

I reckon today's message is going to be pretty short. We've come to the end of Paul's 2nd letter to Timothy. And most of the words of today's letter are about:

- “Ta Ta”, “Cheerio”,
- “Don't forget to visit”; And
- when you do come, bring my coat – I left it at so-&-so's place; And
- I need something to do while I'm in jail – better send my books and parchments so I can do a bit of reading...; And
- Say “G'day to so-&-so; and
- “So-&-so here says “G'day” to you”...

This sort of stuff, helps us remember that, when it was written, this was a very personal letter. We might tend to think of Paul as being some kind of “super-Apostle” – this great man in the church... But he was also a very personal and very human brother to those he knew...

.....

Now, a couple of weeks ago, we read this whole letter, as a letter (the way that a letter is intended to be read), and then we talked about what struck us in the letter. And one of the things that came out, was how everyone had deserted him. Some Christians had to leave him for good reasons – they'd been sent to other places to preach the gospel there. But others had left him because they were afraid.

Jesus warned us, that it's not easy, being His disciple. He said “You will be persecuted for my sake”... In this very letter,

Paul said “^{3:12} **Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted**”

You know, some people will scoff, “It’s only the weak who are Christians”.. I wonder, would they say that to the face of the multitude who have stared death in the face, and said “Even if you torture or kill me and my family, I will not deny my Lord...”

You see, it’s only the **strong** who persevere when they suffer for their faith. In V10, Paul mentions a bloke by the name of “Demas”. Demas deserted Paul and went to Thessalonica. The reason? “He’s in love with this present world”. Now, we don’t know exactly what’s going on there, but I suspect Demas probably deserted Paul because he was saving his own skin. “I don’t want to get locked up too.” “Paul’s about to get executed. I don’t want that to happen to me.” ... He was in love with this present world

And at this point, we might find ourselves wondering, “Would **I** be strong enough to persevere when persecution comes against me???” Well, I wanna give you the ‘heads-up’: It’s not so much about our own strength – it’s about what we love. If I am in love with this present world, no, I won’t be strong enough to endure through persecution. But if my love is in the Lord, and I look forward to the Kingdom of Heaven, then the Lord is the one who **will** give us strength.....

And we’ll come back to that shortly.

The topic for today, is the Sovereignty of God.

And I reckon today, in our self-centred and mostly democratic liberal culture, “the sovereignty of God” is one of the hardest concepts for us to understand, and it’s one of the most difficult concepts for us to embrace and submit to.

The Sovereignty of God, means that He is King (in the true sense of the word) – Actually He’s the King of Kings. And He’s the Lord of Lords. He is high and mighty, and full of power and authority. No one can stand beside Him. No one can even stand before Him. In the Scriptures, when anyone encountered an angel (a mere messenger of God), they would fall on their face before the angle. Imagine what they would do before God...

But even that doesn’t define what the “Sovereignty of God” means... I reckon the easiest way for me to explain this, is to say, “Not my will be done, but Your will be done.”

For God to be Sovereign, means that He is King, in the true unquestionable power, sense of title...

Queen Elizabeth II has recently died, and now King Charles III sits on the throne. And it will not make one scrap of difference to the laws and the lives of the citizens of England, and certainly not for the commonwealth of Australia. Why not? Because King Charles isn’t a real king – he’s a constitutional monarchy. He has been stripped of the raw power of king...

The concept of a **true** king, most of us would probably find abhorrent. After all, who wants to give up our democracy, so we can have a king who has complete power – complete authority over us???, so that:

- What he determines, we do.
- What he says, is done.
- Who he condemns, is indeed condemned; and
- Whom he commends, is indeed elevated and lifted up...

Who wants a king with that sort of power?

Who wants a king who's word is law, and who's decision cannot be questioned???

Any takers?

Now, if we're honest, most of us, we like to be our own rulers/controllers. And Government interference, that's the last thing we want. Imagine if we had a king who had complete authority. And so most of us would say, "No, I don't **want** to be ruled over by a king"...

But what if that King was our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ?

What if that King:

- was good, always, all the time?
- was the personification of love?
- was just? and
- always fair and true?
- merciful?

But then again,

- would I trust Him if He didn't explain Himself and His decisions?
- What if He didn't give us what we wanted, but what He planned?
- Something occurred, that wasn't pleasant for us, but it fulfilled His will

Would you still want that king???

You see, **this** is the sovereignty of God. He **is** King. And we may or may not recognise this... And as Christians, we submit to His Lordship – we submit to His authority. And we do it willingly. **Why?** Because we know who He is, and by faith, we trust Him with everything we have and with everything we are. God doesn't have to explain Himself to us – we just trust Him. We trust Him with even our own families.

Now, the thing is, we're not used to giving **anyone** that level of authority. For most of us, "Oh yeah, I'll submit to a level of authority, where I have to,,, but I'd actually rather be running things myself, thankyou very much...

And that sometimes spills over into our spiritual life. We call Jesus Lord, And we pray "Your will be done". And we sing songs of "I will follow You"; I will trust and obey... But then things don't go as I planned, and even though I've handed the controls over to God, I go and take them back again...

And we might say "No, Lord"... You've messed up; I gave You control, and You've messed it up... We mightn't say

those words, but by wresting control back from God again, is saying to Him, “Your way’s not going so great – I want to be back in control”.

But the thing is: God hasn’t messed it up at all. Do you know what’s happened? I’ve prayed “Your will be done”, because I’ve expected that God’s will would be exactly the same as my will. But it wasn’t, and so I want to take the control back...

