

MBC – 1/31/2020 Pastor Doug Thompson preaching  
 2 TIMOTHY – THE LAST WORDS OF PAUL  
**“Remember Jesus Christ!”**  
 2 Timothy 2:8-13

Let’s read from the beginning of chapter 2 to get a running start on our passage for this morning—

- 2 Timothy 2:1–13 <sup>1</sup>You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, [I hope you took that to heart, and have been putting daily effort to do what is commanded here: to read the Word of God and then soak, meditate, marinate in it until it tenderizes your heart and draws you back to your first love!] <sup>2</sup>and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. <sup>3</sup>Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup>No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. <sup>5</sup>An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. <sup>6</sup>It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.

And v.7 is the lead in to this morning’s passage—

- <sup>7</sup>Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything: <sup>8</sup>Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, <sup>9</sup>for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! <sup>10</sup>Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. <sup>11</sup>The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; <sup>12</sup>if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; <sup>13</sup>if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.

2 Timothy records the last words of Paul to Timothy before his execution. It could be that by the time Timothy received this letter, Paul was already dead. Let me ask you: What would you put in your last letter? What would you want to be read, after you’re gone?

- “The key to the shed is in the bottom left desk drawer. . . please return my library books, they are like, way overdue. . . let Elliot go free. . .” just joking, sweetie.

Honestly, letter writing itself is becoming a thing of the past, but let me make the point here that is so obvious that we can miss it: Paul was constantly communicating. And as his life and ministry draw to a close – he communicates! As Christians, we should be constantly communicating: speaking or writing, in some form. Didn’t God communicate with us – through Creation, then His written Word, and finally, the Word made flesh, the Lord Jesus?

No one is saved apart from someone communicating the Gospel. And beloved, no brother or sister grows in Christ apart from someone *“speaking the truth in love”* – or writing, texting, emailing (Eph. 4.15).

This is a profound truth. As Paul said, “Think over what I say:” all ministry, evangelism and edification, only happens through *some* form of communicating – speaking or writing – the truth of God’s Word. So all of us must intentionally seek ways to communicate with others, and when we communicate, to bring up Christ, and God’s Word—

- I got an email this week from my old high school jazz band director – I haven't seen this dear man in almost 50 years. He found out online that I'm a pastor, so he asked me about my thoughts on some political issues – I wrote back and intentionally quoted Scripture and brought in the Gospel. . . he got back to me in a very gracious letter, and has already listened to one of my sermons.

We should all be sowing the seed of God's Word – just like that parable from Mark that we looked at last week: then we go to sleep, and see what God does with it!

Now you might think, "But I'm shy. I'm just not good at speaking, or writing – then give out what other people speak and write! My wife has the gift of giving good Christian books.

"But can't I just do good things and help people? Can't serving bring people to Christ and edify the body?" Well, that's a good question! At some, you have to communicate. Unbelievers do a lot of good things, right? As Christians, at some point, we have to speak up for Christ. I'll give you an example—

- Janice and I met a man named Steve, up in Idaho. Master carpenter and handyman. He doesn't advertise, but he is booked for months, just because of his integrity. Steve is a very quiet man, but we weren't more than a minute into our conversation before he told us: "I don't do this for the money. I do all I do for the glory of my God!"

God has communicated His Word to us and He calls all of His children to communicate it to others. *This Gospel isn't going to preach itself!* Think about how you can be more intentional about speaking or writing to others – and more intentional about bringing in Jesus and God's Word. Unless someone speaks, or writes, there is no evangelism and no edification—

- Romans 10:13–14 <sup>13</sup>For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." <sup>14</sup>How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

That was a long but important bunny trail! – Paul was constantly communicating, and in his last communication to Timothy he only includes that which is the most urgent, critical, and pressing, and what is that for Paul? "You must make sure the Gospel of Jesus Christ goes on, unadulterated from one generation to the next until He returns!"

