Good Morning!

We have talked twice about Peter and his approaching death. This morning we are going to look at 2 Timothy and the apostle Paul’s approaching martyrdom. So why all this musing on death? I have no premonitions; you may blame this on Chris Wheeler. He had a blog which ran on Wednesday night and he read from his recent book on Poetry called *Solace, Psalms for the Broken Season*. He read a poem from the book that I had asked he explain. Once I realized it was about a funeral he had attended, the poem became clear – or clearer, as it is poetry and poetry is rarely completely clear.

Since then, death themes in the scriptures have popped out to me. I did write a little about this passage on April 25th for those of you who keep these things. This morning I want to look at Paul the man. Not Paul “the apostle,” or Paul our icon, or Paul the thundering preacher who runs for town to town braving the angry crowds. I want to look at that little observed side of Paul where he hurt.

Paul reveals this side of him more in the second letter to the Corinthians than anywhere else. He begins with the great comfort he has found in Christ (1:3-7). Then he reveals what prompted this need for comfort in verses 8 & 9, “For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.” We do not know for sure what this was, but we can hear the still fresh pain in his letter. He mentions later in 2 Cor. 11:28 & 29, “Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?” He was emotionally connected with all his friends, his church people. We cannot forget his thorn in the flesh. This was some physical ailment he desperately wanted removed (2 Cor. 12:7& 8). But it wasn’t.

Now in 2 Timothy 1:4, we see Paul, “longing to see you.” This is a special partnership that Paul wants to renew one more time before his death. In 4:9 he says, “Make every effort to come to me soon.” We see from that Paul’s loneliness. He has had to send some of his coworkers to deal with problems in various churches. He also has had the intense disappointment in one of his own abandoning the faith for the world. This is a ‘kick in the gut’ happening here at the end. How could he have been so mistaken about Demas? He also points out to Timothy that Alexander the coppersmith hurt him intentionally.

He tells Timothy, “Bring me my cloak because I am cold.” The cold he felt was not just a damp Roman prison. It was the cold of being abandoned and alone. Finally he adds, “Make every effort to come before winter!” “I need my cloak, I need my books, but, Timothy, most of all, I need you.” Paul has not lost his faith. He is not despondent. He needs those around him that will encourage him by their faith and trust in Christ. He has Luke and possibly there will be Mark. But most of all he wants Timothy.

We were meant to love and be there for our family, the church. A loving touch, a kind word, but that which most encourages someone at this time in life, is just being there. When you are alone and facing death, everyone needs a Timothy.

In Jesus Christ, who is our comfort,

Pastor EA