

“Christ Always Faithful”
2 Timothy 4:17-18
(Preached at Trinity, December 4, 2022)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verses 9-22** Paul covers a variety of topics. The main focus deals with Paul’s situation in prison and his personal needs. The section opens and closes with almost the same statements by Paul – “Come to me as soon as you are able.”
Paul was in the Mamertine Prison. It was cold and damp and winter was coming to Rome, when the bone-chilling cold would become unbearable. Paul pleads with Timothy, “**Make every effort to come before winter.**”
2. In between these verses Paul gives a chronicle of those who had helped him as well as a listing of those who had abandoned him.
 - A. Paul felt abandoned and forsaken as he faced his accusers alone — “**At my first defense no one supported me.**”
He considered many of these his close friends. He had probably spent many hours ministering to them - teaching them from God’s Word, praying for them, visiting them while they were sick. But when he needed them, they could not be found.
 - B. And then, as a glorious reminder to us all. In spite of his personal hardships and the abandonment he had experienced, one thing remained consistent and unchanging:
2 Timothy 4:17-18 NAU - "But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.
¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen."
3. Paul’s source of peace, comfort, and strength did not rest upon the faithfulness of men but on the faithfulness of God.
Our lives are full of difficulties, hardships, and constant change. Friends are sometimes fickle. Success is often short lived. Satan is constantly assaulting us to draw us off course. But in every difficulty our Savior is strong on our behalf.
Paul understood that he was never truly alone and never abandoned. Though all men may fail us, Jesus Christ is always faithful.
4. This morning I’ll bring to a close this series of sermons on 2 Timothy. What better way to end the letter than to consider the faithfulness of Christ.

- I. He is faithful in His presence – “But the Lord stood with me”
- A. Paul is lamenting in **Verse 16** – “no one supported me”
1. Empire wide persecution of the church had begun. Paul was on trial for his life. He might have stood before Nero himself. The court would have been filled with spectators – but none of them were on Paul’s side. Looking up at the crowd, he couldn’t pick out a single friendly face. Paul stood alone and deserted.
 2. But in **Verse 17** Paul makes it clear that he was not alone. Paul gives the powerful contrast – “But the Lord stood with me”
 - a. There are countless people who are lonely, forsaken
Some have lost a spouse
The loneliness of the empty nest
The loneliness of those abandoned in nursing homes or prisons
 - b. But the Christian is never alone
 3. God has promised His abiding presence in every situation
Matthew 10:19-20 NAU - "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. ²⁰ "For it is not you who speak, but *it is* the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."
Matthew 28:20 NAU - "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
Hebrews 13:5-6 NAU - "Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," ⁶ so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?"
Psalms 145:18 NAU - "The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth."
- B. The Christian is never alone
1. The very name of our Lord assures His aiding presence
Matthew 1:23 NAU - "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."
 2. For Christians this is more than just His omnipresence – He is with us in His sympathizing favor.
- C. Knowing His abiding presence should have two primary effects upon how we live
1. It should give us absolute confidence in every situation – Our Almighty Savior is always with us
 2. It should keep us watchful and ever mindful of our duty before our Lord
Revelation 2:1-2 NAU - "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ² 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them *to be* false;'"

- II. He is faithful in His provision – "and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear"
- A. We have already seen that Paul saw his life as a Divine mission.
1. He was sent by Christ as the Apostle to the Gentiles.
 2. He was empowered to carry out the work.
 3. You can imagine the natural fear Paul must have felt as he stood before his accusers – Paul saw it as an opportunity to preach.
 - a. Paul saw God’s direction in his life in every circumstance – Nothing is by accident – even our trials are to His glory.
 - b. Paul saw his imprisonment as an opportunity to bring the gospel to others.
Philippians 1:12 NAU - "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,"
 - c. And Paul knew that in every situation God strengthened him.
- B. God always equips us for our work – He always provides.
1. He has filled us with the Holy Spirit.
 - a. The word “strengthen” is from ἐνδυναμώω – lit. “with power”
 - b. Jesus promised us
Acts 1:8 NAU - "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you"
 2. Each of us are equipped differently
 - a. There are pastors and deacons.
 - b. Some are gifted in music.
 - c. Some are particularly gifted to work with youth.
 - d. Some are gifted with children.
 - e. Some have the gift of service – laboring for the church.
 - f. Some have the gift of mercy – oversee benevolence
- III. He is faithful in His protection – "and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen."
- A. “Lion’s mouth” was a common figure of great danger
1. David used the metaphor
Psalms 22:21 NAU - "Save me from the lion's mouth; From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me."
 2. It recalls Daniel’s rescue from the lions
Daniel 6:16 NAU - "Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. "
Daniel 6:21-22 NAU - "Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever! ²² "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me"
 3. Paul may have been thinking of Nero.
It also points to our mortal enemy, Satan.
1 Peter 5:8 NAU - "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

- B. On one hand this points to our ultimate deliverance
1. Nothing in this life can rob us of our eternal hope
 2. Paul continually taught this great truth
Romans 8:38-9:1 NAU - "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. "
- C. On the other hand, this points to our mighty physical protection as we serve Him
1. If you see your life as a mission for the glory of His Kingdom then you must be aware of His protection.
 2. Nothing shall keep you from completing your appointed work
 - a. Why wasn't Paul killed in the numerous other life-threatening events?
2 Corinthians 11:25-26 NAU - "Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. ²⁶ *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;"
 - b. God consistently delivered him – **See Acts 16:22-26**
 - c. Christians often demonstrate by their continual fear that they don't truly trust in a Sovereign, Omnipotent God.
 Practical Atheism.
 - d. Paul told Timothy earlier in this letter
2 Timothy 1:7-8 NAU - "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. ⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,"
 3. It is important to note that God protected Paul as he gave himself in service to Christ.
2 Timothy 4:17 NAU - "But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear"

- IV. He is faithful in His preservation – "and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen."
- A. This is the claim of every Christian
Jude 1:1 NAU - "Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ:"
Psalm 37:28 NAU - "For the LORD loves justice And does not forsake His godly ones; They are preserved forever"
1. Paul continued to press on because God was preserving him.
 - a. What was the difference between Demas and Paul?
 - b. What was the difference between Judas and Peter?
 Both betrayed Jesus
Luke 22:31-32 NAU - "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat; ³² but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."
 2. While men are prone to wander, prone to flee danger and distress, God is able to keep His own.
 3. Our salvation is God's work, not our work - something that God has accomplished – it is by the power of God.
- B. The Church of our Lord has often been thrown into severe distress
1. He has promised us that He will deliver us from our trials
John 16:33-17:1 NAU - "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."
 2. He is mighty to save His own
 God will be faithful to complete that which He has begun
Philippians 1:6 NAU - "*For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

Conclusion:

1. He is worthy of our praise – "to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen."
 In the midst of the prison Paul could still sing forth the praises of God.
 He had done the same throughout his ministry
Acts 16:25 NAU - "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;"
2. Are you living continually conscious of the faithfulness of God on your behalf?
 Are you continually aware of His presence, His provision, His protection, and His preservation?
3. These things only apply to His servants. We must never presume upon them. But to have a confidence in them should draw from us great praise and worship.
 "to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen."