

Ben Libby

Sermon

April 25th, the Third Sunday after Easter

In the name of Jesus Christ, who came to redeem us from our sins so that we might become the children of God, Dear fellow Redeemed... Our sermon text this morning is taken from the last chapter of Paul's second letter to Timothy, starting at verse 9.

Make every effort to come to me quickly, ¹⁰ for Demas, because he loved this present world, has forsaken me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is useful to me for ministry. ¹² I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak I left in Troas with Carpus, and the scrolls, especially the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will pay him back for what he did. ¹⁵ You be on your guard against him also, because he vehemently opposed our message. ¹⁶ At my first hearing, no one came to my defense, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message would be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles would hear it, and I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

This is the Word of The LORD!!! The congregation may be seated...

Mercy, Grace, and peace our yours through your God and Father, and through His Son, Jesus Christ, true God and Man, dear fellow Sons and Daughters of God...

How do you want to be remembered? No matter who you are, you want to be remembered for something after you die. It's a basic human instinct. Everyone knows death cannot be cheated. We all want to live on somehow after we die. We all want to leave some kind of a legacy, don't we?

This world tries to attain legacies in many different ways. They try to become famous, and live on through that. Or, they try to become rich, and live on by using those riches to help people long after they die. Or, they try to be personal. They try to make a personal impact on people by being kind or generous. Ultimately, people try to live on in minds, memories, and history books by affecting other people.

But as Christians, legacy is sort of a sore subject. We have those legacy instincts, yet we know death isn't the end. That is why the Christian's goal is different from the rest of the world when it comes to legacy. We don't try to make our mark on people by what we do alone. Rather, we leave our mark by marking out Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

What we have before us this morning are some of the final words of the Apostle Paul. Paul reflects on his call and ministry of his Lord Jesus. He wrote to Timothy so that he wouldn't go through this alone. He could see that he was probably about to die. But he also knew that his Savior stood by him, and would rescue him out of these trials. This is the lifecycle of the believer. It doesn't glorify the saint, rather it glorifies the Savior, Jesus Christ. Our small legacy becomes part of His'. We are remembered, not just by others, but by Jesus, and that's what matters! And so, we pray, MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDITATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT O GOD, OUR ROCK AND OUR REDEEMER, AMEN...

Who typically gets remembered today? He's mentioned here, but he's far from the central figure. Many people are named here. Paul, Timothy, Luke, Titus, Tychicus. No, today, April 25th is the traditional feast day in the church of Mark the evangelist. He is

mentioned here when Paul says in verses 11, **Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is useful to me for ministry.**

The importance of this may get lost in the web of church history to us. Why is it significant that Paul is asking Timothy to bring Mark to him before Paul dies? This shows reconciliation. When Paul started his second missionary journey, he and his fellow missionary Barnabas wanted to go to the churches they had visited originally. Barnabas wanted to take Mark. Paul did not because Mark had been with them originally and left them early on to go back to Jerusalem. So, Paul and Barnabas split up, Barnabas took Mark and Paul went ahead with Silas.

Paul felt other desertions. Another fellow, who we know had been with Paul in earlier parts of his ministry, one Demas, had left Paul **because he loved this present world, has forsaken me and gone to Thessalonica.** Mark is now someone who would only be encouraging to Paul as he stairs down his last days.

Paul's ministry had taken him many places and met many different people. Some mentioned here were with him at one point, but now are elsewhere. He had Luke, another evangelist, with him. He also warns Timothy about a man named Alexander, a coopersmith who **did me a great deal of harm.** Here at the end, Paul wants to be surrounded with people who would be helpful and encouraging as he was about to give his life for the sake of Jesus.

Is all this merely Bible trivia? No. It shows us that being a Christian is hard. We may all be asked to do exactly the same thing Paul is prepared to do here as well. Die for the faith. But, as hard as life can be, we have given a support system. We have first and foremost our Lord Jesus, who is with us even to the end of the age. But we also have the brotherhood. We have each other to lean on, to depend upon. And we have been given the testimony of the saints. We sort of shy away from recognizing past saints. But we can draw on their examples, praise God for giving them the faith to be faithful, and we can imitate them.

Just look at Paul. He knew that his service would soon be over. Paul was by no means a young man

here. He had been imprisoned and persecuted many times before. But this imprisonment was different. This text is very personal. He wants Timothy to come to him quickly, because his time of grace could end any day. He asks him to bring him his jacket and some scrolls, presumably his Bible. This is an urgent and personal matter, because that is what death is.

But Paul wants Timothy and Mark to come to him. He needs to pass on to them what he had learned. His ministry was almost over. Theirs would continue on. He trusted these men and counted on them. He wanted to be encouraged by them, but he also wanted the feeling to be mutual.

What can we learn from this point of Paul's life? What is his legacy? We can see that even though he was about to die, he didn't regret what was about to be asked of him. He serves as an example of standing firm in the faith even in the face of death. By God's grace this is a point of life we will face. When you can see the end, it's important to leave behind something lasting. Not just a charitable foundation or inheritance, but the everlasting Word of the Gospel. That's the one thing that cannot be taken away. That's why we place such a strong emphasis on teaching the word. It's an everlasting, never changing message. It saves us, and it continues to save those after us.