And have you noticed that he does that by giving *clear exhortations*, and *realistic expectations*. Commands and warnings. This isn't a flowery, Precious Moments epistle. He wants Timothy to fold this up and keep it in his shirt pocket to pull it out and read it often: this is what to do, and here is what you can expect. That's what he does in our passage for this morning. And there is nothing more important for Timothy to do, after he is gone, than what he says in v.8—

### **I. Remember Jesus Christ.**

- <sup>8</sup>Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,

That sounds like an odd thing to say: "Don't forget about Jesus?" But don't we do that? Don't entire churches and denominations forget about Jesus? We move on to "the Christian life," "ministries, and programs" "Here's how to get involved – we have activities, and the volleyball outreach, and book club – seriously, you go to some church websites and it's hard to find Jesus!

And the truth is, just a few years after Paul wrote this to Timothy in Ephesus, the risen Lord Jesus said this about that very church—

- Revelation 2:2–5 <sup>2</sup>“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. <sup>3</sup>I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. <sup>4</sup>But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first (their love for Him - Jesus!). <sup>5</sup>Remember therefore from where you have *fallen*.
- Paul was concerned about the Corinthians for the same things: (2 Corinthians 11:3) <sup>3</sup>But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

“Remember Jesus Christ” mean to keep Jesus pre-eminent, front and center – in your mind, your heart, in everything you do as a church. The Christian life is *Jesus*. The Gospel is *Jesus*. As a new Christian, I was so hungry to know the Bible. I was a Bible-centered Christian, until I learned that the Bible is all about *Jesus!*

- Pastor Jon Carson is with the Lord now, but he told me that someone came up to him after a Sunday service and said, “I’ve been here for a few weeks now, but I’m going to look for another church. All you ever talk about here is Jesus.” He said, “I thought that’s what we’re supposed to talk about!” Amen. You can’t be too Christ-centered.

“Remember Jesus Christ.” Isn’t this exactly why Jesus instituted the Lord’s Table? “Do this –in *remembrance* of Me. Remember Me. To the Jews, remembering didn’t mean recalling or recollecting something. It meant to mentally bring the past into the present. When they remembered the Passover, they literally brought the past into the present by reenacting that meal and explaining to the kids what it all meant.

Next week will come to the Lord’s Table, and bring all that happened on the cross into the present to see and savor, again, Jesus’ death for us. And Paul mentions two things to remember—

**1.) *Jesus is risen from the dead*** – this isn’t a past tense fact, it’s in the perfect tense in the Gk. = a past event with continuing results: “Jesus was and is now forever, RISEN!” It means that Easter is every Sunday for Christians. His resurrection means that God accepted His death as the payment for our sins! The resurrection says that the check cleared!

And beloved, more than anything, it means that our Jesus is alive and with us this morning! He rules and reigns over His church from heaven, with all authority in heaven and earth given to Him. He *rules over* and *over rules* any person or situation that is against you. He’s not some dead hero – He is our living Savior and good Shepherd. And like the old Gaither song says, “Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, because He lives, all fear is gone!”

**2.) *He is the offspring (seed) of David.*** Remember that Jesus is the Messiah/King predicted by all the prophets—

- Luke 1:32–33 Gabriel told Mary: <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup>and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

So Timothy, keep in mind Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my Gospel. And then Paul gives himself, again, as an example—

## II. Remember Paul's experience.

### A. His suffering and humiliation.

*"For which I am suffering"* – back in 1:11-12 he said, *"for this Gospel. . . I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, <sup>12</sup>which is why I suffer as I do."*

"They go together, Timothy. You can't separate the Gospel from suffering. The more you stand for Jesus the more the world will try to take you down." Jesus put it this way: "They will treat you the way they treated Me." And the *more* you are like Jesus, the *more* you will be treated the way He was treated.

