

11/17/24 - 2 Tim. 4:16-22 - "Assurance Policy"

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[0 : 00] Our scripture reading today comes from 2nd Timothy chapter 4. Passages from chapter verse 16 to 22, but we'll begin at verse 9 for context.

These are the last words of the Apostle Paul. He's almost home. 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. Tychicus, as 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. 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.

[1 : 11] At my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles might hear it.

So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.

Oh, to him be glory forever and ever. Amen. Greek Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus.

Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill at Miletus. Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Putins and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers.

The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. This is God's word.

[2 : 29] Thanks be to God. We are almost home indeed. Thank you, Duffy, for reading three weeks in a row.

I think you might get the hint. We really enjoy you. Thank you. Paul is nearing quite an end of this roadway home, a long saga of hardships.

And we get that sense from his recent past tense statements that Pastor Rick preached on not long ago. He said in the beginning of chapter 4 in verse 7 that I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. And from the moment that the Lord elected Paul to salvation, his life has experienced a path of difficulty along the way, as which was promised to Ananias, who was to receive Paul in Acts chapter 9, verse 15, where Ananias received from the Lord, the Lord said, Go for Paul.

He is my chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.

[3 : 59] And this path has led down several roads in his life of physical abuse. He was beaten three times in his life.

He experienced lapidation once, stoning once. He was shipwrecked three times. He was imprisoned for over five years, all for surrendering his life to the mission of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

All that remains ahead for Paul is a final judicial defense which will precede, ultimately, his inevitable execution.

He's almost home. And as Paul continues in this last day of his life, he continues to hold his ground, hold his defense.

In fact, if we were to put imagery to Paul's life as a Christian, from city to city, from trial to trial, we might envision Paul being this sort of a castle-like structure.

[5 : 21] He has that outer defense of his testimony, of his faith in the lordship of Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of prophecy, the hope and the good news of the gospel, being that outer defense of a castle.

And Paul's been living this out, holding his ground similar to castles. Now, in my mind, I have all sorts of things that come to my mind. And yeah, you've got to be aware of that. But, you know, movies specifically.

Robin Hood, The Prince of Thieves, as Carmen, there you are, Carmen puts his kids to sleep, and they request another book, a movie that I saw back in the 90s.

The Assault on Nottingham Castle. You might think of Braveheart, another great one. The Assault on York, that came out in 1995. Or even in 1999, The Messenger, the story of Joan of Arc.

Or, I've got to drop the Lord of the Rings reference, right? The Battle of Helms Deep, released in 2002. Amen to that. Yeah. There you go.

[6 : 27] Make people happy. It's like I'm selling ice cream up here. Right? Yeah, make my wife happy. So, whatever image, whether they're orcs attacking a castle, or men in armor attacking a castle, Paul has experienced this standing his ground in his life, just as a castle.

His opponents were met with similar lines of defense, his being his testimony, which they intended to breach, desecrate. to maybe tunnel under, as which was common in medieval warfare.

And even those who are closest to him didn't stick around to reinforce that defense, to stand with bow and arrow on the top of that wall, warding off anyone who came to challenge.

He says that in verse 16, at my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. You see, Paul's opponents are after blood.

They're discarding his testimony. And just as historic castle sieges, Paul's outer defense was compromised at this point.

[7 : 46] Compromised. Walls are broken. They're in. And they seek to take the inner defense to try to destroy Paul's entire empire by taking his life.

But little did Paul's opponents know, the inner defense of this structure cannot be so easily shaken. And for that, let's discover this point today.

That the gospel is our only defense. The passage will unfold proving that to us. And so I have a sermon title, a little piffy sermon title, Assurance Policy.

Not by GEICO. And so let's see this unpack in two sections as we finish this sermon series.

This is the 20th message in such a small four-chapter book. I believe that this journey has been very edifying to us and refining in our faith. And let's discover this final point as we close the book in this series, that the gospel is our only defense.

[9 : 00] Let's begin by prayer. Father, we come to you just needy, sinners, saved by grace, nothing that's good in us that we can boast about.

If we boast, it's Christ in us. It's nothing of ourselves. It's all because of you. And Father, we thank you for the gospel. We thank you for Jesus who came as our substitute to die the penalty that we deserve, who lived life that we can never live.

And because of that, his substitute was sufficient to pay our penalty in full. Father, help us to see that by our faith in Jesus, we receive something that we can never earn.

And it's forgiveness of our transgressions, forgiveness for our sin, regardless how great or how minor. Help us to see that the gospel is our only defense today.

Praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. All right. So, two sections today. And I want us to see this outer defense that Paul has been sort of talking about.

