Our time in 2 Timothy is coming to an end this morning. This is the final letter Paul wrote before he was martyred in Rome. He wanted his trusted friend and son in the faith Timothy to come to him soon. There is some irony in this passage because the main point is not the most important point. Paul wants Timothy to come, that’s the main point, but it is not the most important thing Timothy needs to know.

Before we get into our passage for today I would like to read a story to you all. It is titled “A Crown of Eternal Glory.” It is about a man named Romanus in Antioch which is in present day Turkey in 285 AD.

“Are you the author of this rebellion?” the Roman prefect raged. “Are you the reason so many were willing to lose their lives? By the gods, I swear you shall suffer for it. In your body you will suffer the pains you have encouraged your fellows to bear.”

Romanus boldly answered, “Your sentence, O Prefect, I joyfully embrace. I am willing to be sacrificed for my brethren by as cruel means as you may invent.”

The Roman prefect Asclepiades had invaded the city of Antioch, intending to force the Christians to renounce their faith. But Romanus had encouraged them to fight back. As soldiers were marching to break up the worship service, Romanus burst into the service saying, “The wolves are on the way to devour this flock, but fear not, my brethren!”

As the believers saw the great grace of God working in Romanus, old men and women, fathers and mothers, young men and maidens were greatly encouraged to stand firm, ready to shed their blood for the name of their Christ. With one will and mind, they were able to fight off the armed Roman soldiers.

Asclepiades had Romanus scourged with whips. But instead of tears, sighs, and groans, Romanus sang psalms all the time of his whipping. The more the martyr said about the Lord Jesus the more furious the prefect became. He commanded the martyr’s sides to be slit with knives until the bones showed white.

Romanus continued to preach the living God, the Lord Jesus Christ, His well-beloved Son, and eternal life through faith in His blood. This time, the prefect ordered that his teeth be knocked out, so he couldn’t speak clearly. His face was beat, his beard pulled out, his cheeks were gnashed with knives. When they were finished, Romanus said, “I thank thee, O Prefect. Look how many wounds I have,

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so many mouths I have whereby I may preach my Lord and Savior Christ, and praise God.

The Roman prefect was astonished with Romanus’ unwavering commitment to Christ. He commanded the tortures to cease. He threatened to burn him. He blasphemed God, saying, “Your crucified Christ is but a yesterday’s God; the gods of the Gentiles are most ancient.”

Romanus then preached on the eternity of Christ, His human nature, of His death for all mankind. Then he said, “Give me a child, O Prefect, one who is only seven years old, and not yet spoiled by malice and vice. You will hear what he has to say.”

A little boy was called out of the crowd. “Tell me, child,” said the martyr, “whether we should worship one Christ, and in Christ one Father, or should we worship many gods?”

“God is one and unique,” the child answered. “We children cannot believe that there are many gods.”

The prefect was amazed and said, “Where did you learn this lesson?”

“From my mother,” answered the child. “With her milk I sucked in this lesson, that I must believe in Christ.”

This is an amazing testimony of how the help and hope that we find in God is able to fuel faithfulness in the lives of believers. And if Romanus and the Christians in Antioch could be faithful under such great persecution we know that we can also have the same help and hope fueled faithfulness in our times of difficulty. We will be coming back to the rest of this story later this morning.

Here in the US we do not have persecution like this happening to us. However many people in our church are going through difficult times when they must be reminded of their help and hope. There are those in our families who are sick and in the hospital, others are lonely and in need of a friend; many in our church need encouragement to continue being men and women of God. Our text today speaks of this encouragement, will you please open your Bibles to 2 Timothy 4:9-22 and stand for the reading of God’s word.

2 Timothy 4:9-22 (ESV)

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

17 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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

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

Sermon in a Sentence: The Lord will strengthen us and is faithful; remember God: your help and hope.

This morning we will be looking at how God helps us and where we can find our hope. Let’s first look at how God helps us.

