

Steadfast Living Rescued

There are three themes or words that appear in every chapter of 2 Timothy.

I People suffer.

Suffering is a recurring theme that Paul writes about.

He describes in a variety of ways how he and others suffer.

We can suffer physically through hunger, disease, injury, abuse.

We can suffer emotionally through insecurity, inferiority, inadequacy.

We can suffer spiritually through persecution, rejection, isolation.

But a primary source of suffering is by the words of others.

Paul recognizes the power of words for good or evil.

Words can build up and words can destroy.

We can suffer much over the words that come out of a person's mouth.

There is verbal abuse.

There is verbal bullying.

There are verbal threats.

Over and over again Paul talks about the use of words.

Words can communicate truth or they can communicate lies.

Words can lead to disputes or they can clarify God's love.

Many of the errors that threaten the church are verbal expressions.

Most of the threats have to do with the misuse of conversation.

The words we say can unravel the very fabric of the church.

The body of Christ can be severed limb from limb by a few ill used words.

That is why Paul doesn't hold back in confronting these threats.

Paul received his share of false accusations.

People had lied about Paul's teaching and actions.

Paul was arrested, just like Jesus, on trumped up charges.

Things like that can devastate a person's faith.

It can destroy confidence in the church.

Our community is full of people injured by words.

These are words spoken from both pulpits and pews.

People swear they will never darken the door of a church ever again.

It is hard to be steadfast in our faith when we suffer.

That's the bad news.

But there is another theme that threads through Timothy.

This second theme can be bad news and good news.

II The second theme to help us live steadfast is God remains steadfast.

In the midst of our suffering God never changes.

Paul writes, **"To Him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen"**

Nothing you or I can say has any affect on God's presence and reality.

Our denial of God does not diminish God.

That can be good news or it can be horrific.

It will be horrific for the person who abuses the power of conversation.

"God remains" is bad news for the person who denies God.

It will be horrific for the person who misrepresents God.

Paul said if we deny God He will deny us.

There will be a day of accountability.

And that day of accounting will determine our eternity.

Of course the eternity we face is determined long before that day.

We move toward our eternity one conversation at a time.

"God remains", can also be good news.

"God remains" is good news if our conversation builds others.

It is good news if our conversation releases God's immense love.

The foundation of God is not affected by our words.

No matter how much the church is torn apart God remains.

The Church is the witness to the gospel.

But our eternal relationship with God is affected by words.

Christ, who is the gospel, stands firm whatever may happen.

What God has founded is indestructible.

People may go astray - nevertheless God's firm foundation stands.

Errors may arise - nevertheless God's firm foundation stands.

Congregations may be unfaithful - nevertheless God's firm foundation stands.

Communities may be corrupted - nevertheless God's firm foundation stands.

The salt may lose its savour - nevertheless God's firm foundation stands.

Alexander MacLaren says, "Why, it is the miracle of miracles that Christian people having been what they have been, and being what they are, the Church of God has not been annihilated long, long, ago. Why is it? Only because that which it bears and He who is in it are indestructible. While the envelope may be changed, the central Truth and the living Person who is in the Church, in spite of all its corruptions and infirmities, cannot die, nor be suppressed nor removed.

That is wonderful news for the person following Jesus.

It means that no condition can exist on earth that limits God's rescue.

God can rescue you, no matter where you are.

That brings us to the third theme that surfaces in Paul's letter.

III There is a third theme that is all good news for steadfast living.

It also surfaces in our Scripture this morning.

In verse 17 Paul describes how God Rescues.

"But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the message fully ... So I was rescued from the lion's mouth."

We see Paul claim God's rescue in 3:11.

"What persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me."

Paul is not the only one who needed God's rescue.

Paul used another rare word for rescue.

It can also be translated deliver.

It is the same word Jesus used in the Lord's prayer.

Deliver us from evil.

God's rescue is like a current or rush of water.

It draws us into the flow or movement of God's Spirit.

God delivers from one experience into a different experience.

Rescue is part of God's creating and sustaining will.

We all need God's rescue or deliverance.

In 3:6 he writes about how we can be captured and burdened with sins.

Satan tries to capture people to do his will (2 Tim. 2:26).

Paul writes in 2:23 about quarrels and controversies.

He says the Lord's servant treats that with kindness and gentleness.

Kind and words gentle may result in rescue.

The gentle truth may bring escape from the snares of the devil.

God comes to rescue through people of faith.

God is sovereign and therefore no power or law can limit His rescue.

God rescues - **"God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control"** (2 Timothy 1:7).

God rescues - He **"saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of His own purpose and the grace which He gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago"** (2 Timothy 1:9).

God rescues through Jesus "who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

God rescues by guarding "until that Day what has been entrusted to me. ... Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us." (2 Timothy 2:12, 14).

God rescues through others, "Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains" (2 Timothy 1:16).

God rescues through His word, "But the word of God is not fettered. Therefore I endure everything" (2 Timothy 2:9b-10a).

God rescues because His "firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let every one who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.'" (2 Timothy 2:19).

Paul's letter to Timothy is riddled with rescue as is Psalm 34.

"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34:6).

"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (Psalm 34:8).

"The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears toward their cry" (Psalm 34:15).

"When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:17-18)

"The Lord redeems the life of His servants; none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned" (Psalm 34:22)

The Lord knows those who are His.

This is not an all-seeing eye knowledge.

God's knowledge of our need for rescue comes from love resulting in relationship.

This is something tender, close, gracious, and strength-giving.

This is a communion from the depths of eternity.

It means protection and care.

God will not lose what is His in Christ Jesus His Son.

What is the sign that we are Christ's?

Our rescue and departure from sin reveals our relationship with Jesus.

And what is the evidence of that?

Paul wraps it up with our conversation.

Out of the heart the mouth speaks.

When the heart is abundant with Christ's presence words will reflect Him.

When the heart is absorbed by sin, words will be ripe with sin's destruction.

Who can God rescue through you?

You can speak of God's love, and God's power.

You can tell others of Jesus and His authority.

You can build another person up with words of hope or comfort.

Paul was steadfast because God had rescued him in the past.

Rescued him from the lion's mouth (vs. 17).

That has to be a close encounter with death.

And Paul was steadfast because he was confident of God's future rescue.

We are going to close with a music video of the song "Rescue".

As you listen to the song I want you to be thinking of phrases.

What are some phrases that can build up?

There are too many phrases that can tear down.

We have all heard them.

What words will warm the heart that could result in rescue?

What words can destroy isolation?

Think about these things and write them down as the song plays.

After the song is finished we will do something with those words.

PLAY VIDEO SONG ON DVD PLAYER