Paul knew he was about to die. But death didn't make him shy away from the message he had preached most of his entire life. It only embodied him. **At my first hearing, no one came to my defense, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them.** ¹⁷ **But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message would be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles would hear it, and I was rescued from the lion's mouth.**

Speaking of Church History, the way Paul is speaking of here really reminds of how he entered the ministry. In Bibleclass here, we have been going through the book of Acts. We recently covered the story of the first Martyr, Stephen. Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit, and got up and delivered a powerful sermon. The result of that sermon was that

the Jewish people rose up and stoned him. As he was about to be martyred, Stephen saw the Lord Jesus in heaven, waiting to welcome him with open arms into heaven. **Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." Acts 7:60.**

Also at the stoning was Saul. He approved of this and continued persecuting the saints. But then he was converted. He was turned around quite literally by Jesus, and was renamed Paul. Here at his end, he too prays the same prayer as Stephen: **May it not be counted against them.**

But that's the beauty of preaching Christ crucified. When we do that, we are never truly alone. **But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me.**

The One who never left Paul also never leaves us. He is here in the midst of us today. Whenever 2 or 3 are gathered together in his name, there He is also. It is Jesus who will never leave or forsake you. He's the One who called us, and He's the one whom we proclaim. And it is Jesus who gives this ability to proclaim and defend His name. Paul wrote earlier in this letter: **For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Tim 1:7)**

We all do this in different ways. Being a Martyr like Stephen or Paul is certainly a way that it can end. It's extreme, but possible. But martyrdom is not the only way to proclaim Jesus. How do we here stand up and proclaim Christ crucified? In many different ways. You don't have to be an apostle, an evangelist, a pastor, or a missionary to do these things. You can do them by simply doing your day job. We are all part of the public ministry. The Christian who dies on account of their faith in Christ serves Jesus the same as the Christian who mows the church lawn. The Christian who stands up in the pulpit and preaches on Sunday serves the Lord the same as the Christian who stands up at the cash register on Monday morning. God uses all of us to proclaim His Gospel. It all reflects His glory. The Lord who stands by us allows us to stand up for Him, in whatever we do!

No matter what we do is, no matter what happens to us, we are rescued by the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ! ¹⁸ **The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

We talked about how Paul started out. He began as a Pharisee, and a nasty one at that. He enabled the very same persecution that he was about to face. He summarizes that whole experience in his previous letter to Timothy: **13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. (1 Timothy 1:13-15)**

How much do you know about the Monarch Butterfly? They are certainly pretty, and we see them from time to time here. They are a fascinating part of God's creation. They all start out in their ancestral breeding grounds in Mexico. That first generation then flies north. The next generation of butterflies is then born and continues the journey north. Then still another generation is born and continues the northern journey. They migrate as far north as Maine, Washington, and Canada. But then, a fourth special generation is born. Whereas it takes 3 generations to migrate north, a special 4th generation appears, who make the entire return trip to Mexico in one lifetime! There's really nothing like it in creation, and it reflects the awesomeness of the Creator.

But they all start out as larva. In the same way, the Monarch Butterfly is very much like the Christian. Some of us accomplish incredible feats of faith, like Paul would do here. Some of us serve our Lord more simply. But we all start out in the same place. Dead and worthless sinners. Paul considered himself to be the chief of sinners on account of his past. But everyone here knows Paul's claim is inaccurate. He's not the chief of sinners, I AM!!! We are worthless worms, crawling around feebly in the darkness. It is

Jesus alone who has called us and put us through the process of the metamorphosis of Word and sacrament. He takes these worthless sinners and creates new life in them. He takes us all as the Sauls that we were, and transforms us into Pauls who fly the banner of the cross.

As beautiful as the Monarch Butterfly migration pattern is, it is still all based on death. It takes 3 generations just to get the species to where it is going. That means there are 3 whole generations of dead butterflies before that super generation flies. The same can be said about us as well. Sure, we pass on the gospel to the next generation. But we too will certainly die. Jesus could return at any moment. But we will most likely face death just like Paul did. Our legacy is to pass on the Gospel. That outlives us.

And that's why the life cycle and legacy of the Christian is special. Whereas the world tries to outlive death by leaving a legacy of fame, wealth, or influence, none of that really solves the problem! They do it because they can't get past death. Our legacy of the Gospel outlives us and stands eternal. Not only does it outlive us, but it brings us back to life itself! Jesus said: **"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And where I go you know, and the way you know."**

The butterfly doesn't have to figure out where to go. It just knows. It's built into them. The same with us. We know we will die. We know it that unless we are alive when He returns, we will face death. But we also know that after that, we will live once more. Jesus rose from the dead! So too shall we! The Spirit builds into us the knowledge that we will fly heaven bound.

Paul knew it too. He says here, **The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.** Did this mean that Paul thought he would live past this trial? Not necessarily. Tradition tells us that he did not, and he was executed there in Rome. But that doesn't mean

that what he says here isn't true. It absolutely is true. We can say that same thing in any circumstance, no matter how dire it might appear to be. The LORD will rescue me from every evil work and bring safely into his heavenly kingdom! Sometimes He does this through the power of His almighty hand. Sometimes He does this through death itself. But it's all a deliverance, it's all part of Him rescuing you!

This is the legacy of the Christian, and just another part of our life cycle. We are called from the darkness into the glorious light of His kingdom. Then, we serve Him and pass along what He has given us. Then we die. **BUT THAT'S NOT THE END!!!** We are then resurrected and brought to completion and into His eternal kingdom!

And that, dear Christians, is your legacy here today. Will you live another 5 years? 10? 50? It doesn't matter because our legacy will be the same whenever our Lord calls us home. It is the legacy of the Gospel, that Jesus died to pay for my sins, and rose again so that I may also rise and be with Him forever. This is a legacy that is worthy to pass along to others, and it is one worth living and dying for. Why? Because this legacy outlives us and it also brings us back to life whenever we finally do die. Until that day comes, continue to defend and proclaim the faith. Live for it. Die for it! It's worth it because He is worthy to be praised. All praise and thanks be to Jesus Christ, our risen and resurrected Lord, our life and our legacy! **AMEN!!!**