

We're reading 2 Timothy chapter 4 this morning, and it is good to see you all this morning. 2 Timothy chapter 4, and verses 9-22. It's the last week on 2 Timothy, you've done it, you've made it through this amazing epistle. Let me quickly read to you, and let's pay careful attention for this is the word of God.

[Read: 2 Timothy 4:9-22

'Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus. Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.']

Let's quickly pray.

[Prayer: Father, we are gathered here this morning to open up Your word, to learn from Your word this morning Father. Father we want to know You and we want to develop and deepen our relationship with You this morning. We want Your Spirit to come and reveal the truths of Your Scripture to us. We want our hearts to be renewed we want our spirits to be revived and we want to see Your glory O' God. So, this morning we pray, bless Your word, and guide us by Your Spirit through Your word, we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.]

As you've gone through 2 Timothy and, by the way, let me just quickly note it takes you 11 minutes to read through the whole of 2 Timothy. I would really encourage you to try that, just read from beginning to end, you'll find it very useful actually.

But as you've gone through 2 Timothy, I'm not sure what are the key themes that have stood out to you in 2 Timothy. But as I've tried to read through it the past weeks, the 2 themes that stand out to me is 1) Perseverance, and 2) the Second coming of Christ. And we're going to see how these two are so linked. Having our eyes focussed on Christ and Him coming back is so linked to our perseverance. And actually, as we have just read Paul is so focussed that the Lord stands by him and the Lord strengthens Him. But the question is where has Paul got this theology from? Where is this understanding of God came from and how God is working in him. So, I want us to turn quickly to John chapter 14 and it's an amazing chapter, John chapter 14 to 17 they are great chapters, I recommend them to be read. But if we read John chapter 14 from verse 8.

[Read John 14:8-11, 15-23

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. [...] "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to

us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.]

So, you can turn back to 2 Timothy now. But this is very much the understanding that we need to have when it comes to how do we carry on persevering in the Christian walk. We need to remember that it was by grace that we were saved, and it is by grace that we are sustained. Nothing changes. Paul would say in Galatians to those who were foolish, who would understand they were saved by the Spirit, they were saved by grace, but then they tried to continue in works, and that is not how it is meant to be done. You were saved by grace, and you will be sustained, and you will be preserved by grace. And that is the teaching of Paul in 2 Timothy as you go the whole way through it.

He says, ‘Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds’ (v14). So often its so easy for us as Christians that when someone mocks us for believing or even if it is nothing to do with our faith, but someone does us harm, we want to get our own back, we want to get even, we want to avenge ourselves. But for the believer who trusts in Jesus Christ and His second coming and the day of judgment, we do not take matters into our own hands, we leave it for the one who will always avenge us, and, by the way, He will avenge better than we will. Because when we avenge, we don’t do it in a righteous manner, we always do it with sin at the heart. So, if anyone harms you, leave it for the Judge to avenge one day.

But maybe He hasn’t got our best interests at heart. That’s the lie that has always been believed by humanity, that God doesn’t quite care for us. That really, He hasn’t got our best interests at heart. That’s the first lie that Satan said in the garden, “what you can’t eat of that tree, wow he mustn’t have your best interests at heart... he’s restricting you”, is the lie that Satan has always told.

But here for Paul there is something stronger for Paul, that He can go through persecution. He says in verse 16, ‘At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me.’ This is that Paul is now in Rome and he has stood trial once, and when he stood trial everyone in the church at Rome, they all backed off and they all pretended “oh I don’t know him, no no no, Paul? Don’t even know the name.” And they wanted nothing to do

