

Past Deliverance and Future Hope

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[0:00] 2 Timothy chapter 4, we begin in verse 9. So he's fought the good fight, he's ran the race, and now at the very end he says this, verse 9.

Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia.

Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

Alexander, the metal worker, did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. At my first offense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

[1:17] And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.

Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Putins, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers. The Lord be with your spirit.

Grace be with you. In my defense, earthly fathers don't always discipline well.

We do our best. And my son was able to duplicate with one of their toys the exact holes that were all over the yard. And I put it in his hand, and I said, Ryan, shove that thing into the ground, and he didn't.

[2:21] It made the exact same mark. And there was always some doubt in our minds because of the number of the holes and the location, and we were convinced at the time that he had done it. And he eventually actually admitted it.

That he wanted to get the whole thing over with, I think. That was about a year ago. And then, or a year ago last spring maybe, and then the holes reappeared this spring, and the offending toy had long since been removed.

And then we realized that perhaps little animals were digging in our yard, and then last night there was a skunk roaming the yard, and we saw him. Earthly fathers fall short in their discipline.

Our Heavenly Father never does. He knew from the beginning who had made those holes in our yard, and he knows the beginning from the end in each of our lives, and he knew it in the life of the Apostle Paul as well.

Paul's friends had helped him. They had been an aid to him. But in one of the darkest moments of his life, they fell short. But God did not. And that's what we want to see tonight.

[3:28] And you can perhaps think back on low points in your life. Paul is thinking back on one of the lowest in his life. And maybe you had someone there to support you. A spouse, or a parent, or a beloved sibling, or a dear friend.

Maybe a pastor. But maybe at the lowest point of your life, you had no one there at all. And maybe you're very familiar with Paul's plight, his situation when he says at my first offense in verse 16, no one came to my support.

Maybe you've been there. Maybe friends have failed you in the past. And my point is not to depress you tonight by thinking on the darkest, loneliest stage of your life. Quite the contrary.

By thinking about what happened with the Apostle Paul, I actually want to encourage you tonight.

He's wrapping up this second letter to Timothy, and we're finishing it tonight as well.

And we've seen the tie that binds us together, and Christian love is a blessed one. And Paul talks about a lot of his Christian friends here, and helpers in the ministry. And he speaks highly of some of them. Because they met needs that he had, and we have those needs too.

[4:36] And often God uses other people to meet them. And we praise him for it. But other times, humans let us down. Paul found that out.

That even Christian friends can fail us. So tonight we want to see that though friends should all fail us, and foes all unite, yet one thing secures us. Whatever be tied, the promise assures us.

The Lord will provide. Even when friends fail us. Just as God stood with Paul when everyone else abandoned him, he will stand with you.

And so we've seen that there are human needs. Sometimes they're met by humans, and sometimes they fail us. But tonight we want to think about the divine fulfillment of those needs. How God meets them. And to do that we want to think about past deliverance, future assurance, and divine blessing.

We'll be looking at verses 17 and 18, and also at verse 22 tonight. Past deliverance. Paul thinks back. Future assurance. He anticipates what is to come.

[5:40] And then divine blessing. But right as we get started tonight, these truths that we're going to talk about are for believers.

They're for people who have faith in Christ. And so everything that I say after this is going to be for believers tonight. And so right up front, if you're not trusting in Christ tonight, if He is not your hope, He is not your trust, when your friends all fail you, you've got nothing.

When your friends come up short, like some of Paul's did, and you're in your lowest moment, if you don't have Christ, you don't have anything. And so I would plead with you, and I would urge you, and I pray that you would come to Christ, and that you would put your hope and your trust in Him.

And then you'll find that these promises are yours as well. Well, past deliverance we begin with.

Though we're all alone, the Lord has stood with us.

That's what Paul finds. And to set the stage for seeing God's marvelous provision, we need to go back just a little bit, back to verse 16. At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me.

[6:59] If we're going to appreciate how God stood with him, we need to appreciate how he was abandoned. So picture this scene with me. It's a courtroom, maybe like you've seen dramatized on TV in a movie, or maybe a real one in a documentary.

And there's the defendant sitting at the table. And you watch him. And sometimes he looks worried. And sometimes he looks fearful.

And sometimes he weeps. Occasionally perhaps a smile when he hears something true. But as the witnesses come and go, and the lawyers question and cross-examine the witnesses, the man is sitting there.

But not only is he there, in the rows just behind him are his family and friends. And they weep with him. And when they can catch his eye, they give him a sympathetic glance.

And when he comes and goes before and after a recess of the court, they squeeze his hand and they embrace him and they support him in his time of trial. And then when the jury foreman stands up and says, we've reached a verdict, Your Honor.

[8:06] You look over. And his friends and family are sitting right on the edge of their seats, waiting just as eagerly as he is to hear the outcome of the verdict. Not guilty.

And not just from the defendant himself, but from his family. There are sighs of relief. There are tears of joy. Exclamations of joy. There are embraces as his shackles are removed. And he celebrates with his family and friends who had supported him throughout.

If you were on trial, that's what you would want there. Friends and family to support you. But when Paul went on trial, back in Acts 28, he's imprisoned.

When he was put on trial after that, the scene was very different. No one came to my support.

Those rows behind him were empty. There was no one to sympathize with him, to support him, to strengthen him.

No human there. He was alone. And that helps us to understand verse 17, where he says, But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.

[9:11] To the naked eye, Paul was alone in that Roman court. But the reality was far different. And maybe if Nebuchadnezzar had been in that room, he would have leapt to his feet in

amazement.

Because you remember when King Nebuchadnezzar threw three men into the burning furnace, he looked in there, and he leapt to his feet in amazement, and he said, Look, I see four men walking around in the fire.

Unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods. The pre-incarnate Christ was walking around with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in that fire that day. In Nebuchadnezzar's song.

And maybe some in that court that day were amazed at Paul's calm demeanor, his peace in the face of a possible death sentence. If their eyes had been opened like the king of Babylon's, they would have seen the same Lord of glory standing beside him that Nebuchadnezzar saw in that fiery furnace that day because he wasn't alone.

The Lord stood by his side. Simply the presence of God was a comfort to the apostle. Have you ever found that? Have you ever found it on a human level? A friend can give you comfort simply by their presence.

[10:24] They don't have to say anything, but by being with you in the same room at your moment of trial, they speak remarkable peace to you and comfort just by their presence.

And I hope that you found the same thing in the presence of God with you by his spirit. If you find yourself alone, remember that God is with you and pray that you'll find the comfort and peace that comes from the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.

God may often use other people to fulfill that need, but he often fulfills it simply by the presence of his spirit with us. And so we need not worry.

Though we be alone in our time of need, God is with you just as really as he was with those three men in the furnace, just as really as he was with Paul. Hebrews 13.5, God has said, Never will I leave you.

Never will I forsake you. Though men may leave you and fail you, God will not. And so Charles Spurgeon has a comment on this passage in a sermon and he says, Has it fallen to thy lot, my brother, to be forsaken of friends?

[11:35] Were there other times when your name was the symbol of popularity? And has it come to this now that you are forgotten as a dead man? In your greatest trials, do you find your fewest friends?

Have those who once loved and respected you fallen asleep in Jesus? And have others turned out to be hypocritical and untrue? What are you to do now? You are to remember this case of the apostle.

It is put here for your comfort. He had to pass through as deep waters as any that you are called to afford. And yet, remember, he says, Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me. So now, when man deserts you, God will be your friend. This is our God forever and ever. Not in sunshiny weather only, but forever and ever. This is our God in dark nights as well as in bright days. He is with you. He'll not leave you. He'll not forsake you. And not only is he with Paul and you, but he gives strength. The Lord stood by my side and gave me strength.

[12:37] It should be our prayer, as Paul prayed in Ephesians 3, I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit and your inner being. Now, nobody can see that work going on in your inner being.

But have you ever watched someone, a believer, during a trial, and you're just amazed at their resiliency, their strength, their ability to endure it, that's the work of the Spirit in them, giving them strength.

They couldn't do that on your own. Have you ever found that yourself? Strength that you don't know where it came from, that's coming from the Spirit working in you. Do you know the presence and strength of God?

Is any of this ringing true to you? That God has stood with you when you've been alone? That He has given you strength? I don't have a magic formula to provide it, but I can tell you some everyday, ordinary things that you've heard before.

If you're not experiencing the presence and the power of God, if you want to experience the comforting presence of our Lord, you should be walking closely with Him.

[13:41] You should be communing with Him. As we've been talking on Wednesday nights, if you want the Spirit to empower you, you shouldn't be grieving Him away. And so if your relationship with

God has grown cold, you're not talking to Him in prayer, and you're not listening to Him in His Word, in the preaching of His Word, and you're not living with an eye to the second coming of Christ, and you're living with great pride in your heart, thinking that you don't really need God or these people around you, or if you're living in some other sin without repentance, when trial comes, don't be surprised if you feel very lonely and without strength.

Paul walked closely with his Lord, and so he knew His presence and strength and trial, and you will too as you walk closely with the Lord who is faithful to His people. And you see the marvelous outcome of this past deliverance.

In v. 17, So that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. Paul's first trial. He's imprisoned there at the end of Acts 28, and we assume that he goes on trial after that.

We believe that he does from the rest of his letters and from this here. But it appears that he was acquitted at that trial, and that he was released, and that he was set free for a time.

And that he went on ministering the Word. And I think I mentioned this last time, but there are references to Paul's travels and places he visited in his letters that simply don't fit into the time frame that we have in the book of Acts.

[15:15] We think he was released and then was imprisoned again, which is the imprisonment from which he's writing this letter. Now some have a different view of that first offense there in v. 16.

They think it's a reference to the first part of his current trial. That's possible, but I think it's a reference back to Acts 28. And so he was released after that imprisonment, and he was able to go on ministering the Gospel.

There was more work for him to do. Paul had been on his way to Spain when he was arrested and eventually taken to Rome for trial. And we don't know if he ever made it that far to Spain, but he did, after that imprisonment, make it to Crete, and Nicopolis, and Ephesus, and Macedonia, and Troas, and Corinth, and Miletus.

At least to those places. And as he went, guess what he continued to do? He continued to preach the Gospel. He continued to make the message known that all the Gentiles might hear it.

It was always his goal to proclaim the Gospels to the nations, taking it beyond the Jews who had largely rejected Jesus to all the people. So that the promise made to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations by faith, so that that would be true.

[16:26] And so after that first trial, God wasn't finished with Paul. And his ministry was not fulfilled. And so he continued.

Now this time it is. He's anticipating his death. He's going to be executed after this imprisonment. But at that time, God wasn't done. Not every Gentile had heard the Gospel.

And even here, he says, so that all the Gentiles might hear it. Even at this point, not all the Gentiles had heard it. There were still people in the world where the Gospel hadn't gone yet, but the wheels had been set in motion.

Largely through the work of the Apostle Paul. And now Timothy was carrying that work on Crescens and Titus and Tychicus and these others that he mentions here. And do you know that that work continues today with us?

We are the fruit of Paul's having shared the Gospel with the nations. And it's our job to continue sharing it with the nations until all have heard. And I think it's instructive to notice God keeping Paul alive after one imprisonment, but not after another.

[17:27] It's appointed to man to die once. And that time is always in God's hands and therefore it is always at the right time. And so if God has spared your life, whether in an amazing way, a remarkable way, or in the everyday ordinary, He's still got you breathing and you're still here.

If He has spared your life, He has you here for a purpose. You're here for a reason. Paul's life was spared and he was able to go on preaching the Gospel. He knew what his purpose was that God had him here for.

Do you know what yours is? Are you seeking to fulfill it with every living moment He gives you? You notice Paul doesn't, after that first imprisonment, go back to Antioch and say, you know what, I'm done. I don't want any more suffering.

No more persecution. No more imprisonment. No more beatings. I'm done. I'm going to go sit. And I'm going to just live out my life in peace. No, he continues traveling, preaching the Gospel. What about you?

What are you doing with the time that God is giving you here? With the breath that He's putting in your lungs at this very moment? Do you know your purpose? It's to honor God above all else. [18:36] It's to bear witness for Him in word and deed. It's to walk closely with Him. It's to get home to glory in heaven. Parents, are you seeking these ends in the raising of your children?

Are you using every moment that God gives you with them to seek to bring honor to God and good to those children? That's your purpose. You say, I don't have a purpose. I'm not a preacher. I'm not an evangelist.

I don't see how I'm serving God's kingdom. You've got kids? You better be an evangelist. They need to hear the truth. They need to be raised in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Are you using the time that God is giving you with your children? Spouses, are you loving one another in a way that's honoring to God? Children, are you obeying your parents?

Are you fulfilling your calling in this world and using the gifts that God has given you? What's He called you to? He calls some people like Paul to minister the Gospel.

[19:35] Other people He calls to fulfill all sorts of roles in the world. Are you honoring God in whatever it is? Fulfilling your calling? Glorifying Him?

Being a witness by the way you live and the things that you say? Are you using the gifts that God has given you in the church? You don't have to be a preacher to be useful in the church. You don't have to be a deacon to be useful in the church.

Are you using those gifts for the glory of God? He's got you here for a reason. Are you wasting your time or using it for good purpose? Paul didn't waste his time. He used it well. May God help us to do the same.

Wake up every day and self-consciously live in such a way that's going to bring glory to God. Pray when you feet at the floor in the morning. Lord, help me to live with an eye to the second coming of Christ and to bring glory to Your name today.

To remember that this world is not all there is. Thank You for the breath in my lungs. Thank You that I woke up this morning. And help me to live for You. And Paul sums up that past deliverance then at the end of verse 17 by saying, and I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

[20:41] A vivid illustration. It's not likely he meant it literally. In the Roman Empire under Nero in those days, Christians were fed to the lions for sport and entertainment, but that death penalty was not given to Roman citizens.

And Paul was a Roman citizen. So it's not likely that that's how he would have died anyway. But I think it's simply an illustration that he was delivered from death. And the lion does conjure up thoughts of Satan and being delivered from him when we join it with the following verse that we'll look at in just a moment.

But I hope tonight that you find comfort in past deliverance. This is Paul looking back on something that had happened previously in his life. And the psalmist says in Psalm 103 in verse 2, Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

In the midst of your trouble, and boy, our troubles start to heap up all around us, and that's all we can see. It's like we get blinders on. We can only see our trouble in our trial. But we need to take a moment in the midst of those times to look back.

And to remember previous troubles and trials and how the Lord delivered us from the lion's mouth in those occasions. How He helped us then. You remember, this is some glorious, exalted language that Paul uses here.

[21:59] The Lord stood at my side. You know he's in a dungeon when he's writing this. He's not in a cushy office or a coffee shop just scribbling off a letter to Timothy. He's suffering right now as he writes this and he's remembering what God has done for him.

Drawing real encouragement from it. Do you remember? Or do you forget the benefits that God has showered down on you in your history?

It's like the children's game memory. You lay out all the cards and you flip two over and if you get a match you keep them. And the only way to be able to win that game is to remember what you've seen.

I saw the cat there. So if I see the cat over here I'm going to come back and you've got to remember what you've seen if you want to win at that game. And in this life full of trials full of temptations if you want to win you have to remember.

You have to remember what you've seen. You have to remember what God has done for you. God's faithfulness remembering it gives great confidence in the midst of your trials.

[23:06] When those trials come what's the first thing you do? Do you remember? Or do you fear and tremble and worry because you've forgotten the previous goodness of God in delivering?

You may not be so among us. We haven't received a spirit of fear but one of power. Let's live like it. We have the all-powerful God standing beside us working powerfully within us by a spirit who will not who cannot fail us though all others should.

That's reason to find comfort in the midst of trials. So there's this past deliverance. But secondly future assurance. We have something glorious to look forward to and we see it in verse 18.

Such remembrance of the past inspires real confidence not just for the present but for the future. Verse 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom.

You hear His confidence there. He will. What God has done He will do it again. The Lord will and it's the word deliver. And the NIV translates it rescue.

[24:11] But you see the end of verse 17 I was delivered from the lion's mouth and there's an intentional connection here the Lord will deliver me from every evil attack. Same word. He has delivered me and He will deliver me.

And we see these works of evil these evil attacks in the Scriptures and we find that they're carried out by evil men under the influence of an evil enemy Satan who is prowling around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

Paul says I have been delivered from the mouth of the lion and God will deliver me. No wonder Jesus in teaching us to pray says deliver us. That's our word from the evil one.

Echoes of the Lord's prayer as Paul speaks here of being delivered. And what Jesus would have us pray Paul confesses in confidence. Is it your confession? That He will deliver me from every work of evil.

Every evil attack. Do you pray that? And then do you believe that He'll do it? He's a heavenly Father. He delights to give us good gifts. Do you believe that He'll give you that gift?

[25:20] Paul is confident as we can be that God will continue to do what He's done in the past. He said the same thing to the Corinthians. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril and He will deliver us.

On Him we have set our hope. Is that what you set your hope on? That He has delivered you and He will continue to deliver us. Now deliverance does not mean a couple of things.

Deliverance does not mean that we'll never face suffering. You remember Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus. And Paul himself has suffered much. And you know that you've suffered enough to know that deliverance from the hand of God doesn't mean the avoidance of all trials in your life.

Sometimes we might wish it did. I wish deliverance meant that there wouldn't be any difficulty. But that's not what it means. And it also does not mean that we'll never face death.

The blood of the martyrs, the passing of time clearly show us otherwise. God doesn't just appoint death for His enemies. But there's a time appointed for all men to die. And the death of a Christian even unexpected or tragic or under persecution does not mean that God has failed to deliver them.

[26:29] Paul had confidence in the Lord's deliverance while clearly anticipating His own imminent death. You remember what he said in verse 6. I'm already being poured out like a drink offering. The time has come for my departure.

He's dying and he's confident that the Lord will deliver him. So deliverance doesn't mean that you're not going to die. But deliverance does mean that God will meet your every need and that He will not leave you or forsake you in the midst of those trials that He allows you to endure in your suffering. He will be with you to sustain you and strengthen you. Thy troubles to bless and sanctify to thee. Thy deepest distress. He'll deliver you such that nothing can destroy your faith and turn you away from Him.

No one can snatch you out of His hand. He will deliver you from the trial in that sense. It also means that the evil one, Satan himself, cannot do anything that God doesn't allow him to do.

Satan goes about as a roaring lion, but he's on God's leash. Yes, he released a torrent of suffering against Job and you have endured his attacks, but only with God's permission and God won't allow you to be tempted or tried beyond what you are able.

[27:40] He'll rescue you from every evil attack of Satan, his demons, his wicked followers on this earth, every temptation. You'll find help from the Lord. And deliverance does mean, finally, that death will be our definitive deliverance.

Sometimes God delivers us from death and He gives us more time to live on this earth, more time to serve Him, more time to follow Him when He still has more for us to do here.

But ultimately, we will be delivered from this world by death. Which is why Paul follows this statement with, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom.

He will deliver me from every evil attack and will bring me safely home to heaven. Paul's ready. He's expressed his desire much earlier in life to depart and be with Christ and now the time is at hand.

And deliverance for him clearly does not mean that he's not going to die. It means he's going home to heaven. Is that what you think of when you think of God delivering you?

[28:44] When you think of Himself? Literally, the word is saved. He'll save you. He'll save me for heaven. For His heavenly kingdom. Is that how you think of God saving you? Do you live life that way?

Even if I die, it just means that I am going to be with Jesus. I'm going to my eternal home sooner than I thought. I hope we live with the reality of heaven often before us as a motivator and an encouragement.

