers and the world offers a lot.

The world that is ruled by the spirit of darkness and distortion and error and evil, the world that is opposed to the gospel of Christ, the world doesn't want the gospel.

And here was Demas, involved in the work of the gospel, a close friend of Timothy, and no doubt engaged in one way or another in prosecuting the cause of Christ, in propagating the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, you should say.

Here he was and now he was overtaken by the spirit of the world or the spirit of the age. He had been caught up in it and as someone put it, this world has a very corrosive influence on people and very often it does it without knowing and his mind, his thinking, his attitudes, his desires, his will were drawn away with such tragic consequences.

And notice the consequences is drawn in this chapter. Paul says that he looks forward to heaven and I says I'm going to get the crown of righteousness from the Lord himself and not only I but all those who love his appearing.

[14 : 19] You see those whose hearts are set on heaven will receive the crown and here was a man whose heart was won to the world he loved the world.

See the contrast? Loving the appearing of Christ and loving this world. What one would say here is this that we cannot emphasize too forcefully the importance of living close to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's a very telling phrase in the New Testament concerning Peter. When Peter denied our Lord in the hall of the high priest the New Testament puts it like this Peter followed him afar off and there are some people in the Christian church on almost the periphery of the Christian church who are like that they're following afar off they are neither here nor there they are neither wholeheartedly committed to the cause of Christ nor do they seem to be altogether overtaken by the world but sooner or later they will be overtaken as Peter was and he denied his Lord with cursing and swearing in the presence of his enemies well the same thing happened to Demas he was overtaken and you and I have to be on our guard and if we are going to be real about our Christian commitment and our Christian profession we must cling closely to Christ the second illustration of this was in the life of the man called

Alexander the coppersmith and this is what he says of him in verses 14 and 15 he did me much evil the Lord reward him according to his work of whom thou be aware also for he has greatly withstood our words now it's not very clear whether this Alexander the coppersmith is the same man who's referred to in the book of Acts or not but there's one thing certain at one stage the way Paul puts it here he was shoulder to shoulder with Paul impressed the same teachings believed the same teachings proclaimed the same Christian teachings and then he started opposing the very teachings that he used to teach and he used to confess himself and he said he has done great harm to me you know there is nothing that does greater harm in the

Christian church than men and women and boys and girls who used to embrace these Christian teachings and who now oppose them who used to confess them and who now deny them I was reading recently the biography of a man I won't mention here a man who was a great churchman in this century and he started off as a very enthusiastic evangelical minister in a particular denomination Christian and as a result of his experiences during the war the first world war he began to question the things that teach at the very heart of the Christian faith and he ended up as one of the most liberal theologians that Scotland has ever known a man who was almost on the verge of becoming a communist you see he opposed the truth and he did tremendous harm in the church and to the church and people like that have their followers you see they begin their own movement and people enter into that movement and it marshals just because they oppose the truth have you ever noticed this if the

[18 : 52] Christian church in any community stands up on a public issue and takes its stance on the truth of God have you ever noticed how you will always find someone who will stand up to oppose the church and oppose the truth and whether it any bother at all will gather many followers to them well that seems as though that's what Alexander the coppersmith did he opposed Paul and he says he has done me much harm and there are many people who believe that he was responsible for informing honour and grassing to the Roman authorities and be responsible for bringing him back into prison and ultimately to death ah my friend you and I don't realise the power that the devil has to dispose watch him says Paul be very very careful and you and I have to watch people who oppose the truth because they will do anything to trip you up and they will do anything to oppose the gospel of Christ they will do anything to lay traps in the way of

Christians who don't see and who don't realise how they work and they will do anything to betray the cause of Christ to his enemies you know that the devil does use means because there's one thing the devil hates the gospel he hates the gospel and he will use all his cunning to obstruct the progress of the gospel he will try to silence the church and he will try to persecute individuals in the church and it's very difficult at times to oppose the power of evil at work against the gospel remember

I told you before of the man who said to me once when he was a student in university you know he said if you ever end up as a minister somewhere and I end up in the same community as you in my own chosen profession I will do everything my power to resist the cause that you represent you know there are many people like that and for all I know I hope that there are no such in this village night but who knows but that there may be people here who are prepared at any cost to oppose the truth listen to what Paul says about him the Lord he says reward him according to his works what is he doing here well he was just leaving Alexander the coppersmith in the hand of the judge who is God himself and