GOD STRENGTHENS US TO DO HIS WORK. (9-17, 21)

We must first understand the situation that Paul is in when he wrote this letter. Paul began his journey to this Roman prison by preaching the gospel in Jerusalem. After he was arrested and testifying before the council in Acts 23 the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.” It was then that Paul began his slow, imprisoned journey to Rome.

Paul has made it to Rome and he is in a dark, dank prison cell. We know that he does not expect to be released from verse 6 of this chapter. He knows that he is going to die by the hand of the Roman judicial system. Paul has been actively opposed by people during his time. Alexander the coppersmith is probably the same Alexander that Paul speaks of in 1 Timothy 1:20. In that verse Paul handed him over to Satan that he would learn not to blaspheme. Alexander has done Paul great harm and is either in Troas or Rome, two places Timothy will be traveling through as he comes to see his beloved friend and mentor.

Paul is also lonely at this time. He wants Timothy to come soon and before winter because many have left, some for ministry and others deserted. We know that Paul has sent Crescens, Titus, and Tychicus on missions and they have all left with a blessing, but this was still difficult on Paul. After I graduated from K-State in 2009 I said goodbye to many of my friends. I knew they were going to be moving to Wyoming, Houston, Pittsburg, or Washington D.C. I knew they were going there for jobs and great things, but it was still hard to say goodbye. I did not know when I would see them again. Paul was the same way. Paul did not know when he would see these men and it was difficult when they left to fulfill their ministry. It is difficult to remain faithful when we feel alone.

One relationship was severed in a different way. Demas deserted Paul because he was in love with this present world. Paul and Demas were fellow workers in gospel ministry. Paul puts him alongside Luke in Colossians and Demas also appears in Philemon with Mark and Luke. He was
a fellow worker with Paul. But this imprisonment was too much for him. The persecution and oppression was too much for Demas to stand in Rome and he left. We do not have sufficient evidence to believe that Demas was apostate at this time. It is more likely that he just went home because this section of the journey was too hard. He went home to Thessalonica where it was easier and more comfortable and left Paul in prison. This is the setting Paul is in. The only person with him is Luke and he needs faithful people to stand alongside him as he faces his trial. It is difficult to remain faithful when we feel alone.

But Paul wasn’t alone. Through this opposition, abandonment, and loneliness God strengthened Paul to do his work in an indirect and a direct way. But while God was with Paul he still wants Timothy to come soon, before winter. Paul wanted his best friend and loyal partner in ministry to be by his side during the last few months of his life. This plea is the main point of this passage of scripture. Paul mentions Timothy coming three times (9, 13, 21). Paul wants Timothy there soon. Travel in that part of the Mediterranean Sea shut down during the winter so Timothy would have to leave soon after receiving this letter to make it to Rome. The journey from Ephesus to Rome would be 1500 miles. About the same distance from here to New York, only this trip would be done on foot or in a boat. It would be no small task for Timothy to grab Mark and for the two of them to travel to Rome. Paul also gave instructions to get his cloak, books, and the parchments in Troas.

Paul wanted his cloak because it was getting cold, winter was coming and he was in a dark prison cell. On a side not when I was reading a commentary this week the author went into great detail about what a cloak was and why Paul was in need of it. The whole time I was thinking come on dude I know what a cloak is, it’s the thing the elves wear in Lord of the Rings, very useful.

Paul also wanted the books and the parchments. These would have been copies of the Old Testament scriptures which would be useful for his prison ministry. Paul did not want to stop doing ministry even though he was in prison. He also didn’t want to be without the Word at the end of his life, he was hungry for the Word. “Above all bring the parchments.” When you face the end of the road one day, will you be that hungry for the Word?

