



# What Matters Most

## 2 Timothy 4:9-22

### 1. Faithful Friends (verses 9-13, 19-21)

### 2. A Faithful God (verses 14-18, 22)

I have heard it said many times over the years, "When you come to die, you won't ever regret that you didn't spend more time at the office." The regrets will be on a far different scale. You will regret that you didn't spend more time with your kids. You will regret that you didn't spend more time with God and engaged in His work. You will regret the sins of your youth. Death has a way of focusing us on our priorities, which, too often, are learned too late.

That's why Jonathan Edwards wrote his resolutions in his youth. Many of them focused upon his death. Here are some of his resolutions:

#9: Resolved, to think much on all occasions of my own dying, and of the common circumstances which attend death.

#7: Resolved, never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.

#17: Resolved, that I will live so as I shall wish I had done when I come to die. [\[1\]](#)

Well, let us learn this morning from one who was facing his own death. Let us learn this morning from the apostle, Paul. In our exposition of the book of 2 Timothy, we have come to the last words of the apostle Paul. He is approaching his death. His life is in proper perspective. His priorities are out there for Timothy to behold. Let's read from chapter 4, verses 9-22.

#### 2 Timothy 4:9-22

Make every effort to come to me soon; for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. 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. 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.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren.

The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

My message this morning is entitled: "What Matters Most." That's what we see in this portion of 2 Timothy. Paul is down to his last days. He is alone and in prison and in great need. He is reflecting upon the few things that he really wants.

Here's the first thing that Paul wants. He wants ...

#### 1. Faithful Friends (verses 9-13, 19-22)

You can see it there in verse 9, "Make every effort to come to me soon." Until this point in 2 Timothy, Paul had been seeking to help Timothy, by giving him counsel to help him in his role as a pastor of the church in Ephesus. But, at this point, Paul turns to Timothy and gives Timothy a tangible way that he can help Paul. He can help Paul by coming to him and being with him in his last days upon the earth.

And I guarantee you, when you come to your dying days, you will want some faithful friends around you to encourage you. Aids in the nursing home can provide some comfort, but nothing like a faithful friend can bring. And here is Paul, alone in prison, wanting Timothy's companionship. "Make every effort to come to me soon." At the end of the chapter, the exhortation is even stronger, "Make every effort to come before winter" (4:21). These pleas haven't merely come up in chapter 4. From the very beginning of this letter, Paul has expressed his desire to see Timothy. In chapter 1, verse 4, Paul said that he was "longing to see [Timothy]." The reason was simple: Timothy was a faithful friend to Paul. And Paul knows that Timothy will be able to help him in his final hours.

I believe that Timothy is uniquely prepared to minister to Paul. When Paul was in prison on another occasion, Timothy was with him, and he wouldn't let him to. He wrote to the Philippians, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare" (Phil. 2:19-20). Paul

wanted to send Timothy to those in Philippi. But, conditions were such that he couldn't bear to let him leave, because Timothy was a faithful friend, who was genuinely concerned for Paul's welfare.

Now, at the end of his life, the situation is reversed. Timothy is with the Ephesians, and Paul longs for Timothy to come and help him in his loneliness.

In verse 10, we see that there were several who had left him. We read, ...

2 Timothy 4:10-11

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me.

You can almost feel Paul's pain. Demas, Crescens, Titus, and Luke had all been there in Rome with Paul, but now three of them were gone. Only one was left -- Dr. Luke -- who, no doubt, was tending to Paul's physical needs. But, the other three had left Paul. By the way Paul says things here, there is a decided difference between Demas and the other two who left.

Look again at verse 10, "For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica." Here we see the reason why Demas deserted Paul: he loved the present world. We see no reason given for the other two men. My suspicion is that Crescens and Titus had left for ministry reasons, but Demas had left because he had defected from the faith. Demas wasn't concerned for Paul's welfare. He was concerned for his own welfare. He loved the world and the pleasures that it could bring. And so, he left Paul in his greatest hour of need and headed off to Thessalonica.

Demas is one of the saddest stories in the entire Bible. He was mentioned three times in Paul's epistles. Once in Philemon and once in Colossians, and once here in 2 Timothy. In Philemon and in Colossians, he is identified as a faithful co-worker with Paul (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24). But here, it's much different. Here, Demas has proved himself to be an unfaithful friend.

