

DON'T EVER FORGET

2 Timothy 2:8-10

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

—John 5:25

“After Sir Walter Raleigh was beheaded in the tower they found in his Bible these true and striking lines, written the night before his death:

‘Even such is time, that takes in trust
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,
And pays us but with age and dust;
Who in the dark and silent grave,
When we have wandered all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days.
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up, I trust!’

“All the things of this world he had lost, but he had kept his faith; and faith spoke to him of a hope and life beyond the grave.”

—C. E. Macartney¹

Our text for today comes again from second Timothy.

2 Timothy 2:8-10 NAS:

⁸ *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel,*

⁹ *for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.*

¹⁰ *For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.*

Now I am going to read those verses again, this time from a contemporary translation and you will see where we get the title for today’s message.

¹ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX: Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

2 Timothy 2:8-10 (TLB):

⁸ *Don't ever forget² the wonderful fact that **Jesus Christ was a man**, born into King David's family; **and that he was God**, as shown by the fact **that he rose again from the dead.***

⁹ *It is because I have preached these great truths that **I am in trouble here and have been put in jail like a criminal.** But the Word of God is not chained, even though I am.*

¹⁰ *I am more than willing to suffer if that will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.*

In the preceding verses Paul had challenged Timothy to stay focused and face harsh conditions **like a soldier**, to live honestly and endure the difficulties of training like an **athlete**, and to labor with patience like a **farmer**. Now he tells Timothy to **remember that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.**

Various Bible translations begin verse eight with wordings that all mean "Remember," for instance: "Don't ever forget," "Constantly keep in mind," "Ever keep in memory Jesus Christ." Notice also that throughout chapter one Paul refers to the Lord as "Christ Jesus." But here for some reason Paul places "Jesus" first and "Christ" second. It was very possibly to indicate that the **Jesus who lived on earth was the Christ.**

When Paul names Jesus as one "raised up from the dead," this speaks of His suffering and His death. The resurrection of Jesus is God's everlasting seal upon Jesus' expiation,

"an act by which satisfaction is made for a crime and **the liability to punishment for it is cancelled.** It supposes penitence and faith on the sinner's part. Among the Jews, expiation was effected by a divinely appointed and typical system of sacrifices, all pointing to Christ. The New Testament shows Him to be the true sin-offering for mankind, 'the Lamb of God,' 'our Passover,' offering 'his own blood,' and putting away 'sin by the sacrifice of himself,'"³

confirming that God will accept this sin offering.

Thinking about Jesus' resurrection helps us to think about the example He provides us in times of difficulty because He suffered such agony and death for us. Yet he endured. We should be willing to suffer for Him as well. His resurrection provides hope and courage for all of us because we are promised the same resurrection He experienced, if we accept Him as our Savior and continue in that faith.

² "Ever keep in memory Jesus Christ." Now Paul places "Jesus" first and "Christ" second in order to indicate that the Jesus who lived on earth was the Christ.

³ William Wilberforce Rand, ed., "EXPIATION," in *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*, (New York: American Tract Society, 1859), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "EXPIATION".

Paul also told Timothy to remember Jesus as **descended from David. Christ, being fully human**, experienced pain and rejection just as we do, and He did it without complaining. Think about that the next time you complain about how tough your life is. Christ knew suffering far beyond what we will ever experience yet He endured, and He promises that He will get us through hard times if we only ask for His help and trust it will come. His obedient submission to God resulted in His victory over death. The same promise holds true for us as well.

The phrase in verse eight, "*According to my gospel*," in no way separates Paul's Gospel from the other Gospel writers as if Paul's Gospel were his own creation. All the writers of the New Testament were given their message from God. How God communicated that to every writer is not known. We do know, however, that John tells us in **the book of Revelation**, for instance, that God gave the message to an angel, and the angel gave it to John.

Revelation 1:1:

¹ *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John.*

Paul's reference to "*my Gospel*" simply meant that it was Jesus' gospel message which He entrusted Paul to reveal to the world.

Romans 2:16:

*on the day when, according to **my gospel**, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.*

Paul thinks of himself as one of the called apostles who received the Gospel by means of **revelation** from God, as all New Testament writers had.