[10 : 26] And I'm glad that we did the breaks how we did them to really reinforce this point today. And so, the first section today is this outer defense.

This outer defense was built up and this outer defense was breached. We see that the testimony over the past many, many weeks has been sort of like that holding the line.

That he's been, even through our series in Acts, he's been proclaiming the gospel and he was hated for it. Whether it was beating, whether it was stones being flung at him, he was not received and welcomed.

And so, that testimony has been holding that line. And the people in his life have come alongside of him and reinforced that testimony. And we saw that specifically back in verse 9 where he's calling Timothy to come, someone who would stand with him, to get Mark, the redeemed missionary dropout, to join Luke and Paul.

And don't forget the cloak. Don't forget the parchments. Right? His defense was built up. He was reinforced indeed. It was. But it was also breached.

[11:51] It was neglected. He was abandoned. Like Demas, who abandoned Paul. Or Alexander, who betrayed Paul. You see, all of this is in regard to this outer sort of defense of the mission work of Paul.

And today, we see more fluctuations as Paul explicitly mentions the breach defense referring to his formal judicial hearings. He says that, And then in verse 19, we see it's like a switch flips and he's saying, I greet all my friends.

Because not all abandoned me. Greet Priscilla, Aquila, the household of Onesiphorus, Erastus, who remained in Corinth. He left Trophimus, who was ill.

I don't think he just threw him to the curb and left him to be cared for properly. At Miletus. Do your best to come to me before winter.

And greet all these other brothers. And at this point, his defense is all he had. Yeah, he had Luke with him writing this.

[13:09] But, or helping care for his needs. But he's testifying alone. They're asking, Do you have any witnesses?

And he's looking around. Can I phone a friend? Regis. No.

The line was drawn according to his testimony. And no one reinforced it.

And if history was true, Paul waits in this underground chamber in Rome. Known to have a small hole that's just big enough to shine a little bit of light to a pen and paper.

Paul's hungry. Paul's lonely. And he's got chains digging into his wrists and his ankles.

[14:12] Death is his only escape. And his pen is flowing and concluding here in our series. With the passion it began.

With urgency that it began. As he addresses Timothy this one final time. His last letter written upon this earth. To preserve and continue Paul's work well.

For Timothy to carry the baton of his work. Paul's essentially telling Timothy this. That our testimony of truth or outer defense will be abandoned by those close to us.

It will be attacked by those who hate us. That's a guarantee. And while people may disagree and agree with the testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul reveals the true purpose of defense in that it doesn't include universal acceptance.

And all of a sudden these followers and fan club and all of a sudden everybody just comes swarming the church because they all love the message. No. People will hate it.

[15:21] And so Paul endured these charges alone. No witnesses. No advocate. No support. And yet his response is profound and this should clue us in to his heart.

He says, may it not be held against them. It's almost like the words of Jesus on the cross.

Forgive them for they know not what they do. Or the words of Stephen who was bloody and broken and martyred in the public eye to forgive them.

No bitterness. No resentment. Only prayer and forgiveness to those who abandon him. This is profound.

This is a deep understanding of a sober reality of what our defense, how our defense serves God in this life. How Christ-like is that?

[16:28] And church, we must grasp this reality. Our testimony of God's grace as it's rooted in the gospel is deeper and more substantial than the opinions of those who agree or disagree.

The gospel is not a popularity contest. Paul's hope in his judicial defense as he's nearing the end, it's sober.

It's realistic. It's pretty humble. Because after all, what is a defense? What is this outer wall? How could a king ever assume that this outer defense of a wall would ever win a war?

Right? A defense is a defense. The shiny bumpers on our cars are meant to absorb impact. That's their functional duty.

And we care for our cars like they're our precious, precious little Lord of the Ring. The one that rules them all are precious. And we lose this.

[17:36] We lose this sense and the reality that our defense we get offended when people disagree with the defense, with the testimony of the gospel. Right?

We get hurt. And many of us don't respond may not be held against them. Some of us are like, God, I want you to deal with that person because they're quite annoying.

praise the Lord. Right? With the same tongue that we praise God, we curse other people. It's hypocrisy. No king would ever assume that an outer defense could ever win a war. Nor did Paul expect that his testimony would be universally accepted, thinking so as foolish, church. You see, similarly, our testimony isn't meant to win everyone over. Its purpose is to hold the line. To hold the line. Paul understood the ebb and flow of ministry, especially regarding people in ministry. And some, like Demas, left him. [18 : 35] Others, like Mark, returned. Friends, like Priscilla and Aquila and Onesiphorus, they remained faithful. Praise the Lord. But you see, there's something deeper than that. That meant something to Paul.