Now, we don't know how exactly he loved the world. He may have loved the possessions of the world -- something that he didn't have as a companion of Paul. He may have loved the comforts of the world -- something that he didn't have as a companion of Paul. He may have loved his reputation in this world -- something that he wouldn't have if he associated with Paul (see 1:18-20). It may have been (as some have suggested) that Demas loved his life, and didn't want to die. It was a risk in associating with the apostle Paul, who was considered to be a criminal against society and headed for death, himself.

We don't know for sure how Demas loved the world. But, somehow, surely, it had to do with the call to suffering that comes to every believer in Christ (2 Tim 3:12 told us that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted). Demas was unwilling to take up his cross and follow Jesus. And he was an unfaithful friend to Paul, deserting him in the hour of need.

There is clear application here for all of us. What sort of friend are you? Are you like Timothy? Will you be like Demas? Will you love the world more than you love Christ? Will you love the world more than you love the followers of Christ? Will you desert your friends, and thereby prove unfaithful to the Lord in the process?

Don't trust where you are today. If you are thinking, "What do you mean? It can't happen to me! I'm faithful to the Lord! Look at all the things that I'm doing!" At one point, Paul called Demas a "fellow worker" (Philemon 24). He was laboring for the Lord. And yet, the lure of the world pulled him away. The Bible is full of those who began well, but ended poorly: Demas, who we see here; Judas, who betrayed Jesus; Asa, who turned to the king of Aram, rather than relying upon the LORD (2 Chron. 16:7); Solomon, who forsook the LORD. Don't think that you are immune. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). Identify your own weakness. Plead with the Lord for strength to fight the fight until the end.

We can move on now to verse 11, ...

2 Timothy 4:11

Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.

As discouraging as the story of Demas was, so is the story of Mark encouraging! Because here we don't see a guy going down, we see a guy going up!

The first we know of Mark is recorded in Acts 12. Peter was in prison (Acts 12:5). Herod was seeking to put him to death (Acts 12:3-5). During this time, the church was gathered in the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark (Acts 12:12). They were praying for Peter's release (Acts 12:5). By a miracle, an angel appeared to Peter in prison and led him out to safety. He showed up at the house, where they were praying. This is the environment where Mark was raised.

He had the opportunity to travel with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey, as their helper (Acts 13:5). But, early on in the journey, Mark deserted them and returned home to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). In many ways, Mark was like Demas. When Paul and Barnabas needed him, Mark abandoned them.

The abandonment made such an impact on Paul that when it came time to embark on their second missionary journey, Paul didn't want to take Mark along. But, Barnabas did. So, Paul and Barnabas had a "sharp disagreement" with each other. Barnabas wanted Mark to go with them. Paul wanted Mark to stay home. The chasm between them was so great that they separated. "Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus" (Acts 15:39). "Paul chose Silas and left" by land, travelling through Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:40-41).

But, something happened in the life of Mark, and we don't know exactly what. Somehow, Mark made a turn in his life, and was faithful to the Lord -- so much so that Timothy was able to make this statement: "He is useful to me for service" (4:11). Repentance had taken place. Forgiveness had been granted. Reconciliation had been made. They were now on the same team. Mark had become a faithful friend to Paul, even though, at one point, he wasn't.

Mark comes straight to us by way of application. The dynamics of life are that people rift with each other. People have conflicts with each other. It's the reality of a sin-filled earth. And disagreements will happen. And people will prove unfaithful. You may let some people down with your actions. But, listen: if Paul and Mark got it back together, then you can get it back together. It takes God. It takes repentance. It takes forgiveness. It takes humility. It takes love. But, reconciliation is possible.

We don't see the process here, but we do see the fruit of it. We see two men reconciled and fully engaged in ministry with each other. We see the fruit of the gospel working in the lives of these men. May we know of this sort of reconciliation at Rock Valley Bible Church. Mark went on to write the gospel of Mark. (By the way, the gospel of Mark will be the next book we will work through at Rock Valley Bible Church. We'll begin in January. So, start reading the book of Mark if you want to get ready for future months at Rock Valley Bible Church).