The whole reason Mark is being brought is because he is useful for Paul’s ministry. He worked for the Lord to the very end and he wanted his friends to be there with him. I imagine the coming of Timothy and Mark made Paul leap for joy. Just imagine seeing one of your great friends after being away for so long. I worked at a summer camp in Maryland when I was in college and I met some amazing people there. One of my great friends that I met there is Dan Kashani, some of you have met that crazy Israeli man. I knew Dan was coming back to camp for my 2nd summer there and he would be there when I arrived. I got out of the van and began to take my stuff to my cabin I saw him teaching lifeguards at the pool. Our eyes locked and it was a dead sprint towards each other. It was so good to see him after a year of being away. I imagine Paul experienced this same joy, happiness, and encouragement when Timothy and Mark came to Rome.

I believe that God was active in the bringing of Timothy and Mark to Paul. He was working indirectly to strengthen Paul during this difficult time. I have had to preach this main point to
myself all week. God will strengthen us to do his work. This has been the busiest and most hectic week I have ever had since working at this church. We had Wonder Week this week, I was trying to prepare for today, my grandma’s funeral was on Friday, and I learned that my other grandma will be moved to hospice care tomorrow. I would be lying to you if I said I there weren’t times during the week when I thought about not showing up on Sunday. This week was difficult as I poured out. But when I was writing this late Friday night or early Saturday morning whichever way you want to look at it, God strengthened me. I knew that he was telling me, Lucas listen to the words you are preparing to say and believe them. God will strengthen us to do his work. He strengthened me indirectly by allowing others to minister to me just like Paul was strengthened by the company of his friends.

We must remember that as the body of Christ we must be faithful to one another. When someone in our church is struggling, needing encouragement, sad, happy, joyful, we must be alongside them. Are you quick to come to someone’s aid when they ask for it or do you wait for someone else to go? I would encourage you to go quickly when someone calls for you to come, to listen well when people need to talk or vent. We belong to this local church to both worship God and strengthen others.

Paul was also strengthened directly by God. In verse 16 we see that at Paul’s first defense no one came to stand by him, but all deserted him. In the Roman judicial system there was a “first action.” This is a preliminary defense hearing in front of the emperor or magistrate of the area. During this hearing the defense and prosecution would present their sides and it would be decided if the case would go to trial. At this first defense Paul had nobody to stand alongside him to present his side. He was alone against the opposition. But we must remember the second sentence in verse 16, “May it not be charged against them!” Paul offers this brief prayer that God would forgive those who were not there. He is not bitter towards those people but rather wants God to forgive them. He also tells Timothy this so he will not charge them with wrong doing.

After this statement comes verse 17 which reads, “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.” Paul was not alone during his defense but God directly strengthened him. God gave Paul a ministry to fulfill in Acts 9:15-16 when he spoke to Ananias during Paul’s conversion. “But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a 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.’” Paul knew that by proclaiming the message of the gospel before the Roman court he was fulfilling his call to ministry and God was strengthening him to do it the entire time. God strengthened him with the wonderful spirit that he gave to him and to all who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Verse 7 in chapter 1 describes this spirit, “for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” God strengthened Paul to do his work and to fulfill his ministry. Paul wanted Timothy to be there during his final days. He wanted this human companionship. This is ok and not a sinful desire on Paul’s part. Paul was lonely and wanted people with him during this time, but he also wanted Timothy to know that the Lord is our strength. People let Paul down, but God was there for him in his most desperate time of need.
It is difficult to find your satisfaction and know that God is with you when all else seems to be falling apart. It took me until I was at my wits end Friday night to grasp this. Remember where your help comes from. It comes from the Lord and he will never let you down.

We have spent a good deal of time on the help aspect of this passage but let’s turn to the hope, more specifically where we find our hope.

THE LORD’S FAITHFULNESS ALLOWS US TO HAVE HOPE (14, 18)

We see God’s faithfulness throughout the Bible.
- God’s promise to Noah that he would never flood the earth again, which we are reminded of every time we see a rainbow.
- Promise to Abraham fulfilled when Joshua led people into promise land/
- Promise that David would always have an heir on the thrown, fulfilled in Christ.
- God’s faithfulness to Joseph through his trials in Egypt, which eventually ended in saving the nation of Israel from famine.
- God providing for the Israelites in the desert with manna from heaven.