Paul knew as he tells us in the letter to the Corinthians that every one of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive our reward according to what we have done whether we have been on the side of the truth or opposed to the truth and you and I I think it is not true to say that you and I tend to live today as though there was to be no judgment as though none of us was to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and yet we all will and the Lord will reward us as he sees it and he sees us as no one else does my friend may I leave it at this are you on the side of the truth or are you opposed to it are you helping the cause of Christ or hindering its progress where do you stand tonight are you part of this movement or are you outside it obstructing it well one day you will answer for the stand that you take the next item that

Paul deals with here is this item of loneliness you know he says try and come to me he says as quickly as you can in verse 9 verse 11 only Luke is with me verse 16 at my first answer that is when he stood before the Roman tribunal no man stood with me but all men forsook me I'm sure that you and I know what loneliness is there are some people and I think this is true that perhaps the loneliest place the greatest sense of loneliness you will ever have is when you're part of a crowd I've heard some people say that when they walked for example with the teeming masses in the city of London that they never felt so lonely in all their life you know what it is to feel alone no one perhaps to talk to

[24 : 31] I wish I could speak about this to someone you say in a particular experience but you can't there's no one to whom you can turn and here's this man and you can enter into the very humanness of his feelings christen he says and titus and titicus they've gone off they were engaged in misery enterprise and here he was in prison all right there were friends in the church in Rome but he felt very much alone there is a tremulous note as someone put it in this world only Luke is with and that was the Christian doctor who played such a prominent part in the Christian movement in the first century and the comradeship and the companionship of Luke must have been one bright spot in Paul's encircling gloom and so he longs for his dear friend

Timothy to come to him he longs to speak to him he longs to give him personal encouragement he urges him to come before winter so he was saying to him if you don't come then it will probably be too late and I think that this folks attention for us on this and I just want to make this point moving on to something else the importance of Christian friendship as we journey on from time to eternity you see it is in the mercy of God that he provides for you and for me friends at the natural and at the spiritual level and this is needed it is necessary that you and I have friends especially in times of stress and trial and strain a confidant you know that

Peter and James and John were very close and they compared notes and they conversed very often and they talked about their varied experiences Jesus had the three of them himself Peter James and John in whom he confided he told them things that he didn't tell anybody else in times of great stress for example in Gethsemane he told them about the sorrow and the burden of his heart and he told them to pray with him of course they failed and what I would say to you here tonight is this don't go through this alone I know that there are times when you're tempted to withdraw almost from people and from company we all know what that is I told you the story already and I told you very recently about Charles

Wesley I think I told it since I started these studies when he was very depressed coming back from a preaching engagement and he felt his life and his total failure and he decided right I'm not from now on I'm going to be on my own we all feel like that from time to time great great provisions Christian friendship Timothy says come and see me as quickly as you can don't be long take mark with you

I feel so alone only Luke is with me you know you can understand the way he felt so may I leave it like that if the Lord Jesus Christ valued Christian friendship are you here tonight without that kind of friendship if you had a spiritual problem tonight is there someone of course apart from the Lord of course you go to the Lord in the first instance but it's great to be able to unburden yourself to someone else can you do it do you have someone or are you outside the circle of the Christian church remember what I told you some time ago the old minister in Glasgow his heart was full of Christ after a communion service in his church on a

[29 : 46] Sabbath morning when the member sitting at the table and the adherents sitting beyond the table he stood up to make the intimations and he made the intimations I can still picture him fingering his collar and saying to the unconverted sitting out with the table ah my dear friends he says why do you sit out there the cold come into the warmth of Christian fellowship and you know there's a lot to be said for it cultivate it value it hold on to it and many a day you'll derive great help and comfort from it and as he felt this loneliness he also felt the cold you know he says bring with you the cloak I left and throw us and bring with you also the books and the parchments especially the parchments which I left behind and here you can understand how the the the the problems that he was having the difficulties that were confronting him the prison was probably