[with him], they didn't want to be associated because they didn't want to be persecuted. How is it that a whole church can fail to stand in their faith, and yet Paul so strongly, he manages to stand, he manages to persevere? Well, this is as we read in John 14, that when Jesus left, what happened was we didn't lose Jesus and exchange Him for the Spirit. Jesus went, the Spirit came, and then the Father and the Son made their home in us. It wasn't we traded one for one, we traded one and we got three. That is why Jesus says, "oh it's better for me to go" (John 16:7). And for Paul as he goes through 2 Timothy, Paul is really trying to get at and he does this in all his epistles, that we have a union with Christ. That is by the Spirit of God we are united to Christ. In fact, that is the new man that Paul would talk about, put off the old self, that is the sinful self and let the new creation be made manifested. Did you notice that Judas, not Iscariot as it has in brackets, but Judas asks how will you manifest yourself? (John 14:22) And He says when the Spirit comes, we'll make our home in you. You see 2 Corinthians 5 verse 17 says "therefore, if you are in Christ you are a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come." That is, so often we sometimes think the old is being renewed, the old is not being renewed but removed. And the renewal is the manifestation of the new creation in us. Now if we get that, and we understand that we are a new creation, we are no longer alone but we are united to Christ, then we get the words of Paul, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). That will do wonders for us as we face difficulty. For Paul he can say 'the Lord stood by me and strengthened me' (v17), it is not that we are trying in our own power to just look at Christ and keep persevering, it is that Christ Himself now dwells in us by the Spirit. If it was left to our own strength we would fail, but because Christ is the one empowering us, we will not. Now the old self might cling on to us, and that's why Pauls says put it off. It is against your identity now that you are in Christ. Understand that the Lord He doesn't just stand by you, next to you, no no no, the Lord dwells in you. And that is what should encourage you to persevere. The Spirit is with you. Remember chapter 1 you have not got a Spirit of fear but of power and of love (1:7), it is the Spirit of the Son. It was the same Spirit that was in Christ Jesus, that is the Spirit of God, and that same Spirit dwells in you. And this is why Paul can look at his persecutions and say, 'the Lord stood by me and strengthened me' (v17). And that he can have his mind set on the task of the Gospel, for he says, 'so that through me the message might be fully

proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.’ (v17) This is what we call the providence of God, that God in His sovereignty, He will always work out, always whether it is suffering, whether any evil is happening, God will always work out things for good. So that Paul could stand there, and he knows he’s going to die. If you cast your mind to Philippians chapter 1 there Paul is saying it is better for me to die so that I can be with Christ, yet I believe I will remain, because Christ wants me to continue teaching you (1:23-25). But this is different now in 2 Timothy, Paul realises this is it, at the next trial they will condemn me and then they will kill me. And yet he is so confident and positive about it. Why? Well, he told us in 2 Timothy chapter 2 he said, ‘Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory’ (2:10). Paul does not weaken in the face of persecution, for Paul knows the Sovereignty of God and that God’s will, will always work out for good. He knows I’m not here because God has deserted me, no I am here because God is with me, and God is empowering me to spread the Gospel. It is my union with Christ that means I will not give up, but I will persevere for Christ gives me the grace to keep on going. He says, ‘so I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.’ (vv17-18)

Let me quickly read for you Psalm 121. Psalm 121 the psalmist writes:

‘I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.’

The Lord will keep us because we are in union with Him now, for the Spirit has come and now the Father and the Son have made their home in us. And what the Spirit is doing is making manifest Christ in me, and that’s for every single believer. That we would be empowered in our Christian walk, that Christ would come to the forefront.