There are two words that can never be said together: “No Lord”... You can say “No, God”. You can say “No, Jesus”... But if Jesus is truly Lord, I cannot say “No”... Are you with me?

If Jesus is Lord – If He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords – If He is **my** Lord, it means “His word stands”. His will **will** be done, in my life. And even when things don’t work out as I was hoping, God will do, as God will do, and that’s OK, because He is Lord...

That, is the Sovereignty of God. And this is one of the hardest things: For us humans to surrender our will, to the will of our Lord.

And we see Paul’s submission to the Sovereignty of God in today’s reading.

You see, in his faith, Paul trusted God completely. And the Lord hadn't let him down. He said: **the Lord stood by me and strengthened me** (through all of these persecutions)

And God had a purpose in this: That through Paul, the Gospel would be proclaimed, and it would go much wider than Israel – It would be preached to all nations... And many places Paul went (as we read the book of Acts), he faced danger after danger after danger, but God rescued him time and time again, and he kept preaching in many lands...

And this was no little thing. He says: **So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.**

*It is unlikely that Paul would've ever been thrown to the lions in the colosseum. He was a Roman citizen you see, so if he was to be executed, it would be by the Sword, which he was... But in later years, many Christians **were** fed to the lions, and the crowds got great entertainment out of.*

What he was really saying was, "I was rescued from the attacks of Satan."

1 Peter 5:(ESV)

⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Alright, keep your wits about you. Watch and understand this. Persecution comes from Satan. He **prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

But Paul is saying, "God rescued me, from the jaws of the lion"...

Righto, so the fact that Paul was rescued, did that mean that he was safe? (That even though he was in prison, in a short while he'd be let out and it'd be all good?)

No. Here's what Paul **was** confident about: ¹⁸ **The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.**

Do you understand what he's saying there? Basically, the Devil can kill the body, but he cannot kill the soul. And ultimately, Paul would be rescued from pain and suffering and imprisonment, straight to the loving arms of Jesus in His heavenly kingdom...

And there's the difference between Demas and Paul. Demas loved this present world too much. And so when Satan the prowling lion came at him with persecutions, he fled. He was living for the flesh/the present. But Paul was living for eternity. And so the Lord gave him strength...

And **here**, is Paul's submission to the sovereign will of God. When he thinks of his imminent execution, he views this as "being safely brought into the heavenly Kingdom", and thus, it leads him to worship: **To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

Have you noticed, that for some, when troubles come upon them, or when their prayers are not answered, their faith is shaken to rubble... "God, you've lost the plot. I believed for it, but it didn't happen". They claim promises for themselves, that God never made to them...

But for Paul, "God's sovereign will", meant everything to him, and so no matter what happens, to the Lord, **be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

How well do we submit to the Sovereign will of God???

I was actually reluctant to use that word "submit", because we tend to think of "submission" as a burden. But when it comes to God, it's not a burden. To be in a place of complete faith and trust in our Lord, to submit to Him in all things, is a delight and a joy. It is so freeing. It overcomes our fears and anxieties.

Some folk live with fears and with anxieties every day, and for some, they have every reason to be afraid and to be anxious... But not if we trust in the Lord. With Him, **nothing** can come at us, that He will not handle. And when we have an eternal perspective, that means "You know what? Even if this life

gets snatched away from me, The Lord has rescued me to His kingdom.”...

How well do we submit, to the Sovereign will of God???

When we pray, “Thy will be done”, are we serious about that??? What if “God’s will isn’t ‘nice’ for me???”

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night that he was betrayed, went to the Garden of Gethsemane, and He prayed,

Luke 22: (ESV)

⁴² ... **“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”**

When you pray for someone who’s sick, are you willing to pray “Father, if you are willing, please heal them.” Are you willing to pray “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.”...

You see, as some folk pray, they put themselves in the place of God. They view themselves as sovereign. They decide what they want, and they demand it of God.

They:

- command a healing;
 - command a blessing;
 - might use the phrase, “I’m believing for” (this or that);
- And

- are so confident **their** will will be done.

But what if their will, isn't God's will?

- they put themselves in the place of God; and
- decree it shall be so...

And if the prayer isn't answered, then "We need more faith"... And they pray all that much louder and all that much harder, and shout out their prayers...

That's not how Jesus taught us to pray... How do we pray? We ask our Father. We do not command. And it is not up to us to determine God's will. God does that. I have often heard it said, that if we pray it and if we believe it, and we have enough faith, it shall be done...

Rubbish.

I've been told "It is always God's will to heal."

Rubbish.

I get told that in the Bible, people were always healed. Really... The Apostle Paul mustn't have gotten that memo... In V20, he tells us that he had to leave Trophimus at Miletus because he was too sick to travel...

You see, when

- we truly understand the Goodness of God; and
- the Sovereignty of God;

- our love is not in the things of this world, but
- for the Lord Himself; and
- for His will to be done; and

- we're living for the Kingdom of Heaven

That's when The Lord is truly **our** Lord.

And when God's will is done, whether it be 'nice' for us, and whether we understand it or whether we don't,,,,, When God's will is done, we will be led to worship:

To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

When all goes well:

To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

When things are not nice, and I don't know why:

To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

When sorrow and grief rack my very soul:

To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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

And that's the end of 2nd Timothy.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,
Our prayer today is a simple one:
Your will be done.
Your will be done on Earth as in Heaven.

Lord, You are Sovereign.
You are King.
You are my Lord.
And I trust You in everything.

Please pray together with me:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
As we forgive those who
sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are Yours

now and for ever.

Amen.