In verse 12, see Paul smoothing the way for Timothy to come. "But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus." Tychicus was a faithful friend of Paul. In Ephesians 6:21, he called him a "beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord." In Colossians 4:7, Paul called him a "beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord." These descriptions demonstrate how faithful Tychicus was to Paul. And I believe that Tychicus would have remained at Rome with Paul unless Paul had sent him on. But, Paul did send him on. He sent him on to Ephesus. I believe he sent him there with 2 Timothy in hand to be the mailman. This wasn't anything new for Tychicus. Paul had sent him to deliver Ephesians and Colossians as well.

But, I also believe that Tychicus was doing more than merely delivering the mail. I also believe that Tychicus was coming to ease Timothy of the pastoral burdens in Ephesus, so that Timothy could leave to come and see Paul. Tychicus was a faithful friend, willing to help Paul in whatever way possible, even if it meant leaving Paul, so that others could come and help in ways that he couldn't.

In verse 13, we see Paul seeking some administrative help from Timothy. When he comes to see Paul, he is to bring some things.

2 Timothy 4:13

When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.

Here we see help for his body and help for his soul. He wanted a coat to keep warm physically. And he wanted the Scriptures to keep engaged spiritually.

Somehow, he had left this cloak in Troas. We don't know how he left it there or why he left it there. Some speculate that Paul was arrested by the Romans and carried away quickly, so quickly in fact that he didn't have time to gather his cloak. Perhaps he had left it in Troas and planned to return there before winter, but was taken away by the Romans. Perhaps there was a need in Troas, so he lent it out to Carpus. Whatever it was, we just don't know.

At any rate, Paul wanted Timothy to pick up the this coat. To do so would have taken Timothy out of his way -- like 200 miles out of his way to the north. That's a long way to go for a cloak. But, Paul knows that winter is coming (4:21), and he wants the coat before winter. It will help provide needed warmth for his body.

It does show how poor Paul is at this point. He doesn't have sufficient funds to purchase an extra coat. It helps to show the difficulties of Paul's situation at this point. It's going to get cold, so he needs a coat.

And then, Paul requests help for his soul. He said, "Bring the books, ... and especially the parchments." Perhaps this is the real reason why Paul sent Timothy to Troas. Perhaps his books were there. The term here used for "books" is referring to the scrolls, made of papyrus. The term used for "parchments" is referring to the more expensive scrolls made of animal skins. No doubt, they are talking about Biblical material that Paul desired while in prison. While spending the long days in prison, he wanted nourishment for his soul.

This ought to teach us much. If the apostle, who wrote portions of the Scripture, needed the Scripture, how much more do we need the Scripture! We need the Bible to nourish our soul.

I can do no better than to quote Charles Spurgeon here:

The Apostle says to Timothy, and so he says to every preacher, "Give yourself unto reading." The man who never reads will never be read. He who never quotes will never be quoted. He who will not use the thoughts of other men's brains proves that he has no brains of his own. Brothers and Sisters, what is true of ministers is true of all our people. You need to read.

Renounce as much as you will all light literature, but study as much as possible sound theological works, especially the Puritan writers and expositions of the Bible. We are quite persuaded that the very best way for you to be spending your leisure is to be either reading or praying. You may get much instruction from books which afterward you may use as a true weapon in your Lord and Master's service. Paul cries, "Bring the books"—join in the cry. [\[2\]](#)

Is this your cry? Can you say with Job, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job. 23:12). Can you cry

with David, "Your lovingkindness is better than life" (Ps. 63:3)? Do you live on bread alone? Or, do you live on every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord? (Matthew 4:4).

Is this your cry? "Bring the books!" May I remind you the power of the books? They are "inspired by God" (2 Tim. 3:16). They are "profitable for teaching." They are "profitable for reproof." They are "profitable for correction." They are "profitable for training in righteousness." They are sufficient guides for your life. They will prepare you for "every good work."

Are you reading the Bible -- consistently, systematically, affectionately? Are you reading books to help you learn the Bible? When you come to your final days, what will you seek to read? You will only do so if you are doing so today.

