

11/10/24 - 2 Tim. 4:9-15 - "A Steadfast Symphony"

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Date: 10 November 2024

Preacher: Brenton Beck

[0 : 00] Our reading this morning is found in 2 Timothy chapter 4. We'll be reading verses 9 through 15.

These are the closing remarks of Paul in his last letter. 2 Timothy 4 beginning at verse 9.

Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.

Titus, I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.

[1 : 12] Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm. The Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.

This is God's word for us today. Thanks be to God. Amen indeed. Great Sunday. It's amazing to be a part of this church.

And it's just a blessing. Every Sunday to gather like this and to open God's word. And just be part of what God's doing. It's so important for us to realize that it's not us.

We're invited in to what God's doing. And such a blessing to be part of that. Amen. We're going to be interactive today.

Let's go. So it's been good to have the last couple weeks off, two weeks off, which is great. I spent most of it sick with congestion. But it's all good.

[2 : 17] I'm good enough to preach in, so praise the Lord. As I was looking at this passage, looking at the few verses that remain on the page, and what Paul is doing at this end time of a letter, and quite frankly, his entire life.

He's at the end of his life. It made me think in the image of orchestral imagery. And so, for your benefit, you're going to get taken on this imagery journey with me.

Because I'm a huge fan of orchestral music. I love, you know they do the live movies with the orchestra kind of company, the movie.

That's awesome. I love the nutcracker play, but with the real orchestra in the pit. Love orchestral. Amen to that.

Make those, the nutcracker great again. Too early, too early. But I'm a fan of orchestral music.

[3 : 29] I find it fascinating how each instrument, you can isolate each instrument within an orchestra, and they all have just a beautiful, distinct sound.

Their tone is beautiful and distinct. Their range of ability to play notes is distinct. And also, just the resonance of their instrument is distinct and unique.

And most of all, they can just stand alone. They could, as soloists. But when they play together from a little ensemble to a giant orchestra, the notes intertwine with one another, support one another into this rich harmony that could never be achieved in a solo performance.

The violins. The violins. The violins. If you can just hear it. The violins soaring brightly as the deep tones of the cello just resonate, while combining with the deep grounding bass, all filling the air with this full and rich sound of a symphony.

Within the passage today, we see Paul assembling, we'll call it, an ensemble. Each one can stand alone on its own as a solo, each person that he calls.

[5 : 03] But when they're assembled, what a mighty force to be reckoned with. We see Paul assembling this ensemble. It's a union that similarly enriches when they're together.

It uplifts when they're together. It strengthens when they're together. It supports when they're together. Each through the bond of friendship.

Friendships. Friendships are a rich sound indeed. Richard Sibbes comments on this aspect, saying that Christian friends are like two lutes in concert.

Each receives help and harmony from the other, and both together make a most excellent sound. This beautiful metaphor will carry us through the passage today in the sermon as we enter into Paul's tough time.

It's, we'll call it, a bitter symphony. As his execution waits around the corner, and he depends upon tough friends to help him during this tough time.

[6 : 17] And what we'll see develop by the end of our time, I believe it will be that Christian friendships precede Christian continuance.

Christian friendships precede Christian continuance. And the sermon titled today is, let's see if it works, yeah, The Steadfast Symphony.

And this passage doesn't have necessarily the theological depth of, like, the doctrine of substitutionary atonement and things like that, or those things.

But it's very practical in nature, and I don't want you guys to undermine the practical nature of God's Word in these later parts of these letters.

There's so much practical application in the parts that we want to go to Romans 9, and we want to forget about 2 Timothy chapter 4.

[7 : 20] Don't miss what God's Word has to say for us at the end of this series and at the end of this letter. And let's unpack these features as we see that Christian friendships precede Christian continuance.

And let's unpack that in three features of Paul's assembling ensemble and allow us to understand that our most dire need in difficult times is not self-sufficiency but corporate dependency.

Okay? So let's pray as we enter into that work. Father, we praise you for the illumination of your Word brought to us by the power of your Holy Spirit that helps us understand, convicts us, leads us, guides us, comforts us.

We thank you so much for the person of the Holy Spirit. And right now we pray that we are helped, not only myself but also all of us who are hearing your Word today.

Help us to see the depths of the practical nature of your Word. And sometimes our shortcomings according to that practical nature that we often skip in your Word.

[8 : 36] So help us in this endeavor. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. So like I said, we're going to unpack three features of Paul's assembling right now.

It's called arms. Three features. The first feature of this ensemble is the need for transparency. He says in verse 9, Do your best to come to me soon.

He's writing to Timothy still. Do your best, Timothy, to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. And Luke is alone with me. Paul's first call is for Timothy to come quickly.

This literally gives off an immediate sense in Greek. It has a sense of dropping everything.

[9 : 48] Timothy, I don't care if you're in the middle of the bathroom break. Drop everything and get out to me. I need you, Timothy. Get to Rome.

This is about a four to six month trip. And as verse 12 informs us, if you look down a little bit further, it seems like Paul has sent Tychicus to be the interim pastor for Timothy.

He's already working things out as Tychicus is on his way to Ephesus. And now it's odd, though. We see something odd. There's something kind of like directional, like Timothy, come.

We see that there's going. There's Tychicus being sent. There's Crescens being sent. There's Titus spreading the gospel in all these areas. And then we see Demas.

Demas has departed, not for the gospel, but for love of this present world. He's deserted Paul and gone to Thessalonica. This is quite bizarre.

[10 : 51] And it will get even more bizarre and actually come together in answer for us in the next section, the next feature we'll see. But Demas, we would never have expected Paul to address Demas like this.

That Demas has departed. That Demas has a love for the world. Because Demas has been with Paul through all the ups and downs in ministry.

He's commended in his letters to the Colossians and Philemon for his strength. But it seems that something happened for Demas.

That Rome was a little bit too much. This prison cell was a little bit too much. I believe the most fascinating aspect of this, we'll just call it a bat signal that he raises up in the sky.

I believe the most fascinating aspect of this bat signal is the fact that Paul doesn't go at this alone. He doesn't say, well, my friends are better off to just continue gospel work.

[12 : 04] I'm here. I'll just rot away. I'll just rot away. Luke will help pen some of my final letters. No. He didn't deal with this time of need, of tough situations on his own at all.

He had needs, and he was not afraid to communicate those needs to anyone. Even though it would be quite an inconvenience of other people to serve these needs, for Timothy to come to him quickly.

It's quite a bittersweet pill and reality for Demas to part, to sit and think that he's been abandoned. It's a bitter pill. Jesus knew this bitter pill pretty well. As Judas betrayed him for money, Peter denied him three times.

The disciples failed to support him in the Garden of Gethsemane. And all the disciples abandoned him, right? Everyone. Phone drop. Amen. They're gone.

Right? But unfortunately, because of our weakness and frailty, I think that we sometimes mistakenly import ourselves wrongly into these narratives of Scripture.

[13 : 21] We may import ourselves in here and be like, oh, man, I would be a Timothy. I'd drop everything. Right? Or I'd be a Luke. I would lose everything and sit there in prison and care for Paul's health as a physician.

But in fact, we often would resemble Demas if we were honest with ourselves. We procrastinate in this life, hoping problems will just somehow resolve themselves along the way.

We seek distractions, hoping to sense immediate reprieve from problems. We minimize problems altogether, hoping that optimism will bring some sort of relief.

We blame, hoping to redirect any accountability for ourselves. And we avoid, hoping conflict will just magically go away. And as we evaluate Paul's situation, we should not only see the quality of friendship here that is built upon this feature of transparency with one another, but we should also see its counterpart of having transparency with ourselves, seeing our own failures, seeing where we missed the mark.

And this hits me quite hard. But this passage hit me quite hard because I don't think I would have done what Paul did here. I wouldn't. I'm someone who doesn't want to inconvenience others.

[14 : 52] Anybody who knows me closely, my wife, amen to that. I know it in her head. Yeah, you don't ask for help. This is supremely a challenge, even in my own life.

And I know I'm not the only one. But maybe, to my own discredit, is it because of my fear of being let down by somebody not coming and tending to my needs?

Is it a fear that I have of somebody not meeting some standard that I have? And so the picture is put back upon me.

And how many of us are in that same boat together? This hits me hard. And it should hit all of us hard, too. I'm fairly confident that Rome was the last place that Timothy would have desired to sprint towards.

He'd probably have sprinted away from. Luke would probably much rather be at home, laying in his bed. But the needs of others became their primary concern.

[15 : 53] We'll talk about that more in the next feature, too. But what an inspired reminder of what gospel friendships contain. What gospel friendships look like. You see, Paul knows what he needs and is not afraid to voice it.

I'm preaching to myself today, too. If we might find ourselves attentive to the call for this transparency, being honest with ourselves and honest with other people when we need something, not yielding to the Demas syndrome, we'll call it a syndrome.

We'll get medical. Demas syndrome. If we do this well, the world is front row to experience the symphony of the church as God intended it to be.

It's a picture that we saw in Acts chapter 2, where Luke wrote, And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship and to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And awe came upon every soul, front row. And many miracles and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

[17 : 02] And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together, breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all people.

And the Lord added to their number, day by day, those who were being saved. That is the front row picture of God's intention for us upon this world, in this world.

For the world to experience this symphony playing from this church. Taking this a little bit further, we see the second feature.

We see this transparency of stating needs, asking for help, but also evaluating our own hearts, this kind of two-way transparency. We see this second feature, this need for service, that it kind of takes this transparency a further step.

He says, Get Mark, in verse 11, the last part of verse 11, Get Mark, and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.

[18 : 25] Verse 12, Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus, and when you come, bring my cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas. Also the books, and above all, the parchments.

And just as Demas' departure, probably seems odd, when you see Demas being listed as quite honorable, in many of his other letters. Paul's call for Mark should seem pretty strange to us.

Because Mark, also, John Mark, also stood alongside Paul through Cyprus. But for some unknown reason, in Acts 13, he left Paul in Pamphylia, and went home.

He struggled with Demas Syndrome. That might be a speculation, but I don't think it's too far from the truth. And we see a reversal here.

And this is the good news. Get Mark, and bring him with you. For he is very useful to me for ministry.

[19 : 41] Mark had gone from useless, to useful. And moreover, the once missionary dropout, became the author of the Gospel of Mark, for us today.

Mark is the contrast of the failures of Demas. The immediate contrast of Demas' failure. And for that, we know that our failures, relationally speaking, church, do not define us.

We know that our failures, or our rejections, do not define us. Nor, do they define friendships. How many times we fail one another.

I'm a fallen, I'm a frail pastor. Yeah, I'm going to, people can put me on a pedestal, but I don't put myself there. I know I'm going to let everyone down. In one way or another. Carmen, as well.

Rick, Les, we know this about ourselves. But they don't define, friendships, relationships. In fact, it is often our failures against one another, when we realize our failures against one another, that actually, oddly strengthen relationships, through forgiveness, and unifying, based on grace.

[21 : 01] However, most of all, despite our failures, we can become instrumental, as the hands and feet, of Jesus Christ. You see, when we surrender, to the needs of others, even if it might be an inconvenience, to us, when we surrender, to the needs of others, this is Christ-likeness, on display.

Of Christ, who came to serve, and not to be served. This is Christ-likeness. It humbles us. We see this great reversal. Remember, Peter denied Christ three times, but, he was redeemed.

And Jesus, encouraged him, that he was going to be, the rock, of the church. Each apostle, didn't run far, from Jesus Christ.

Each, suffered greatly, for the gospel. And the grace, that Jesus Christ, exceeded, the consequences, of all of their failure, from Peter, to every disciple.

And this is the good news, of the gospel church. Despite our sin, despite our rebellion, against God, Jesus Christ, paid the penalty, for our failure. And through our restoration, with God, we become profoundly, useful to him.

[22 : 20] Of honorable use, to him. And this gospel narrative, rests within each, reconciled relationship. Marriage isn't the only union, on earth, that presents, and proclaims the gospel.

Sometimes it's as easy, as having these, close friendships, with one another, through thick or thin. Rejection, failure, letting people down, time and time again, and forgiving one another, as Christ has forgiven us.

What a forceful reality, to see a great reversal, between Mark, and Demas. And now unfortunately, Demas has departed, yes.

But Mark, is back. Mark is back. And I could only imagine, given time, and whatever happens, in real history, from this moment on, I would only expect, and pray that Demas, would also return, at a certain point.

But that is unknown, only known to God. But the gospel calls us, to redeem, broken relationships. The gospel unites us, relationally speaking.

[23 : 30] Just as it unites us, with Jesus Christ, and our relationship, with Jesus Christ. It unites us, with one another. That's a symbol, of the Lord's Supper, of communion.

That it serves for us, in this present day. You see, in a few months, in this passage, historically speaking, Luke, Mark, Timothy, will all be assembled, for Paul's fatal, departure, his execution, his martyrdom.

He has a tough team, for quite a tough time. He knows who to call on, who to depend on, even though it might, inconvenience them. But maybe, in a sense of, an ensemble, or an orchestra, maybe this is a beautiful ensemble, to accompany, a bitter time, for Paul.

I mean, even in practical ways, he literally tells Timothy, oh yeah, stop by, Carpus' house, grab my cloak, it's a little cold here, in this prison. Right? Just practical needs.

And grab the parchments, the scrolls, grab the Bible. Right? This will challenge us. When needs, within our own body, arise, church, do we wait for someone else, to respond, so that we can get out of it?