Our faithfulness to the gospel means something. Don't hear something I'm not saying. But there's something deeper rooted in our convictions. That Paul knew that his calling was to testify to the grace of God in Christ Jesus regardless.

Come what may. Stone or accusation. And so church, do we hold the same sober understanding of our testimony that it intends to hold the line, to hold the line of truth in a world full of lies?

Or do we lose sleep over those who abandon us, who disagree with us, who hate us, who cast us out of their lives because of the testimony of the gospel?

Let us remember our supreme loyalty is to the gospel of Jesus Christ, church. This loyalty is evident in those who not only who live not only for the fruit that's produced on account of the testimony but solely for the testimony itself.

[20 : 04] Right? There's various things that motivate us and to evangelize and to shine the light of the gospel in this world but may we never be disproportionately motivated by the fruit, by the reception because then we will be severely let down because of its rejection.

Embrace your call. But still yet, even though this outer defense in Paul's life was breached deep within a castle rests an inner defense.

And this is not so easily desecrated. Here lies Paul's assurance policy. In the second section, an inner defense, a mighty fortress.

Verse 17, we see something unfold. This outer defense may have been compromised but this inner defense stand firm. These are, this inner defense of a castle, these walls stand really high, really tall, really thick walls.

It had a lot of room inside. There was a bailey space or an inner ward inside and you can comfortably hang out in there knowing that you got this big thick wall surrounding you and military can stand at the top and stand against the enemy.

[21 : 40] And this central tower was very challenging to breach because you have the heights, you have the heights working for you because you lose a lot of men trying to breach that castle wall, that inner wall.

This inner defense often brought assurance in times of warfare. Even when people are flooding in, those orcs and all, all the trolls and everyone coming in, right? Here they come.

It brought assurance in times of warfare. And looking upon the passage today, it is a testimony that has nothing to do with what Paul said after all.

But this inner defense has everything to do with what God says about Paul. This inner defense that cannot so easily be shaken. He says in verse 17, What Paul understood is what so many of us struggle to understand.

The testimony of the gospel is not our testimony. Yeah, we got this hymn that says this is my story, this is my song, right? But it's God who writes that story for us.

[23 : 00] It's Him doing the work, right? And in fact, if the world stands vehemently against and opposed to the gospel testimony in our lives, it's not us that they stand against, but it's God that they have the problem with.

And so naturally then, if we endure in life in proclamation, God alone is the one who sustains that proclamation. proclamation. This is the inner defense that no enemy can touch.

No enemy can breach. The steadfast faithfulness of God is the one we depend upon who never fails us. God has always been sustaining Paul and is the same for us today.

In Acts, going back to Acts chapter 19, God tells Paul in verse 9, do not be afraid. Keep on speaking.

Do not be silent. He says later in chapter 23, verse 11, to take courage. In chapter 27 of the book of Acts, in verse 24, angel of the Lord came near to Paul and said, do not be afraid.

[24 : 14] Paul testifies to the Lord's standing by him, his faithfulness to Paul. In his first letter to Timothy, in chapter 1, verse 12. He says, I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service.

And we see not too long ago in the second letter, in chapter 3, verse 11, he says, my persecutions, my sufferings that happened to me at Iconium, at Antioch, and at Lystra, which persecutions I endured, yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

From them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life, remember that sermon? All who desire to live a godly life, what? Will be persecuted.

Will be persecuted. It's a surety. And so today we see that he's saying that I was rescued again from the lion's mouth.

The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever.

[25 : 27] And he ends it with amen, an agreement. The Lord will not fail those who fully surrender to him.

Paul joins David, even in the Psalm of David in Psalm 22. He identifies with David's trials here. And I believe the imagery is a clear connection.

But he also sings with David's faith. He identifies with David's trials in Psalm 22, verse 1. Why have you forsaken me? David's crying out to God.

He says in verse 11 in chapter 22, there is no help. Verse 21. He says, save me from the mouth of the lion. And verse 27.

Thanks, Carmen. And verse 27. And all the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord. And then he sings with David.

[26 : 26] Dominion belongs to the Lord. You see these parallels between singing with the trials and triumphs of David. And here Paul is with no one around. Abandoned, cold, hungry, forgotten about almost in this prison.

And he testifies. I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed. Bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.

Therefore, the inner defense that we are assured of, church, is the one placed and governed by God alone according to God's word alone.

No one can touch it. No one, not even death, can touch that. Its walls are fortified not by what we say and what we proclaim, but what God says and proclaims about us.

Because of our righteousness found through being clothed in Christ's righteousness. Not of anything good in us, but Christ's righteousness clothed upon us.