Look again at v.9: *"I'm suffering bound in chains like a criminal!"* The word for *criminal* here is the same word used for those criminals hanging on either side of Jesus at Golgotha. I told you a couple weeks ago: It's not like Paul is some spiritual hero or rock-star in his cold dungeon: many, many Christians were *ashamed* of him – didn't want to be identified with this death-row loser anymore.

- Suffering, sacrifice, persecution – even from your own family – amen? Perhaps death. But we know what to expect – and forewarned is forearmed! I tell folks all the time: Frustration is the gap between reality and your expectations. If you want to be less frustrated – and you can't do much to change your reality – then bring your expectations in line with your reality! Problem solved!

So Paul is preparing Timothy: 2 Timothy 3:12: Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." But Paul spoke of his suffering for the Gospel for another reason— *To establish his credibility.* No one could accuse Paul of being a phony. Or insincere. Or a lightweight. He had *suffered* for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel. I love what he said in—

- Galatians 6:17 <sup>17</sup>From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. - Isn't that good?
- I have a series of commentaries by a man who is regarded as a preacher's preacher. And the exposition is superb – but his applications are weak-sauce: it's like he gets them out of one of those "20,000 sermon illustrations" books. They just leave me cold – and when I see a picture of the guy – he just looks so – preppie: Dr. So-and-so, wearing a Mr. Rogers sweater, full head of hair, slightly tinged with grey – WHAT'S UP WITH THAT ANYWAY?? And I know I'm being terrible, I'm sure he is a godly man – but his church has colonial pillars, and it's chock full of wealthy, suburban, squeaky-clean white people – seriously, I looked at the church staff – over 2 dozen people, all white, mostly blond. . .

And I think to myself: why does this bother me? Again, pray for me, I can't judge by appearances: but I just wonder: has this man ever suffered? Has he gone through fires? Trials and tragedies? Has he been stabbed in the back – betrayed by a brother – abandoned during a crisis? And come through it all, still clinging to Christ?

I want to sit at the feet of *that* man. A man who has suffered for the Gospel, because I have suffered, I still suffer, and I need a Shepherd who knows what it's like to suffer from His own experience, not from a book of illustrations. That's why I need Jesus: a Shepherd with nail holes in His hands and the gash of a spear in His side. He knows my tears – Ps.56.8 says He keeps them in a bottle.

\*God has called some of you to suffer, to be battle-tested, battle-scarred suffer for Christ. Just know that you are a precious gift to the church. You give us hope that when suffering comes, we can still cling to Christ. And look at Paul's great confidence, even in his suffering—

### ***B. His confidence.***

#### ***1.) The success of the Word.***

- 2 Timothy 2:9 . . . I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!

Hallelujah! They might silence the messenger, but they will never silence the message because God's Word is alive with the life of God—

- Hebrews 4:12–13 <sup>12</sup>For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. <sup>13</sup>And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.
- Colossians 1:5–6 . . . the word of the truth, the gospel, <sup>6</sup>which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you.
- Acts 12:24 <sup>24</sup>But the word of God increased and multiplied.
- Acts 6:7 <sup>7</sup>And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.
- Acts 19:20 <sup>20</sup>So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.
- 2 Thessalonians 3:1 <sup>1</sup>Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.
- John Bunyan was thrown into prison by the Church of England for preaching the Gospel in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They thought jail would keep him quiet. But Bunyan was like Paul: he preached in the jail courtyard until not only the prisoners, but also hundreds of people from Bedford would come to the prison daily and stand outside to hear him expound Scripture. So to shut him up they placed him deep inside the jail. Since he couldn't preach, he wrote: *The Pilgrim's Progress*, one of most widely read and translated books in the world after the Bible. Nothing could stop him from *communicating* the Gospel.
- Another true story: During the cold in the 70's, Communist Romania was being criticized for persecuting Christians. But they wanted the valuable Most-Favored-Nation status from the U.S., so as a show, they asked the American govt. to send them Bibles. We sent them 20,000 Bibles, which they promptly recycled into toilet paper! But apparently, you could still read the Scriptures – so the Word of God continued to go forth!