At this point, I want to share the story of William Tyndale, because his situation was much like the apostle Paul's. Tyndale worked long and hard in his life for the Scriptures to be translated and read by the common people of his day. He was driven by the desire that the boy driving the plow would know the Scriptures better than the pope, himself did.

He was in prison awaiting his heresy trial. His crime? Believing that faith alone justifies. One of the last letters that he wrote before his death was to the prison governor. Listen to the parallels with Paul! He wrote, ...

I believe, right worshipful, that you are not unaware of what may have been determined concerning me. Wherefore I beg your Lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here through the winter, you will request the commissary to have the kindness to send me, from the goods of mine which he has, a warmer cap; for I suffer greatly from cold in the head, and am afflicted by a perpetual catarrh [illness], which is much increased in this cell; a warmer coat also, for this which I have is very thin; a piece of cloth too to patch my leggings. My overcoat is worn out; my shirts are also worn out. He has a woollen shirt, if he will be good enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of thicker cloth to put on above; he has also warmer night-caps. And I ask to be allowed to have a lamp in the evening; it is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark.

But most of all I beg and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the commissary, that he will kindly permit me to have the Hebrew Bible, Hebrew grammar, and Hebrew dictionary, that I may pass the time in that study.

In return may you obtain what you most desire, so only that it be for the salvation of your soul. But if any other decision has been taken concerning me, to be carried out before winter, I will be patient, abiding the will of God, to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ: whose Spirit (I pray) may ever direct your heart. Amen. [\[3\]](#)

In 1536, Less than a year after this letter, he was executed for his "crimes." Strangled at the stake, and then burned.

Both Tyndale and the apostle Paul show for us what matters most in this life. They were imprisoned for their faith, awaiting execution from a prison cell. And they wrote letters to request the few things that mattered most to them. They wanted a little physical comfort. They wanted nourishment for their soul.

In your last days, the Scriptures will be what matters most to you. When you come to your last days, you won't want the Rockford Register Star to be read to you. You won't want Time magazine or Mark Twain or Socrates. You will want the Scriptures read to you. And the only way to find comfort from them in your last days is for you to find comfort from them in these days. So, Paul wanted the books. And Paul needed a faithful friend to bring the books to him.

What Matters Most? We have first seen: Faithful Friends (verses 9-13, 19-21) Let's look at my second point this morning, ...  
2. A Faithful God (verses 14-18, 22)

In verses 14 through 18, we see Paul relying upon the Lord through times of adversity. First, in dealing with Alexander. Verse 14, ...

2 Timothy 4:14-15

Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.

Again, there is much here that we do not know. We don't know much about Alexander. Nor do we know exactly how Alexander had hurt Paul. But, I think that you can put together some of the pieces and see a bit of what probably went on.

When Paul entered Ephesus, it was a pagan city, dominated by the goddess Artemis (Acts 19:27). In fact, people would make pilgrimages to Ephesus to worship this idol. And it brought much wealth to the people of Ephesus, especially to the craftsmen who made small idols for the people to purchase and take back to their homes (Acts 19:24-27). Well, when Paul came to Ephesus, revival broke out, especially among those who practiced magic and exorcism (Acts 19:13, 19). As a result, "many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver" (Acts 19:19). "The word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing" (Acts 19:20).

This didn't sit well with the craftsmen of Ephesus. They knew full well that their livelihood was at stake if the gospel prevailed. A man from Ephesus, named Demetrius, gathered together all the workmen of the trades and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all. Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be

dethroned from her magnificence" (Acts 19:25-27).

That was the attitude among the craftsmen in Ephesus. And so, you can imagine the passion of Alexander--the coppersmith, one of the craftsmen in Ephesus. His anger may well have been directed against Paul, who brought the gospel to Ephesus in the first place and who worked tirelessly to see it propagated throughout the world.

I have spoken with a financial planner in our body about people and their money. He said that you start touching the pocketbooks of people, and they begin to get a bit testy. When their nest egg starts losing in the market, people get a bit antsy. Years of hard work have brought them to where they are, and they want to protect their security.