Galatians 1:12:

¹² *For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but **I received it through a revelation** [personal teaching]⁴ **of Jesus Christ.***

We still identify the gospels as the Gospel "*according to Matthew*" or "*Mark's Gospel*"; or "*according to the Scriptures.*" Each of these writers explained the truth of God's message to all of mankind.

So in 2 Timothy 2:8 Paul declared, "*This is my gospel*," Then he goes on in verse nine to say, "*for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal.*" Christ's servants must be ready to suffer just as He did. Paul was willing to suffer just as his Lord had suffered. Paul's suffering came as the result of teaching the Gospel, which was the same reason Jesus was made to suffer. It was a battle between Christ followers and those who refused to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior. Paul particularly offended Rome

⁴ Brackets mine.

because every citizen of the Roman Empire was required to declare Caesar to be God. Anyone not doing so could be imprisoned or executed. Paul refused to do that and went on preaching that the crucified and risen Christ was God.

Paul realized that suffering was part of his commitment. It is when hardship comes that true commitment is tested.

Timothy could have thought the church's chance for survival was not good. We have already touched earlier on the fact that Paul was concerned about Timothy becoming discouraged. The gospel message was not exactly being accepted enthusiastically throughout Asia. He had been abandoned by many early followers in Ephesus. His teacher and friend, Paul, had been imprisoned in Rome and was facing death. There seemed to be little hope. Yet, Paul provided hope in these words: **"But God's word is not chained."**

"The Word of God." This phrase in verse nine is so appropriate. Paul describes first how the Gospel has taken him to *the lowest level of shame*. Paul is treated just like any other criminal who has committed the worst of criminal acts. But the Word of God, which is what Paul is preaching, has *not* been imprisoned. *"For my (Paul's) Gospel men could do this to me but with God and God's Word they can do nothing."* Paul knew that he could be silenced, but who can stop the glorious, triumphant Word of God? *"The testimony of our Lord"* (2 Timothy 1:8) cannot be silenced by anyone. Paul's voice may be silenced by his death, but what Jesus speaks through him to the world cannot and never will be silenced.

Note again the phrase, *"God's Word is not chained."* How glorious that statement is and what a blow to Satan! They can put Christ-followers in prison thinking it will shut them up. But God's Word can never be silenced; it cannot be chained. God's Word will always get out. Consider those who have written great books from prison: The Apostle Paul, John Bunyan (*Pilgrim's Progress*), and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (*The Cost of Discipleship*).

"The power of the Gospel resides in the living Christ and the ongoing work of his Spirit in the world."⁵

Next we come to a verse that is difficult to understand.

2 Timothy 2:10 NAS:

For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.

Many scholars believe this verse proves that God has selected from before time began those who would be saved and those who would not. To those who believe that, I will reply

⁵ Knute Larson, *Holman New Testament Commentary – I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 283-284.

“not so.”

But, for the sake of fairness, here is their argument as stated by Paul Achtemeier.

“Because of Paul's identification with Jesus Christ and the confidence he had in the Lord's resurrection power, he was willing to endure everything for the sake of the **elect**. Election is a difficult theological concept to grasp, but it remains unalterably part of the Gospel. Clearly, God has direct involvement in those who consecrate their lives to him.

Thus, a ‘consecrated thing’ (hallowed) was something set apart for a special use or purpose. *To hallow* (consecrate, sanctify) persons or things was to remove them from the realm of ordinary labor or use to that of the sacred, such as the consecration of Aaron’s sons as priests (Exodus 29:1; cf. 20:11). Associated with this appointment for special use was a sense of respect and reverence, clearly seen in the application of the term *‘hallowed’* to God’s name, which was understood to be in the sacred realm and therefore deserving of special reverence (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2).”⁶

To which we respond, just as clearly each individual is responsible for his or her response or decision. To Timothy, Paul emphasized the crucial task of believers to extend the Gospel to all people. God has ordained that the spreading of His message and life will take place through people who are faithful to Him. His followers must be willing to do whatever it takes to enlarge His kingdom throughout the earth.