Remember that you hold something supernatural in your hands. Something that can make dead people live. It just needs to get out. During the Reformation, someone painted a picture of men in a blacksmith shop standing around a Bible on an anvil, and they were all pounding it with hammers. The caption said: "The more they scream, the more they shout – the more they wear their hammers out!" And then he gives another great confidence—

## **2.) The power of the Gospel.**

- 2 Timothy 2:10 <sup>10</sup>Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

This sums up Paul's life mission. At the beginning of last year, a dear person asked if I would give them a verse that they could pray for me for the rest of the year – and I gave them this verse, which I want to be my life verse – *"to endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is Christ Jesus with eternal glory."*

You say, "I want that verse to be my life verse too." No. It's mine. Get your own life verse.

Look at what is saying here – it's really amazing: God has His elect – those He chose to set His love upon before time began – scattered among every people, nation, tribe, and tongue. And when God is ready, He will send His messenger with the Gospel, and that elect man or woman will hear, and believe, and *"obtain the salvation that is Christ Jesus with eternal glory."*

It's what Jesus meant when He said in—

- John 10:27 <sup>27</sup>My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Paul devoted his life to being one of those messengers, and why wouldn't he? He's guaranteed success! I believe he was thinking back to what happened to him when was in Corinth—

- Acts 18:9–10 <sup>9</sup>And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, <sup>10</sup>for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."

Jesus was speaking of His *elect* in that city who would come to Christ as Paul preached the Gospel. So Jesus says, "Paul, don't be afraid, don't lose heart when it seems like nothing is happening – you just keep putting the Gospel forth, and I will call My sheep to Myself." Do you see how that promise carried Paul through suffering, and disappointments, even through all the people that had abandoned him? The Gospel was still the power of God for the salvation of God's elect. He said to Titus in Crete—

- Titus 1:1 <sup>1</sup>Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth.

As we say, when we go fishin' for men, we know that the pond is stocked! So we can endure suffering, and sacrifice. We can stand a little rain, when we remember Jesus' promise: "All that the Father gives Me, shall come to Me!"

And finally, Paul tells Timothy to remember that foundation for his confidence and endurance is *God's faithfulness to His own promises*. Most scholars think that this was part of an ancient Christian hymn. It has four lines--

### III. Remember God's promises.

#### 1.) "If we have died with him, we will also live with him."

Notice this death is in the past tense: "if we have died with Him." When did we die with Him? When He died on the cross. If you are a Christian, you died with Him, and you were raised up with Him. And one day you will be raised – resurrected – in a glorified body like His, to live with Him forever—

- Romans 6:4–5 <sup>4</sup>We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall *certainly* be united with him in a resurrection like his.

What a promise! Especially as our bodies get older!—

- Romans 8:11 <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

When your heart flutters and you break into a cold sweat looking at this world, remember – remember – if you died with Him, 2,000 years ago – you will – you will, also live with Him!

You have passed out of death into life, and one day Jesus — "*will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself!*" Philippians 3:21. It's a trustworthy statement, and God will keep His promise.

#### 2.) "If we endure, we will also reign with him."

If you remain steadfast, and you don't throw in the towel – like all those in Asia did – like Phygelus and Hermogenes – like Demas – like Judas – there will be a prize. You will reign with Jesus on a new heaven and a new earth.

The Gk. word for endure is *hupomone* - it means to abide under, to remain under = to dig in your heels and stay put when the tests come. It's the same word James used—

- James 1:2–3 <sup>2</sup>Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup>for you know that the testing of your faith produces *steadfastness*. = staying power – endurance.

This is so important in the Christian race – keep running through the pain, when you get that cramp – just keep moving and don't quit. When you are discouraged in your ministry, in your marriage, in your own sinfulness – keep going: that's when God pours out His grace and the Spirit unleashes His power!