I believe that such was the case with Alexander. He was a coppersmith. His security rested in the prosperity of his business. The gospel was a threat to his business. It's no wonder that (according to verse 15), he "vigorously opposed [Paul's] teaching." The gospel wasn't good for his financial well-being. We don't know exactly what Alexander did to Paul. But, we know that it was harmful and it was hurtful (4:14).

But, we guess how Paul responded to him. He certainly followed his own advice in chapter 2, verses 24-26. He wasn't quarrelsome, but was kind. He was patient when Alexander wronged him. And with gentleness, he was correcting him, bringing him the truth. He was praying for God to grant him repentance. Obviously, Alexander didn't repent, because he told Timothy to "be on guard against him" (verse 15). In other words, "Be wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove" (Matt. 10:16).

But, the key to everything about Alexander is Paul's perspective. He simply says, "The Lord will repay him according to his deeds" (verse 14). Paul knew the Scriptures, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay" (Rom. 12:19; Deut. 32:35). Paul trusted this scripture. Paul knew that God would deal with Alexander in a far better way than he, himself would. And so, Paul gave him over to the hand of God, in his mind.

And notice what this does for Paul's peace of mind. In life, you are going to have conflicts with many people. Some of them you will be able to resolve. But, others, you will not be able to resolve, especially if your conflicts center around your trust in the truth of the gospel. We can confess our sins to others. We can bend with our preferences. But, we can't bend the truth. If others aren't believing the gospel, they won't back down, either. And a permanent rift may easily develop.

The best thing to do in that sort of situation is to let God deal with it. And if you can do that, you will remove all bitterness and anger and wrath toward that individual. That comes here with Alexander. As Paul simply says, "The Lord will repay him according to his deeds," (4:14). You can almost feel the burden lifted from his shoulders. Think about it -- trusting in the final judgment of God, has a way to help us deal with our bitterness toward others today.

As John Piper wrote, "One powerful way of overcoming bitterness and revenge is to have faith in the promise that God will settle accounts with our offenders so that we don't have to." [\[4\]](#)

As Chris Brauns wrote, "If you feel yourself wrestling with bitterness, then focus more intently on our glorious God. Savor the providence of God. He is in control of all things. He is perfectly just and cannot be unjust. Bitterness begins when we have been treated unfairly. But if we believe that God will accomplish justice, and if we are simultaneously confident that God is working all things together for our good, if that is our center, then we will beat the stuffings out of bitterness every time." [\[5\]](#)

This is what Paul was doing with Alexander. He is trusting in the goodness, the faithfulness of God to be true to his promises. God will deal with Alexander, thank you very much.

What matters most in Paul's life at the end? The faithfulness of God. What matters most in your life today? The faithfulness of God. In this life, people will wrong you. You will be treated unjustly. That's just the way that it is! But, don't carry it around! You don't want to live your life as a bitter person. You don't want to live your life trying to get even. It will eat you up! You will eat others up. You will be unhappy. You will be unpleasant to be around.

The best thing to do is to trust our faithful God to make all things right in the end. What matters most? A faithful God.

And you see that again in verses 16, but from a slightly different perspective. Verses 14 and 15 speak about an unbeliever hurting you. Verse 16 speaks about a believer hurting you. Look at what Paul said, ...

2 Timothy 4:16

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.

Picture the apostle Paul standing trial before the Roman authorities. Picture him defending his actions. Picture him claiming his innocence. Picture his many accusers. Picture nobody around to support Paul in his words.

Surely, that hurt Paul as he was surrounded by Demas-like friends. A faithful friend was nowhere to be found. Paul could have become bitter. Paul could have become vengeful. Paul could have called God to judge them.

Now, note afresh how Paul deals with the hurts of others. With Alexander the coppersmith, he was trusting in the judgment of God. With fellow believers who had hurt Paul, he was trusting in the grace of God. Look again at verse 16, ...

2 Timothy 4:16

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.

Rather than entrusting his fellow believers to the judgment of God, Paul entrusts his fellow believers to the grace of God. That's grace. But, it's the sort of grace that God extends. It's the grace extended to Peter after he denied Jesus three times in His greatest hour of need. It's the grace that Paul extended to Mark after he deserted him during the missionary journey. It's the grace that Paul would extend to Demas if he would ever repent.