It motivates us because the difficulty we face on this earth will pay off in the long run. And it encourages us because we know that not even death can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

Death delivers us home to be with Christ. And so do you see that right now the suffering, the trial, the pain, and the difficulty are worth it.

It's worth it. I think that we often get too caught up in this present age. I know that I do. Demas did.

[29:50] And he deserted Paul. I think we get that way sometimes. We get caught up in earthly pleasures and money and cars and games and houses and a comfortable standard of living and success for our children.

So much so that our love for Christ and our eagerness for our eternal home in heaven begins to grow cold. We love this world too much.

May it not be so. Jesus is our priceless treasure, our highest pleasure, and we must live that way. We like life here so much that we forget sometimes to live for the heavenly reality.

But we must not. There's a crown of glory awaiting us. There's an eternity without suffering. It's the world for which we live, not this one. And it should make a cold dungeon worth it for Paul.

And it does. He's looking forward to something much better than the place he is now. And I think maybe sometimes because we're not in a cold dungeon that we wonder if heaven will really be so great.

[31:00] I like my house. I'm comfortable there. We like this world. We're comfortable here. And as long as we're here, we're to live and to honor God in this world and to carry on our lives and to enjoy the world that He's given us.

But we're to have our eyes fixed on something way better. Way better than this. And I think our perspective is so skewed. And I know that you would confess to me with your mouth that you're looking forward to heaven and that that is your aim and that is your goal.

But I wonder sometimes if our lives show it. Does the way you live show that Christ is your treasure and that heaven is your home or that this world is all there is?

What does your life say? What is the way you live? The way you spend your time? Your money? The things that you think about most? The things that you talk about most? What does it say about where your heart is?

Where are you laying up your treasure? Does it make your trials seem small when you put them on the balance against an eternal weight of glory? I trust that it does.

[32:04] God is saving you for His heavenly kingdom. And some people might think you're crazy for not living for this world and not accumulating everything that you can have and pursuing pleasure with reckless abandon.

People thought Paul was crazy too. Crazy to live for Christ. Crazy to serve Him. But you know, the truly foolish ones are those who live for the temporal.

The things that pass and fade away when eternity is looming before them. And so may that not be us. It's a matter of perspective. May God give us eyes to see and hearts to believe that there's an eternal weight of glory.

And that's what we're aiming for. That's what we're excited about. That's what we're eager for. That's what we're looking forward to. And so Paul, he breaks into praise.

The Lord will rescue me. He's going to bring me safely home to heaven. It's like He can't help it. He's still got some greetings to give, but that's just going to have to wait to God be the glory.

[33:05] To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen. So grateful. A commentator says, so grateful is Paul for such a Lord in the midst of such difficult circumstances that he breaks out into a doxology of praise and asks that the Lord be glorified forever.

Notice just a couple things about that doxology with me. Notice the person who's praised. It's the Lord. You say, that's obvious. We only worship the Lord. He's the only one worthy of worship. And that is right. But sometimes I wonder if we're ever like Paul, if we're ever so amazed that we say, glory be to the Lord. You know, we're good at marveling at the things that men do. Or at least I am. What an amazing catch. What a remarkable comeback. Did you see it? How smart she is.

We're good at praising men. I mean, we'll even call somebody in from the nation. Come see this. They're going to play the replay. Check this out. And we're so excited that we're praising them and we're giving glory to them. And it's okay to appreciate a good play and something glorious.

[34:10] We see it. We're so amazed. But I wonder if any of you husbands have ever said, honey, come here. Can you believe what I just read in my Bible? Can you believe what God did for this person?

Glory be to God. And if you're saying, hallelujah, what a Savior. I know we sing it. Have you ever talked that way in your conversation? Can you ever not hold back a praise to the Lord?

Because of what he's done. Have you ever been like that with Paul? We're good at praising. Man, but do we praise God that way? You get so overwhelmed that you have to tell somebody about it. Paul couldn't hold it back as he contemplated God's great work. Do you praise and worship like that? Maybe some would say, my life is just too hard to be able to praise God like that.

I'm too discouraged. I don't see any sign of his blessing. What? You see where Paul is? He's in a dungeon.