The list goes on…

But we also see God’s faithfulness all throughout 2 Timothy. So let’s take a trip through this book and look at a few of these verses. If you’re in middle school crack that Bible open if it’s not and join us.
- 1:12 “But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.”
- 2:13 “if we are faithless, he remains faithful”
- 2:19 “But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his”
- 4:8 “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”

The final verse we are going to look at is 4:18
- 4:18 “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

This does not mean that God will give us a bright shining life with sunshine, tulips, and other wonderful things all the time. It is very easy to read this verse and think that God will rescue me from the evil deeds done to me and give me the opposite here on earth. I bought into this way of thinking when I became a Christian. When I was 15 my parents were getting a divorce and my sister Melissa asked me to come on a retreat at the church she was going to. I said sure because I wanted to get away from my parents for the weekend, not because of a real interest in God. But on that retreat the Lord found me and I knew he was real. I believed the gospel and God saved me. At that time I began living my life for him. The next school year several of my friends died and I remember asking the question of God, “Why are you doing this to me. I am doing the
things you want, I am a Christian and am following after you.” It seemed that God should be giving me good things since I was a Christian and living for him.

When Paul wrote this he was not thinking in this way. The rescue from every evil deed was death for Paul. God delivered Paul from every evil deed after Paul was martyred. Paul is confident that death is coming but he is also equally confident that God is faithful and will bring him safely into his heavenly kingdom. We can have this same hope and confidence if we know and believe that gospel: That we are are sinners and deserving of God’s wrath. We have failed God and not lived up to the righteous requirements he set before us, we have missed the mark and because of this we deserve punishment. But this was not God’s plan because he sent his son Jesus Christ to come and live a perfect life and be the ultimate sacrifice for sin. Jesus came and satisfied God’s wrath and brought sinners like you and me back into relationship with God. If you believe that you are saved by God’s wonderful grace. Through your faith in Jesus Christ you can have the same hope and assurance that Paul did. We know that God will bring us safely into his heavenly kingdom despite the evil deeds done to us. He is a faithful, just, and trustworthy God.

Paul is awaiting his crown of righteousness, his crown of eternal glory. All throughout Scripture we see how this hope fuels faithfulness. When we are able to have hope for the last day it fuels faithfulness today. Let’s go back to the story of Romanus now.

The boy has been called out of the crowd and has just explained that he heard the message of the gospel from his mother.

The mother was called, and she gladly appeared. The prefect commanded the child to be whipped. The crowd of people watching could not keep from crying. The mother alone stood dry-eyed, reminding her child of stories from the Scriptures of others who suffered. She called to her son, “Hold fast, my child. Soon you shall pass to Him who will give you a crown of eternal glory.”

The mother smiled her encouragement. The child was encouraged and received the stripes with a smiling face.

The prefect commanded the child to be killed. The mother kissed him, saying, “Farewell, my sweet child. When you have entered the kingdom of Christ, remember your mother.”

As the sword came down, she sang:

“All laud and praise with heart and voice,
O Lord, we yield to thee:
To whom the death of this thy saint,
We know most dear to be.”

Asclepiades returned to torturing Romanus. He was cast into a mighty fire, but a great storm arose and quenched the fire. Finally, the prefect, amazed at
Romanus' courage, commanded him to be brought back into the prison to be killed.

Romanus, this boy, and his mother knew where their hope was. They knew that they would be rescued from every evil deed and brought safely into God’s heavenly kingdom. We must constantly have this hope. When we hear of those being persecuted around the world we must remind them of the hope that they have. We must remind them that God is faithful and will strengthen them to do the work. We must also remind ourselves of the hope we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. We must know that he will rescue us from every evil deed and bring us safely into his heavenly kingdom.

The Lord will strengthen us and is faithful; remember God: you help and hope.