I don't know where the prison was but we all know from history that they weren't very comfortable he certainly had many privileges in this prison and he didn't have the privilege of central heating or probably of any kind of heat and he was desperate he was feeling the cold desperately an old man remember I told you he was only about 60 right enough but he had been serving Christ for 30 years and you know we know the experience that he had in the service of Jesus how all these experiences had left their mark he was feeling the cold bring to me the cloak that I left in thrones and bring to me the books that I left behind in verse 13 bring the books but especially the parchments now of course we don't know what the books were but in all probability it would have been a copy of part of the Old Testament scriptures perhaps notes from he had heard of others of what Jesus had said maybe notes of letters he had written himself and notes that he had taken concerning the great doctrines of the Christian faith and here was a man who valued reading and studying and getting to grips with the things of God well perhaps the application is too self-evident here in a day when reading is not the done thing

I'm sure the teachers here tonight would agree with me here the problems that they have themselves with children they don't read nowadays they watch television they watch videos and they play with a computer but reading that's another thing in days gone by when young children would go to bed maybe and sit and read a book perhaps many of them today have the television in their own rooms television is on the books aren't read the bible isn't read the bible isn't learned we know so little about the Christian faith about Christian doctrine 20 years ago if a man came into this pulpit and other pulpit and teach heresy I believe it would be more quickly spotted than it would be today by the rising generation you know that you and I need to read books need to get a grip of the bible

I said something last week which was mistaken and misapplied and misrepresented does is often the kiss I referred to last week about testimonies and some people look that up as though I was finally full with testimonies I do no such thing I applaud I rejoice in the person who has a testimony to give but you got to move on from that that's the point I was making you move on from these things you get to grips with things move on by getting rid as much as you can of the word of God and of books and good books that are based upon the word of God Paul valued that towards the end of his life nearing heaven and he still wanted to study still wanted to read still wanted to learn and then and this finally the reference he has here to the helping hand that he got from the testament that he makes gives to the helping hand of God nevertheless he said in spite of all that in spite of all my loneliness and all that when I stood before the tribunal the Roman court

I was allowed to have an advocate I was allowed to call witnesses that was a practice but he says no one stood with me I couldn't call on anyone to help me but he says the Lord stood by me and the Lord helped me not even his friends in Rome came to his assistance as I mentioned there's one thing I want to say in connection with this Paul wrote a letter to the Philippians during his first imprisonment in Rome and he told them that his great desire in life was to know the Lord Jesus Christ this he says is what I am preoccupied with I want to know personally the fellowship of his sufferings and the power of his resurrection and here he was perhaps a year or two after that and little did he know to what extent he was going to enter into the sufferings of Christ here he is now when he knows what it is as never before what to feel alone what to feel alone means he knows as never before the sufferings of life and the persecution and the denial and the stabbing in the back and being left in the lurch by people used to stand shoulder to shoulder with him did

[36 : 37] Jesus not know this from Judas Iscariot from Simon Peter was it not Jesus said I looked on my right hand and viewed but none to know me well I looked on my left there was no one there to answer I cry to thee I said thou art my help and the heavens were clothed the Lord forsook him for a and here's Paul all alone but he says the Lord helped me the Lord stood by me and strengthened me do you know what this is do you know what it is to be able to say in this world well there's one thing I know the Lord has been with me remember what

Sam said as we sang here tonight though me my parents both should leave the Lord will me uptake that's what he's saying here the Lord stood by me and strengthened me Jesus said I am not alone but the Father is with me Paul here says the same thing now then this is the point what did that strengthening enable him to do it enabled me he says to preach the gospel that by me the preaching of the kerygma might be fully known so that all the Gentiles heard and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion oh how typical this is of Paul there he is right before the Roman tribunal accused by his enemies he looks and he appeals for witnesses to his defense none is an advocate here who stands with me no then he feels the

Lord strengthening him grace is given to him power is given and what does he do he preaches the gospel and the word that is used here for the word kerygma that is the gospel in its entirety God's provision for a lost world the provision of a saviour a Christ who came into this world in our nature a Christ who took out sins who suffered who died who was buried who rose again who ascended who is at the right hand of God and who is going to come again to the end of his life in a prison in