[35:09] And he's going, I can't help it. Praise the Lord. May it be so with us. As he sustains you and gives you grace, praise him. Glorify him.

See, the person being praised is the Lord. The words of praise are glory. Paul knew that glory belonged to God and God alone. He's not looking for a pat on himself, on the back for himself. Good job, Paul.

Way to endure all those trials. Way to suffer. Way to keep preaching even though you've been in prison. Good job. Way to endure. Glory to the Lord. Glory belongs to our God and not to us.

And the duration of the praise is forever and ever. Literally, it's for an eternity of eternities. Eternities forever. And so what Paul wants us to think of is an infinite number of eternities.

Sometimes, when we're talking with our kids, a lot of times, of course, we say, I love you. And they'll say, I love you more. And they'll say, I love you the most.

[36:13] And kids have sort of learned, I don't think they really know what it means, but they'll say, I love you infinity. And they'll say, I love you more than that. And if I really wanted to top them, I would say, I love you an infinity of infinities.

And that's what Paul's saying here. Glory be to God for an eternity of eternities. As many eternities as you can imagine, glory will go to God for that long.

And whenever I try to understand eternity, my brain starts to short circuit because everything we know of comes to an end. But this heavenly kingdom is going to be forever. And glory will be given to our God forever.

And isn't that great? When we look around this world, I get discouraged sometimes. I see people not glorifying God and people blaspheming God and shaking their fist in God's face. And I hope that pains you.

But what a thought to think that forever and ever, glory will be given to His name. And it won't end. And there's the affirmation of it. Amen. So be it.

[37:18] And so there's this past deliverance and this future assurance and now a divine blessing in the third place and much shorter than the other two.

In verse 22, the Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Even in the blessing, we see that it's the Lord who is with us always. And by the time that we get here, it should be clear that this is no empty blessing.

It should have been clear to Timothy, the Lord be with your spirit. And that's singular. This one's especially for Timothy. The Lord be with your spirit, Timothy. And what a final encouragement here. Not only Timothy has the Lord... Paul's been talking about himself here in these last few verses. The Lord has stood by me. He's been faithful and He will be faithful to me. And from His Father in the faith comes this encouraging word to Timothy.

The Lord be with your spirit too, Timothy. It's not just me that God does this for. It's not just for apostles. It's for you, Timothy.

[38:24] May He be with your spirit. And it carries the weight of all of that encouraging words that Paul has spoken about himself. May that be for you as well. Not just for Paul, but for all of God's children.

For each of you here tonight who are trusting in Christ. The Lord be with your spirit. And He will. It's my prayer for you that you'll find the comfort that flows from the Lord being with your spirit.

And grace be with you all. A word for all of the Ephesians there. As the letter was likely read in their hearing. A word for each of us.

Grace be with you. Only by the grace of God will we find these things to be sown. So may you know that great, that amazing grace. God has delivered you in the past.

And the evidence of it is that you're sitting here tonight. And maybe He's delivering you right now in the midst of some trial, deep waters through which you're passing. Don't forget that.

[39:24] Remember it. Cling to it. Go back to it when you face new trials. And know that the Lord will continue to deliver you. And He will take you safely home to heaven.

And so we say with Paul, to Him be glory forever and ever. Amen. Let's pray. Our Father, we thank You that You are faithful.

We thank You for the many times that You have delivered us. That You have been with us even when no one else was. And we pray that You would forgive us for not showing our love and gratitude and appreciation in return by living in a way that's too consumed with this world and not eager for the glorious kingdom to come.

We pray that You would give us grace to live with an eye on the past deliverance that You have given and on the future eternity that is waiting for us. We know that You have delivered and we trust that You will continue to until You take us safely home.

Comfort our hearts with these truths as we go from here. We thank You that You are a heavenly Father, that You give good gifts to us, that You are faithful, that You show us compassion, that You are kind to us.

[40:42] Thank You that You discipline us. Thank You for Your blessings that You shower down. We pray that we would go from here in that comfort and that hope. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.