[24 : 59] Of course not. That wouldn't be Christ-like. We are called, at times, to be, so motivated, to serving each other's needs, that we might even, have to use, our last personal day, at work, to accommodate, and help someone else.

As inconvenient, as that might be, because you wanted, that personal day, to go fishing. Praise the Lord, for the gospel image, and praise God, for the picture of service, so clear, within Paul's friendships, in this passage.

Praise God. But there's still another feature, of this ensemble. Not just transparency, with your own needs, or transparency, of knowing our shortcomings, not just of service, and pouring out ourselves, to one another, but we see, this third feature, of this need for security, these relationships, are founded as, safe, secure, that's a weird word, in our culture today, but, it's certainly true, in this passage.

We look out, for one another, look in verse 14, Alexander the coppersmith, did me great harm, the Lord will repay him, according to his deeds, beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed, our message.

Now it seems, as if Paul anticipates, potential delays, that could arise, that could delay, his cloak, from being delivered, specifically around, Alexander's disdain, for Paul, and scholars, many scholars, actually attribute, Alexander's, being the sole reason, that Paul was arrested, in the first place.

[26 : 46] However, regardless of, Alexander's, false narrative, his story, that he might implode, upon his followers, cloak, and parchments, and all, run into Rome, he prepares them, for what may, cause delay, or, even worse, may cause doubt, if they're doing, the right thing.

And as we look, at this passage, what some of us, might evaluate, and call, gossip, Paul uses, as a basis, of wise guidance, to his friends, to protect his friends.

This reminds me, of one of our family favorites, Paul Bunyan's, Pilgrim's Progress, and the story, of Christian, and hopeful, making their way, to the celestial city.

And, they encounter, a deceiver, called the flatterer, who attempts, to lead them, off the path, of righteousness. And, the flatterer, shows how, Christians, can be, tempted, by smooth words, by deceitful, promises, time, and time, again.

Christian, and hopeful, remind me, of Timothy, and Mark, running to Rome, their mission, to, this intercontinental mission, to reach Rome. Paul's warning, to them, was not out of spite, for Alexander, of anger, towards Alexander, and how could he, wrong him, but it was out of, care and concern, for his friends, not to be, taken off track.

[28 : 29] That's the difference, between wisdom, and gossip. One is helpful, one is harmful. You see, this is the third feature, of friendships, is security, safety, in friendships.

The safety, we ought to experience, in our friendships, is the bond, of Christian unity, and charity, that's expressed, at all times. We ought to be, the safest people, for each other, with each other, looking out, for one another.

If we stab somebody, it's not going to be, in their back, it's going to be, in the front, right? Better are the wounds, from a friend, right? This is for the church, it ought to be, the safest place, for people, to be in relationships, with one another.

Recognizing, and honoring, sometimes, when somebody says, no to something, laying down, your own agenda, agenda, and, and, supporting them. Maybe, we should just say, make Christian relationships, safe again.

We are family, and we ought not, to forget it. So, Paul assembles, an ensemble, for a bitter time. Luke, faithful, since the beginning, knew Paul better, than anyone.

[29 : 51] Timothy, Paul's spiritual son, and Mark, redeemed failure, with the desire, to serve. This powerful, ensemble, would gather, one last time, as Paul teaches them, how to die, for the gospel.

for the sake, of continuance, of the gospel. Do you see now, how Christian friendships, precede, Christian continuance.

I mean, after all, these, three, four men, that would assemble, wrote over half, the New Testament. That's pretty incredible, to realize.

Christian friendships, precede, Christian continuance. This is important, to grasp, and apply for us today, because, it's far greater, than superficial, friendships, that lack, any depth.

It's not that. It's not, convenience based, friendships, where, you know, it's just, your paths are crossing, and you're friends. No, it's deeper than that.

[31 : 04] It's not, transaction based, friendships, where, you only reach out, to somebody, when you need something, or whatever, friendship, mold, you might want to, apply that to.

The gospel, enhances, and deepens, our, friendships, within the church, because they are, an image of the gospel. We see, our own needs, in this, to call for, transparency, and trust, to call to serve, others needs, of everyone, in times of need.

And it's a call, for security, within those friendships, and care, for serving, each other's needs. This is the symphony, of the church. Richard Sibbes is right.

Christian friends, are like two lutes, in a concert. Each receives, help and harmony, from each other, and both together, make a most excellent, sound. Friendships, in the church, are intended, to be, indispensable, not, disposable.

May this inform, correct, encourage us, today, to be a rich harmony, to complete, each other's calling, in this life.

[32 : 18] Amen. Let's pray.