[27 : 42] And church, don't you see this? Paul's salvation was not equivalent to being delivered from prison. It wasn't to be healed from every ailment.

It was greater than that, but delivered into glory, a heavenly kingdom. Why? We have to ask.

Because Christ was in him and he was in Christ.

Even when the day comes in the future when the sun won't rise anymore, still God's word remains.

That is a surety according to the gospel.

Did Paul deserve that? Did he deserve God's grace? Of course not. Just as it is for all of us. But did Paul receive God's grace?

Yes. By the work of Jesus Christ, he received God's grace. Maybe those who are apart from Christ today, this kind of strikes a chord.

[28 : 54] It's a little bit different than maybe some of the religious messages you've heard at the last church, or the last time you were in youth group, and you just couldn't add up to what the pastor was saying you need to add up to, meet a certain standard, do a certain something in order to achieve a certain salvation.

I mean, take Paul, for example. He was a murderer who gave his life for the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and nothing could touch it. It was certain within him.

He had faith in Jesus Christ and Paul was saved by God's grace through his faith. It had nothing to do with Paul. Paul continued upon his, if Paul continued upon his broken way, how his story would have ended much different.

There would have been no rescue. There would have been judgments. The lion's mouth of God would close upon Paul apart from Jesus Christ.

It would crush him. And instead of being delivered safely into the heavenly kingdom, Paul's fate would be entering into eternal condemnation, eternal punishment forever in hell.

[30 : 20] God's love. And while Paul deserved that road, it is not what he received, which is the definition of grace, church.

Grace. And the plea for you remains today, if you're not in Christ, repent of your way, turn to God's way. What is your assurance policy?

prophecy. So as we look upon this, we see this profound letter of endurance to Timothy, written by Paul.

However, it was a bittersweet time, I believe, as Timothy read that final line. Look with me.

The last line of this. The Lord be with your spirits. Grace be with you. Our English doesn't communicate this as well, and I'm not going to give you a Greek lesson, but I am going to highlight something important for you.

[31 : 35] There's a singular and a plural at hand here. The Lord be with your spirits, singular to Timothy. But there's grace be with you all.

Plural. Grace be with y'all if we want to get Southern with it. Timothy would carry this blessing to Ephesus.

And Ephesus would find hope in the blessing of such a message. And this blessing reaches us and is carried even to this sanctuary in the year 2024.

Going on 2025. Church, this blessing is available for us to carry. And this blessing recognizes that people will come and go.

There's an ebb and flow of things in our lives. But still the Lord will remain forever. His unmerited favor, his forgiveness, his enabling power for us to continue, will continue to shower over his people everlasting.

[32 : 47] But life is tough, isn't it? We live in a broken world, we live in a fallen world, it's tough. Some today might feel sort of a distance from such a blessing.

Maybe you're wondering why you aren't experiencing God's favor, it doesn't feel like it. In fact, it might actually seem like the opposite, like he'd done something wrong. You're getting disciplined. More on that next week. Or maybe you're here today and you've just been clinging so tightly for so long upon the promises of the gospel that you're unsure if you can hold on any longer.

Whether you find yourself maybe in financial hardships prayers that seem to just cloud any hope that you might have in this life. That it's just a dreary November fall day in Youngstown.

That overcast that never goes away. Praise the Lord, I see sunlight out there. There is hope. But there is financial hardships that cloud us in this life. Maybe your prayer life seems unfruitful as you pray or you fervently pray for your unbelieving kids or maybe your unbelieving spouse.

[34 : 11] Maybe your experience in the doorway of potential pregnancy is closing due to ongoing fertility issues and just scared of having another miscarriage in life.

Maybe you're reaching your very last option for a medical treatment plan to treat your condition. Maybe it's anxiety just simply of life's unknowns navigating a fallen world.

Maybe it's this sense of regression in your parental efforts of raising your kids in godly ways that you just feel like you're losing grip of that.

You try so hard and your kids just can rebel and test you and nearly break you. Or maybe you're just simply struggling to find a reciprocating meaningful friendship within the church.

Either you're always being poured out to and never being poured into. Church, regardless of the changing circumstances of our lives, God's goodness, His faithfulness never change.

[35 : 29] Ever. Why? Because those who place their faith in Jesus Christ, Christ dwells within them. It's an inner defense that nothing in this world can touch.

church. And so may we stand firm because Christ stands firm in us, with us, and for us because of what Jesus Christ did on account of us.

You see, the gospel is our only defense, church. You see that. This defense is our mighty fortress that advocates on our behalf when all the world comes against us.

it's behind this mighty fortress that we stand behind. And so may we continue to carry this blessing to the end.

Let's pray. Let's pray.