Rome and he's doing the same thing he was living for Christ living that he might proclaim Christ and he took this last opportunity so the Gentiles heard the story of the gospel yet again and he says the Lord delivered me out of the mouth of the lion we're not told what this was it could be a reference to Nero that he was allowed free from that particular appearance or hearing it may have been a reference to death that he wasn't put to death that day it may have been a reference to the devil the lion the devil like a roaring lion and whatever it was the devil was behind it because the devil was trying to destroy the gospel and the more he tried to destroy Paul the more the gospel was preached and the more heard it and no doubt the more were converted to that's the history of the world here we are 1994 people still trying to oppose the gospel people still trying to destroy the church and destroy the gospel and discredit the gospel and ridicule the gospel that's not true this isn't true that's not what the

Bible means see what the devil is doing working away year after year and century after century and he's failed and the gospel the kerygma the story of the salvation of Christ is still with us and it's the only remedy for you my friend to know as a sinner God meets you in the depth of your need as a sinner with the gospel of his grace and he will never ever give you another message because there is no other remedy I was delivered he says and I know that the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom you see what it does when the Lord strengthens you that encourages you to go on to face the next emergency the next difficulty the next trial and if you take the opportunity that

[42 : 28] God gives you and speak in his name you may say oh well I can't say very much and I can't do very much well say what you can and do what you can because that will strengthen you for the next opportunity you know that there are many people who don't take a stand in the sight of Christ because at heart they're cowards that's what it is a spirit said to his open air audience who were laughing at him it takes a coward to laugh it takes a man to make the stand on the side of Jesus Christ you remember that and the next time you hear someone speak in the name of Christ or the next time you see someone making a stand in his name and confessing his name you slink away my friend in the spirit of shame that you ought to fear and not with the laugh of the coward on your lips and the sneer of the coward on your face it takes a man to be a follower of

Christ you remember that the Lord is it strengthen me and I know that he will deliver me there's confidence for you and that he will deliver me and preserve me unto the coming of his heavenly kingdom what's he say I know he said that one day and very soon the Lord is going to usher me away from this evil world into his kingdom he has kept me hitherto I know he will keep me to the end and very soon he will bring me there's a confidence for you there's confidence in a man facing death and an awful death martyrdom in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ now then where have all your privileges taken you where do you stand tonight as you and I look back over this epistle that we are studying and here he ends when he says grace be to you he says from the

Lord Jesus Christ glory be to him he says in verse 18 to whom be glory forever and ever you see what he does Timothy the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit grace be with you from him may he give you strength day by day but may he be given glory see what he's saying as someone summed it up grace from Christ and glory to Christ and that's I said often enough to you this is exactly how Jesus lived to this world and this is how he died he died to the glory of God father he says glorify thy name and he died for the good of men may the blessing of God come upon this lost world that's what Jesus was in this world for to win the favor and the grace of God for men so that through that glory would return to

God as you and I step out these doors tonight is this why we live remember the short of catechism what does achieve end what does man achieve end to glorify God and enjoy him forever what did Paul do for to glorify God and to enjoy him and here he is now in the throes of death what he say glory be to Christ and may grace from him come to you ah my friend there's a martyr for life remember it the two G's glory to Christ and grace to men and now the epistle is closed and as you look back on it what has it been saying to you and to me tonight this you and

I live in a difficult and a dangerous world perilous times when the gospel is being attacked from every side from the authority of the bible is being challenged and when men and women and boys and girls are being ridiculed for accepting the bible as the word of god same days what does this letter say to you it says to you what it said to Timothy be courageous be bold don't be ashamed defend the truth confess the name of Jesus and fight the good fight and don't give up what god has placed in your hands and you've got a bible like i have tonight read it get to know the lord in it and through it enter into a relationship of love with him and identify yourself with those who love his name and who seek the extension of his kingdom and you step out in faith and trust and commitment don't turn right or left never mind what the enemies of the cause say to you but the bible you believe it because it is god's word to you guard it defend it and proclaim it let us pray bless lord thy word help us to cleave to thyself and to know that thou art our god and our king and our savior and be with us this night and part us with thy blessing and forgive our sins for

[49 : 29] Jesus sake amen does so sins O are done Ê please ■■■ are the should enjoy us sus hearts these are