Achtemeier goes on to say:

“The elect are those who trust Christ Jesus; they are the ones who invest themselves in Christ's saving grace and kingdom. **These followers of Jesus affirm God's call upon their life by responding in faith.** For these people, some of whom are yet unknown, Paul was willing to suffer any hardship, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”⁷

This interpretation of 2 Timothy 2:10 contains a great deal of truth. However, it is my considered interpretation, taking the Bible as a whole, that it was God’s desire for everyone to be saved, thus making everyone “*the elect*.” It is simply dependent on whether the person truly seeks after Christ, asking Him to reveal the truth to them, and then accepting that truth.

⁶ Achtemeier, Paul J.; Harper & Row, Publishers; Society of Biblical Literature: Harper's Bible Dictionary. 1st ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985, S. 369.

⁷ Ibid.

John 3:16 NAS:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 NAS:

³ *This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,*
⁴ *who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

2 Peter 3:9 NAS:

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

As J. I. Packer has written, there is a paradox, that is, a balance between two seemingly contradictory truths, that we humans will not fully understand until we are in heaven. In this case, those two truths are the free will of human beings and predestination or election. In some way in God's divine economy those two factors work together in a perfect balance.⁸

Now let us return to Paul's calling Timothy to remembrance in verse eight. What is Timothy to remember?

The text makes it quite clear: he is to remember Christ. Remember who He is and what He did. Some connect Timothy's remembering with the previous section, with the figures of the soldier, athlete, and farmer, or with the gentle reminder to suffer hardship, but ultimately to remember Christ. Barnes is one of these:

"Think of the Savior, now raised up from the dead after all the sorrows of this life, and let this encourage you to bear *your* trials. **There is nothing better fitted to enable us to endure the labors and trials of this life than to think of the Savior.**' Paul is summing up the heart of his whole Gospel in connection with those trials that he is now experiencing."⁹

In 2 Timothy 1:8 Paul had asked Timothy to join in suffering what is bad "*for the gospel.*" In 2 Timothy 1:12 Paul says, "*For this cause I am suffering.*" So Timothy is now to remember **the great cause.** In 2 Timothy 2:9 he is to remember "*the Word of God*" **and then all the elect who are brought to glory by it.** All this Timothy is to keep in mind as he thinks about Paul in his dungeon in Rome.

Remember the dying cry of Jesus, the great Cause that makes the suffering worth it. Don't ever forget it.

⁸ J. I. Packer. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God.*

⁹ Barnes' *Notes On The New Testament* by Albert Barnes. Database © 2004 WORDsearch Corp.

Luke 23:46:

And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last.

Remember the place where Stephen's soul went.

Acts 7:56-59:

⁵⁶ *and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

⁵⁷ *But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse.*

⁵⁸ *When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

⁵⁹ *They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"*

Remember the place where Paul's soul wished to go.

Philippians 1:22-24:

²² *But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.*

²³ *But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;*

²⁴ *yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.*

Timothy is to remember Jesus, the sum and substance of Paul's gospel, to remember that in connection with both Jesus and the Gospel, Paul is suffering hardship and cruelty. In 2 Timothy 1:8 Paul says only: "me, his prisoner," and in 2 Timothy 1:12, "I am suffering these things," and adds "my chain" in 1:16. Now we get the full statement as to what Paul's condition really is: "I am suffering what is bad to the extent of imprisonment."

Thus Paul says that he suffers the utmost shame and disgrace as a criminal of the most shameful and disgraceful kind. See how this casts light on

2 Timothy 1:8, 12, 16:

⁸ *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,*

¹² *For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.*

¹⁶ *The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.*

Like one who had committed the foulest crimes Paul was confined in a foul dungeon. But he remembered the goal. He pressed on to the prize (Philippians 3:14).

So Timothy is to always remember his Lord Jesus, raised up and glorious, from David's seed as David's Lord, and that His Word will be triumphant.¹⁰

We might then ask, during this time of Lent, what are we to remember? Those same things and also some more. Paul would say to us:

Don't ever forget God's great love for you
Don't ever forget God's Word and how it speaks to you
Don't ever forget Christ's suffering and death on the Cross for you.
Don't ever forget Christ's resurrection.
Don't ever forget that Christ lives today in Heaven.
Don't ever forget how He saved you.
Don't ever forget all the things He's done for you.
Don't ever forget how He's answered your prayers.
Don't ever forget Christ is preparing a place for you.
Don't ever forget that Heaven awaits you one day.
Don't ever forget. Amen.

¹⁰ Ibid.