But there's a warning, because understanding what Paul understands, that we are now united to Christ, we are now a new identity, and a new creation, we need to understand something, you cannot walk like the old anymore. In fact, if you walk only like the old, then Paul really questions whether you are the new. Do not be like Demas in verse 10. Paul writes 'For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me'. Has Demas just forsaken Paul, or has he forsaken the faith? Well, there's two clues I think that lead us to understand that as far as Paul is concerned Demas is not saved. And that is that Demas is not the only one to desert Paul in this chapter, notice in verse 10, Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me', verse 16, 'At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me.' There's two people here who have deserted, but only one of them does Paul say they deserted me because they loved the world. And what Paul is doing here is he's contrasting it. We will need to skip back a little to last week, just the end verse of verse 8. He says, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.' Different translations might say 'longed for his appearing' but loved his appearing. And it's the same Greek word here, *agapao*. It is in verse 8, 'that all who have loved (*agapao*) his appearing' and then in verse 10, 'for Demas in love (*agapao*) with this world', Paul is making a strong contrast, you either love the world or you love Christ, but you cannot love both. And if you have a union now with Christ, the righteous one, then we expect to see righteous works come through you. For it is no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me. And yet Demas, how is it that he has forsaken? How is it that we see friends and family members walk away? The question always faces us was the person ever saved? And for Paul, I think, he knows the words of Jesus, he spent time alone and was ministered to by Jesus (Gal 1:12, 15-18). And Mark chapter 4 it is the parable of the sower, and Jesus would say that there would be some seeds that would fall on rocky ground, and for those who fell on rocky ground what would happen was that there would be no root. And they would rejoice at first because of the Gospel, but when tribulation and persecution came they would fall away. It is the plant without any root that when the storm comes it just drags it away. And we won't see that until the storm comes. In fact, if you go 50 years without the storm you might think there's a root, but it's only when the storm comes that we see it had no root, it's only when the storm

comes that we see it does have a root. For Demas there was no root, for Paul there was. For he was in union with Christ, that's where he got his strength. He was rooted in Christ, not outside of Christ.

And we need to be so careful that we do not detach the Gospel from the benefits of the Gospel. We cannot detach the privileges and the benefits of the Gospel from the person of the Gospel, who is Christ. Because actually the truth is, only an insane person would not rejoice at the privileges of the Gospel. Only an insane person would not think that the privileges of the Gospel were good for them. You will not go to hell, you will live for eternity with God. Even the person who is hostile to God, longs for self-preservation. You say to the person who's weary and seeking rest, Christ can give you rest, and that is so attractive, that they will rejoice. But if we detach the privileges and the benefits of the Gospel from Jesus Christ Himself, then we end up with people who can stand and preach, stand and teach, talk in everyday conversation about how good it is that Christ has saved them and yet they never actually are in Christ, never have a union with Christ. We need to be born again. The Spirit must come and put a new heart in us. But if the spirit has put a new heart in us, we can't live like the old self any longer. We must put off the old self, there is a change of affections, a change of direction in the heart. We no longer love the world and this is why Paul can be so blunt and he can say in contrast that those who love Christ and His second coming, they will receive the crown of righteousness, but those who love the world like Demas what do they have... nothing. Nothing's mentioned for Demas, because he's in love with the world. You cannot have all the benefits and the privileges of the Gospel, without having Christ Himself. And you cannot say I believe in God, because James' would say in his epistle, you believe in God, ha, even the demons believe in God (James 2:19). Believing in a creator is not enough to be saved, no we have to believe in Christ Jesus, God manifested and shown in person. For the Father and the Holy Spirit are spirit, that is why Jesus says you cannot see the Father but now you have seen me, now you have seen the Father, For the father is in I and I in Him, and now both are in us. And they will keep us going until the final day. We are not running the race by ourselves, for most of the race we will be carried by Jesus. If you run it by yourself, you will only trip up; and Jesus will pick you up.

If you have been born again you cannot be unborn. That is the doctrine of once saved always saved. If you've been born you cannot be unborn. If you've received the birth from above, the heavenly birth, then you are born of the Spirit and the Spirit now dwells in you, so now live as if the Spirit was in you because He is in you. It is a contradiction to say that I have been born of the Spirit, that I am in union with Christ, but to continue going in sin. Now don't get me wrong the Christian will sin and the Christian will mess up, and that is why we thank God that He forgives us daily, and that all our sins have been paid for by Christ. But we must not think that we can just continue living in sin. And in fact, Jonathan Edwards, he was a great theologian and Bible teacher during the revivals, and he went through two great revivals, and he saw his church packed, but within years he saw his church empty. And he had to struggle with, how do I know if someone's saved, in fact how do we know that we are saved. And his conclusion... the heart. Because the only way you know you have been born again is by having a new heart put in you, but if you have new heart put in you, you have new affections. And that new heart should give you a guilt for sin.

