

2nd Timothy 4: 1-18; “The Lord Standing with You”, A Devotional prepared for those men gathered for the Mid-West Reformed Baptist Association Meeting held at Pastor Al Huber’s house in Rockton, Illinois on July 18th, 2017.

The apostle Paul, here in this chapter is giving his final instructions to his son in the faith, Timothy, and he will speak to him about the things which will be the most important for Timothy to remember after he (Paul) is gone. The things that he would have Timothy to remember, I am quite sure that he would have us to remember as well. They are – 1st – the importance of continuing to preach the word. (verses 1-4) 2nd – The importance of persevering in righteousness. (verses 5-8) 3rd – The importance of faithful men. (verses 9-13) And 4th – The importance of the Lord delivering you from every evil work. (verses 14-18) As this is a devotional, I will not have time to do an exposition of all of these verses, but simply to draw a few points which I hope will be pertinent to the ministry which the Lord has given to each of us. I will attempt to do this from the vantage point of verse 17 – “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear.”

1st of all – Remember the importance of continuing to preach the word.

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: “Preach the Word!” “Be ready in season and out of season.” When Paul charges Timothy, he is laying upon him the responsibility to pay strict attention to what he is going to tell him to do. He is personally commanding Timothy to do this; to preach the word. Paul charges him before God and the Lord Jesus Christ. These matters that he is speaking of, are that important. Timothy was to think about the Judgment Day that was coming, when Christ would appear and ask for an account of what he had done in regard to preaching this word. Paul told him that he was to preach this word in season and out of season; when it was popular and when it was unpopular; when it was apparent that great fruit would be born from preaching; great benefit and blessing, and other times when it seemed unlikely that any good results could come from it at all. He was to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all patience and instruction.

Let me ask you men; are you still preaching the word? I am not asking you whether you are regularly giving an exposition of the Scripture and a few good points of application every Sunday. I am asking whether your heart is still in preaching; in sounding forth the word and in declaring what is true, with joy and enthusiasm. Can you say with Jeremiah, “Your words were found and I did eat them, and they became unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by Your name.” Do you still joy and rejoice in your heart over the blessed truth of the word of God? Is the word of God still your meat and drink, your bread and butter? Is it the treasure hid in the field which you still search for? Is it more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold, to you? Is it sweeter than honey and the honeycomb to you? Do you personally consider its warnings as good for you, and know that in keeping God’s commandments there is great reward? Do you still hold fast to the word, and prepare to proclaim the word, knowing that there will be a reward for you if you are faithful in preaching it and delivering it?

You say to me: Well, I am getting to be an older man now, and I have been preaching a good long time, and I am very tired and weary because I have not seen the results that I would like to have seen come from my labors. I reprove people in my congregation. I gently tell them where they are wrong, and point out to them what they need to do to walk in the truth and do things God’s way. I rebuke them when I see them in some sin; and when I can perceive that they do not know how to live in a righteous way, I tell them about it. I exhort them; I tell them what they need to do in obedience to the word of God. I am patiently persevering in the ministry which the

Lord has given to me. Ah, that is good, my brother, but let me give you encouragement from the word itself today if I can. What truth is it, that will help you when you are weary in the well-doing of preaching the word? It is this truth that the Lord stood by Paul and strengthened him so that the message might be preached. I hope that you will remember that the Lord Jesus is standing right by you day by day to strengthen you. The strength that He gives is primarily spiritual in nature; although certainly He is able to renew your strength physically as well. Christ is standing by you to actually supply you with the strength that you will need to continue to minister the word of God in a fresh and powerful way, Sunday by Sunday.

He will also stand right by you to strengthen you when, or if the time comes that many in your congregation will not endure sound doctrine. Perish the thought that this should be the case with any of us, but Paul was saying that it would come in Timothy's day, at Ephesus. Why could it not happen again? We pray that it will not, but if it does, Christ will be there to see to it that you can preach. But He expects you to "put Him before you" in your conscious expectation of His working on your behalf. Listen to Psalm 16: 7-9 – "I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night season." "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is a my right hand I shall not be moved." "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope." You see, these words take in every kind of tiredness and weakness and weariness that you might have. The Lord gave David counsel through His word coming to him in the night season. And that word instructed him very practically to "set the Lord before him", and realizing that the Lord was there at his right hand, he would not be moved by all the difficulties that he encountered with men. Indeed his heart was glad and even his glory rejoiced; his flesh even rested in hope. Remember the Lord is standing with you.

2nd – Remember the importance of persevering in righteousness. (verses 5-8)

Paul not only urged Timothy on to consider Christ's present help in preaching, but he urged him on to consider the reward for faithfulness which is laid up for all who have loved Christ's appearing. Verse 8 – "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also all who have loved His appearing." Paul had this firm assurance of this crown of righteousness being laid up for him. And Paul would persuade us who are sitting here listening to this today to have this firm assurance of receiving this crown as well. Do you think often of what is laid up for you, dear brothers, when Christ appears; this crown of righteousness? Let it be an incentive to your labors. Think of it this way. The crown of righteousness is what Christ Himself will give to you when He appears, because you love Him, and in your life you saw Him as your righteousness. And all that time, even though there have been many mistakes made, and some sins committed, you have been persevering in doing what is right based upon this imputed righteousness and this imparted grace which He has been giving to you. There will be a reward for your labors which is based upon His grace, and your improvement of it in the good and righteous things that you do. This is here called the crown of righteousness.

