

NOTES FROM STEPHEN TIBBERTS SERMON- 12th November 2023 am

TITLE: “The Lord stood with me” TEXT: 2 Timothy 4 verses 9-22

Series: “More on Mission” Part 2 Scripture references from the ESV

2 Timothy 4:9-22 Do your best to come to me soon. ¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia,^[b] Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. ¹² Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. ¹⁵ Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. ¹⁶ At my first defence no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰ Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus. ²¹ Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers. ²² The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Paul, the great theologian, winner of souls and planter of churches, wrote this letter to Timothy at the end of his life of ministry and mission. We might well ask what drove him, what sustained him and what empowered him, for those questions are relevant to every missionary. There are various ways to answer this question:

- The love of Christ constrains us. We have a debt of love and gratitude to him for his wonderful gift of salvation full and free.
- We see the heart of God in scripture, which is always for the ends of the earth, and we want to see God's name glorified in every corner of the earth.
- We do all for the glory of God, because ultimately that is what God is all about. He wants people to recognise him for who he is and to worship him as our creator and our Lord.
- We have an eternal perspective, as Paul did, and look forward to hearing the commendation of the master – Well done, good and faithful servant.

- We go because Christ commands us to go. It is the great commission, not the great suggestion!

All of these are true, but one truth stands out in these words of Paul as he looked at his life and ministry and the realities of working with people in a fallen and sinful world. Why did he not give up? How did he keep believing God for spiritual fruit, and how did he endure suffering and persecution?

What kept him going was the presence of the Lord himself.

The Lord stood by me and strengthened me (v17 above)

In the Great Commission, Jesus promised his disciples that he would be with them always. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:18-20).

Hudson Taylor said "God is not looking for people of great faith, but for individuals ready to follow him." Missionaries do not take God to the people. God takes the missionary. God already has plans for that place.

It is his work and it is he who invites us to get involved in it. What a privilege!

Background:

Paul had spent a considerable amount of time in Ephesus, and Timothy had been with him for some of that. Timothy and Paul had faced considerable difficulties together, and spiritually, Timothy had grown up with Paul. After Paul left Ephesus, he later sent Timothy back to establish the church and see it grow to maturity, defending the truth of the gospel in that region. Paul charged Timothy with the primary responsibility for:

- Studying, knowing and handling the word of God (**rightly handling the word of truth** 2 Tim 2:15)
- Continuing in it because it is inspired and profitable (**from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in

righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:15-17)

- Preaching the word (I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 2 Tim 4:1-2)
- Entrusting that teaching to others who would also teach (what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men,^[a] who will be able to teach others also 2 Tim 2:2)

Paul was concerned that the church should be Gospel-centred and scripture-centred.

The realities of mission, then and now:

As an old man in prison, Paul writes these final words to Timothy and they show us much about the life of mission.

We see the human side of ministry:

- a) Paul misses Timothy and also wants Mark with him (v9,11 above). This very godly man has a human side we can identify with. One reality of mission is that people are often separated from those they love, and from those they work with.
- b) He has physical needs (his cloak to protect him from cold) and also wants to have his books and parchments to study (v13)

We see what it is like to work with other people:

- a) Some people give up (v10). Demas had been a fellow worker, but he had succumbed to the temptations of the world and had left Paul. People get discouraged. They take their eyes off God and begin looking at their own problems.
- b) Some are called to other ministries (vv10,12 and 20). It is a reality of mission. The Lord of the Harvest determines when to move people on, and we do not always understand why.
- c) Some become ill (v20) and are no longer able to serve.
- d) Some do not help when they could do so (v16). No one supported him when he needed it. Those who were in a position to help as character witnesses did not do so, possibly because of fear of persecution.

We discover that some people are called to full time ministry while others support from behind the scenes:

- a) Luke was there in Rome ministering with Paul, and Mark was useful for service (v11).
- b) Other believers, who had some connection with Ephesus, were there as part of the church (v21). Though only Luke was there full-time, Paul knew he was surrounded by others who offered support.
- c) Even those who were at a distance, to whom Paul sent greetings (v19), were supporting the work.

We find that there is opposition and we must be on our guard:

- a) Alexander the coppersmith did Paul harm(v14-15) and was a threat to others in the church.
- b) Earlier in this letter, Paul had warned against others who were leading some astray with false teaching, saying **their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus** (2 Tim 2:17)

In all this harsh reality, one phrase stands out.

The Lord stood by me and strengthened me

This was true, not just for this trial, but throughout his ministry. God was with Paul, not just as shown by the presence of his co-workers, grateful though he was for their support. God's presence was a reality for Paul in some way that he could recognise, and that reality brought him comfort and strength.

- Remember, Christian brothers and sisters

God is with you and God is with your missionary.

God's word tells us:

- I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matt 28:20)
- I will never leave you nor forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5)
- And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper,^[1] to be with you forever, ¹⁷ 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. (John 14:16,17)

- 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 (John 13:23)

Paul loved the Lord and these promises were a reality in his life.

God is with us

We have the encouragement of his presence and the empowerment of his Spirit.

The language of faith is that of thanksgiving. We do not need to pray that God will be with our missionaries. Rather we can thank God that he is with our missionaries.

Despite all that happened in Paul's life, he knew that God was with him.

The result:

(v17) **so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.**

What difference does God's presence make, as he encourages, sustains, equips and empowers us? We can see the answer through how Paul prays.

- praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, **that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,** ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, **that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.**

(Ephesians 6:18b-20)

- Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that **God may open to us a door for the word,** to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ **that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.** (Colossians 4:2-4)

Paul prayed for opportunities, boldness and clarity. When we pray for our missionaries, these are the great needs. Our God is a clear communicator, and has chosen to reveal himself. John Stott wrote this:

One of our basic convictions is that God is light; in him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5). That is to say, it is as much the nature of God to reveal himself as it is the nature of light to shine. Now God has revealed himself chiefly by speaking. We may be quite sure therefore that he has spoken in order to be understood, and that he intended Scripture (the record of the divine speech) to be plain to its readers. For the whole

purpose of revelation is clarity not confusion; a readily intelligible message, not a set of dark and mysterious riddles.

**God was with Paul in his ministry,
providing him with opportunity, boldness and clarity to proclaim the name of the one
he loved.**

God is with you too.

- Pray that as he provides the opportunities you will step into them with confidence and ask him for clarity in your message so that the Gospel will ring out with clarity to a lost and dying world.

Paul anticipated his heavenly reward (v18). God had stood with him on earth and Paul knew he would be with him for eternity. Finally, Paul restates the truth of God's presence (v22). He prays for Timothy that he will know God's presence to be a reality in this life as Paul did, and that Timothy would be enabled to live his life with an ever-present awareness of God's grace on his life and ministry.

God lives with his people

Thus, we are strengthened, renewed, transformed and equipped for every good work