The truth is if you have not been born again, you will happily sin because you enjoy it. In fact, so often my non-Christian friends will say "but God restricts your life, he gives you these laws to keep, he has these standards to live up to" but that is not a restriction but a liberation. Because before we had the new heart put into us, we were unable to keep any of the laws at all, but Christ who is now in us, He keeps the laws for us. Now we will constantly fail to keep them, and that is why we praise God that Jesus was sent and He fulfilled the laws, that we didn't have to. But there is a standard of God and it is His holy way and His holy living. You cannot say I believe in the holy God and not live a holy life. You cannot say I am now in union with the holy Jesus Christ but then not live a holy life. It must penetrate our heart, for the Spirit lives in our heart. We cannot be like Demas; we cannot love the world, I don't know if Demas expected that crown of righteousness or if he was now content with not having it. If he would rather give up that crown of righteousness and live a life happy here and now. But the Spirit is working in us and we have union with Jesus Christ, and we must long for His second coming, we cannot become content in this world. The second we become in this world, is the second we almost

turn to Jesus and say, “take your time, don’t come today, don’t come next week, if you want to leave it till after my life that is fine because life right now is quite good.” That is always the temptation, it is the old self that desires to stay in this world because it is the old self that will be removed after this world and the new creation will be made manifest. For the new creation has come. And we can stand, and we can suffer persecution, we can go through it all for Christ has not left us. What did He say in John 14, I don’t leave you to be orphans, I will come to you when the Spirit comes to you and the Father will come to you.

Do not believe the lie of Satan that Jesus does not have your best intentions at heart, that he wants to restrict you, he wants to liberate you. For when the chains of sin are on you all you can think about is sinning and the pleasures of the world are so attractable. But when the chains are removed, the new heart is put in, a heart directed to God, now, now we find pleasure in obeying and following God. It is our delight. It is why we can read psalms, psalms like Psalms 119, and we see that David delights in the law. Why is that? Because he understands it is not restricting him, it is liberating him to be back in fellowship with his one and only true God. We now have union with Christ, he now works in us. When we put off the old self, the Spirit manifests the new self. And if there is any reason why our churches evangelism will be stunted; John Stott the theologian and Bible teacher would say it is because we are not showing ourselves to be transformed.¹ We preach a gospel of transformation, we say Christ will change you, but non-Christians look and say well what is different about you. If they cannot see any difference in you, you stunt the Gospel. It must change us.

There is a magnificent, beautiful passage here actually in 2 Timothy, in verse 16 when he says, ‘at my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!’ Jesus said if you deny me in front of others, I will deny you (Matt 10:13). That is a stark warning but one we must take on. If

¹ John Stott, *Favourite Psalms* (London: Candle Books, 1998), 68; commenting on Psalm 67.

‘Non-Christian people are watching us. We claim to know, to love and to follow Jesus Christ. We say that He is our Saviour, our Lord and our Friend. “What difference does He make to those Christians?” the world asks searchingly. “Where is their God?” It may be said without fear of contradiction that the greatest hindrance to evangelism in the world today is the failure of the church to supply evidence in her own life and work of the saving power of God.’