The reason that you are able at all to persevere in righteousness now, is because He first loved you and by His righteousness He overcame and sat down at the right hand of His Father on high. And now from His high position of having been given all authority in heaven and earth, He would have you overcome and persevere in righteousness because of all that He has done for you, and all that He is doing, for you. Christ will stand by you and strengthen you to do this very thing. "But you, O man of God, flee from greed and the love of money, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness." "Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life..." Christ Himself will strengthen you to labor for Him, to overcome sinful temptations, and to grow up into a greater exercise of practical righteousness in living your life unto Him. This will go on until you die, and go to be with Him. At that time, He will then confirm you forever in righteousness as regards your spirit, and you will await the day of the

resurrection when He will appear to judge the living and the dead; where you will actually receive the crown of righteousness which He will give to you and to all who have loved His appearing. Your reward for your labors in doing what is right, will come to you from Christ Himself. Ask yourself – Am I laboring toward this end, to receive the crown? Do I love and look forward to His appearing because it will be the completion of my redemption, and the crowning of my life with the joy of seeing Christ; being made like Him, and receiving this crown from His hand?

3rd – Remember the importance of surrounding yourself with faithful men.

(verses 9-13)

“Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica – Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.” “Only Luke is with me.” “Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.” “And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.” “Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come – and the books, especially the parchments. I am quite sure that you men know the value of faithful men in the church, and that you have studied to try to surround yourself with such men. But I want you to take notice of the fact that Paul must have suffered some amount of disappointment with men who he thought would have stood by him, and labored with him, for the forward progress of Christ’s kingdom. Some who he thought would be faithful, turned out to be unfaithful. Demas forsook Paul because he loved this present world. And sometimes, even beyond those who disappoint us, there are those, during the course of our ministry, who we do find faithful, and so we send them out to do service for Christ, and sometimes we may think that we are quite alone in laboring at various aspects of the ministry.

Sometimes, those men who we thought would become our greatest helpers and laborers together with us in the ministry, leave for some other place. What should we do? Well, I think that we ought to take stock of every single person that the Lord has given to our church and realize that He is perfectly in control of our particular situation. He is certainly able to bring others to help, and so we might think: Why doesn’t He? Well, He has His reasons. And we ought to do all that we can with the people that we have been given. Crescens had gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. The Lord would use them there. Only Luke was with Paul, and O how he must have valued that man’s help to him. Paul appeals to Timothy that he would get Mark and bring him with him when he came, and this would strengthen him in his work of preaching the gospel. This was the same John Mark who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work; the same man who Paul refused to take with him when he was leaving to go on his 2nd Missionary journey. But if you will remember, Barnabas took him with him and taught him, and so John Mark changed and grew in Christ, and now Paul would have him come to him to help him. Remember, brethren, that our brothers and sisters in Christ will grow up over time if they are sensitive to the Spirit’s leading them into a greater godliness.

But what I would have you to remember in respect to your particular ministry is to surround yourself with faithful men in your work so that you don’t get bogged down with trying to do everything in the church by yourself. Learn to delegate responsibility for the multitude of little things that need to be done, and look for men to put in charge of things which can be done; things which you should not necessarily spend your time doing. Paul would send Tychicus to Ephesus, and he would have Timothy to bring him his cloak that he left at Troas with Carpus, and he would have Timothy bring him his books and parchments. Is it not encouraging to think that Christ Himself thinks of all of the details of your ministry and over time will provide men to help you with all the various tasks? The Lord is standing with you.

And then 4th – Remember the importance of the Lord delivering you from every evil work.

Verse 14 – “Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm.” “May the Lord repay him according to his works.” “You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.” “At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me.” “May it not be charged against them.” “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, and that all the Gentiles might hear.” “And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.” “And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom.” “To Him be the glory forever.” “Amen.” We see here a specific man named who did Paul much harm personally, and who greatly resisted their words. Probably it was the words of the gospel and words of truth which brought Alexander to conviction of sin and made him angry. But I want you to see that when Alexander was doing this harm, and Nero or whoever was ruling in Rome in Nero’s place at that time, arrested Paul, all the Christians there forsook him for fear of being jailed or put to death themselves. I want you to see that Paul did not become bitter and complain against the Lord. He said, “May it not be charged against them.” Instead, he was able to make his defense and succeeded in preaching the gospel, so that all the Gentiles who were there at that time might hear. This is what he rejoiced in; to be able to preach the gospel and the word of God. And the reason? Because the Lord stood with him and strengthened him. This is what the Lord did for Paul, and this is what He will do for us as pastors as well. The Lord will deliver us from every evil work and preserve us for His heavenly kingdom. Instead of complaining, instead of becoming downcast or bitter, Paul could actually give glory to God in these circumstances. Eventually he would be martyred for the faith, there in Rome. But even in that awful act of putting his being put to death, God was delivering him from every evil work to place him before His presence with great joy. Today let us rejoice in the fact that the Lord stands with us in our ministry of preaching and He will be with us throughout our ministry to establish every good thing that we will preach, and He will be with us to the end, and be waiting on the other side to greet us when we enter heaven.