And I would encourage you to extend such grace to believers who disappoint you. Just as God has forgiven you by grace, pray for God to forgive them by grace.

Though Paul lacked a faithful friend, still a faithful God was around. Verses 16 and 17, ...

2 Timothy 4:16-17

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. 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.

Paul had lived through difficulty. Paul had experienced the faithful hand of God through the difficulty. He experienced the strengthening hand of God. He had experienced the rescuing reach of God. He says in verse 17, "I was rescued out of the lion's mouth."

Now, we don't know exactly what Paul was referring to here. Perhaps Paul was referring to the time when his life was threatened at Damascus and he escaped the city by being lowered down through an opening in the wall in a large basket (Acts 9:24-25). Perhaps Paul was referring to the time when his life was threatened at Jerusalem and he had to be led away by the brethren (Acts 9:28-30). Perhaps Paul was referring to the instance when he was stoned and left for dead at Lystra (Acts 14:19). Perhaps Paul was referring to the time he was given a Roman escort of 200 soldiers and 70 horsemen by night from Jerusalem to Caesarea (Acts 23:16-35). Perhaps Paul was referring to the time he appealed to Caesar and was given safe travel to Rome (Acts 25:1-12).

Paul may have been talking about one of these instances, or all of these instances. We don't know. But, we do know that God was faithful to Paul. God had saved him for a purpose -- "to bear [God's] name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). God was faithful to carry out Paul's purpose: "the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear" (verse 17). God's strengthening hand was felt in Paul's life, so that now, at the end of his life, he can trust the faithfulness of God.

Verse 18, ...

2 Timothy 4:18

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.

And in the end, this is what matters most -- that, "the Lord ... will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom." Paul had seen the faithful hand of God in his life. Paul was now in a position to trust the faithful hand of God with the rest of his life. It's what matters most.

And see the gospel in these words. The God who has saved us is the God who will rescue us, is the God who will protect us, is the God who will guard us, is the God who will bring us to Himself.

I can't help but to think of the promise of Romans 8, ...

Romans 8:28-30

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

And Philippians 1:8, which says, "He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it." This is the gospel. God doesn't save us by His grace only to let us continue by the strength of our own hands. No, the gospel *is* grace from first to last. We begin in God's hands. He keeps us in His hands. He will preserve us in His hands.

As Richard Sibbes said long ago, "When the child falleth not, it is from the mother's holding the child, and not from the child's holding the mother. So it is God's holding of us, knowing of us, embracing of us, and justifying of us that maketh the state firm, and not ours." [\[6\]](#)

That's what Paul was trusting in His final days. He was trusting in His faithful God. He knew that God would be faithful, ...

2 Timothy 4:18

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.

What Matters Most in this life? Faithful Friends (verses 9-13, 19-21) and A Faithful God (verses 14-18, 22). As we wrap up this epistle, let's look quickly at verses 19-22. They are a microcosm of my message this morning, ...

2 Timothy 4:19-22

Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

We see the faithful friends listed in verses 19-21. First, we see those who Paul is greeting: Prisca and Aquila, who helped Paul earn a living making tents (Acts 18:1-3), and Onesiphorus, who helped Paul by seeking him out in Rome and not being ashamed of his chains (2 Tim. 1:16-18).

Then, we see those who were faithful in ministry with Paul. Erastus, who remained at Corinth (for ministry reasons, probably). Trophimus, who was ill and remained at Miletus. Note, the apostle Paul wasn't able to heal this man.

And then, we hear from those in Rome, who knew Timothy: "Eubulus, Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren."

Finally, we see a faithful God in verse 22.

2 Timothy 4:22

The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

What a great way to end the letter, entrusting Timothy to the grace of God. What a great place for us to end, entrusting ourselves to the grace of God.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 13, 2011 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] You can read all of Jonathan Edwards' resolutions [here](#).

[2] Charles Spurgeon, "Paul--His Cloak and His Books," sermon #542. You can read it [here](#).

[3] God's Outlaw, pp. 163-164

[4] John Piper, "Future Grace", p. 261

[5] Chris Brauns. "Unpacking Forgiveness", p. 158

[6] Richard Sibbes, "Complete Works", Volume 6, p. 439