we deny Christ in front of others, He will deny us. If we deny our brother or sister in Christ, we are denying Christ. But what would Paul's prayer be, would it be "bring down fire from heaven"? No, Paul's prayer would be 'may it not be charged against them'. Now I think that is beautiful because these words are so similar, Paul has heard these words before. Paul heard these words before he was converted; before the new heart was put in him. In Acts chapter 7 verse 59, Stephen is being stoned and it is at the feet of Paul. And it says that there were witnesses who 'laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul' (v58). They have torn the garments of Stephen and laid them at the feet of Saul. 'And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." (vv59-60) What a transformation and what a prayer to be answered! Do you see that Stephen, he doesn't want to avenge, he wants God to have mercy on the people. And here now is Paul fully transformed from the one who was persecuting to now he is saying the same words, practically at least, the same words that Stephen prayed, don't charge it against them forgive them. Where did these words come from? It comes from their union with Christ. It was Christ on the cross who first said them words, 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). And if Christ now lives in us, we can truly expect them words to come from our lips, for it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, it is now Christ who works through us. So do not try to run the good race by yourself you will fail. But do not try and stay in your sin because that is not the calling you have been given. Pray to God that His Spirit would be with us.

This is how Paul ends his chapter, and his letter. 'The Lord be with your spirit.' (v22) The Lord is with your spirit, we read that in John 14, the Lord is now in us, He has made His home in us. And he says, 'Grace be with you.' (v22) The final reminder, fight the good fight but do not try to do it without the grace of God, do not try to do it without Christ doing it in you.

I won't go to 35 minutes, so I will stop after reading these last few verses. Let me take you back, you read this last year actually when you did 1 Timothy; but I want to quickly read you some of the closing verses in 1 timothy. In 1 timothy at the end in verse 11 Paul writes 'but as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue

righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.’ Notice Paul’s message has not changed. We don’t even know how many letters Paul would have written between 1 Timothy and 2, he didn’t number them we did. But Paul’s message has not changed, what we just read there is repeated in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 22. You still need to flee from sin. And then he goes on in verse 12, ‘fight the good fight’ well we know where that’s from, that’s from chapter 4 of 2 Timothy. ‘Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.’ (v12). ‘I charge you in the presence of God’ (v13) that’s chapter 4 as well, preach that Gospel the judge is Jesus Christ. ‘I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.’ (vv13-16) That is the message of Paul always, whether 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, or any book we read. You must love Christ and love His second coming, and want it not next week, we don’t want to put it off, we want it today. We want to be with Christ. He is in us, but we want to be physically right in His presence worshipping Him. We need to long for that day. And that unapproachable light, that is what we call the Shekinah Glory of God, that’s an impressive name. But it is the Shekinah Glory of God, it is that bright light, we saw it on the burning bush with Moses, the flame but not burning, the Shekinah Glory, and then we see it, and it’s coming up to Christmas, when the Shepherds were on the field and there was a bright light in the sky with the Angels, the Shekinah Glory of God, and then now Paul mentions it that Him who is coming dwells in unapproachable light, the Shekinah Glory of God. And if you take away one thing it is this, that our Saviour He sits on that throne in heaven, there is a higher throne and our eyes must be fixed on it, because the one who sits on that throne dwells in us. And that Shekinah Glory that displays His glory, one day we will see it and on that day we will receive the crown of righteousness. On that day Christ will be glorified above all others and

His Church will be glorified with Him. Christ will be fully made manifest, the old will be fully gone and the new will be fully here. Let's pray.

[Prayer: Father we love Your word. Help us to fix our eyes on You, help us not to read the Bible so that it would just pick us up during the week, but help us to read the Bible so that we would know who You are and who we now are in You and You in us. Help us Father to persevere and run the good fight relying on Your grace and the person of Christ. Help us always to love Your Spirit who works in us. Help the Spirit manifest You in us. Help us to shine the glory of God to those around us. Make sure Father that we are not living lives of the old self, and Father forgive us when we do. Help us Lord to put off the old self and to live the holy lives that You call us to. Father we need Your grace, we need Jesus Christ, we need Your Spirit. But Father we thank You above all that You have made Your home in us, we are not orphans, we have not been left, Father we thank You for this amazing truth. Help us to persevere, in Jesus name, amen.]