And remember that the real prize is on the other side of the ribbon—

- 2 Corinthians 4:17 <sup>17</sup>For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. – I love what Peter said. He endured so much—

- 1 Peter 5:10 <sup>10</sup>And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

“But it says if – how do I know I will endure and keep trusting Jesus to the end? Well honestly, if it depends on you, how do you think that’s gonna turn out? But you didn’t save yourself, and you don’t keep yourself saved—

- 1 Thessalonians 5:24 <sup>24</sup>He who *calls you* is faithful; He will surely do it.

If you trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you can read this passage as a promise: you will endure, and you will reign with Him—not because of your faithfulness to Him, but because of His faithfulness to you! God the Father chose you, in love, before time began, Jesus died for your sins, and the Holy Spirit called you and sealed you – you are locked in! You will endure.

There will be glitches and set-backs, but *nothing* will snatch you out of the Father’s hand, amen? Nothing, but *nothing* can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. So with that in mind, listen—

- Romans 8:16–17 <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (stop right there: is that true of you? Does the Spirit whisper to you, through the promises of God, that you are His child?) <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

He will hold you fast – amen? But – there will be pain before gain, there will be a cross before you get the crown. Now the first two stanza were promises of reward – but the last two stanza are warnings of judgment—

### **3.) if we deny him, he also will deny us;**

Jesus said this more than once—

- Matthew 10:32–33 (NASB95) <sup>32</sup>“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. <sup>33</sup>“But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.
- Mark 8:38 <sup>38</sup>For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

If you won’t claim His name before men – He won’t be your Advocate before the Father. You will stand before God the Judge, in your sins, with no Advocate. Horrible thought.

And every one of us our thinking: “Isn’t this exactly what Peter did – three times?” Yes – exactly – and didn’t Jesus forgive Peter, and restore him to ministry? Yes. Jesus is full of mercy, isn’t He? So this isn’t talking about momentary weakness – This is talking about those who turn away from Christ and never come back – the very ones Paul mentioned earlier who abandoned him and the Gospel. Jesus will say to them on that day, “*Depart from Me you workers of iniquity, I never knew you.*” And now look at the last stanza—



**4.) If we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.**

God is faithful – He keeps His Word – but His faithfulness cuts both ways: He will be faithful to keep His promises to His children, His elect. But He will also be faithful to judge those who deny Him, and those who are faithless.

So which group does Paul have in mind here? We have to let the Word speak: I think it's the second group for 2 reasons: First, this hymn is symmetrical: the first two stanzas are positive, the last two are negative. Second, the Gk. word for "faithless" – *apisteuo* – means without faith, literally, "an unbeliever." It's the same word used in—

- Revelation 21:8 <sup>8</sup>But as for the cowardly, the *faithless*, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

God's children can have doubts. Even the Disciples had "little faith," right? But "faithless" means no faith. And the warning here is that for those who won't believe, they will see the God's faithfulness too – as their righteous Judge. Sometimes Judges go easy on criminals – and some convicted criminals receive pardons – but that will not and cannot happen with God. Every sin ever committed by every person, will be punished: either in Christ, for those who believe; or in the sinner for those who won't believe. But either way, God will be faithful.

Now maybe you are really bummed because you always read this as a promise for you that when you are weak and struggling, God will be faithful to hang on to you. I want you to know that's true – it's just not in this verse!

- If you are a Christian, your faith might be weak and small – but you will never be *faith-less*. And even when you sin, you have the faithful promise of God that "He will never desert you, nor will He forsake you." As He says in Isaiah, "My salvation is forever." You sins were nailed to the cross and you bear them no more!

And the great hope for every child of God is His *immutability* – His unchanging faithfulness to Himself and His own promises is the guarantee that we will all make it home to heaven. Here is the verse to put in place of the one I took away from you this morning. Maybe you remember it from our study of Malachi last summer—

- Malachi 3:6 <sup>6</sup>"For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.