



Remember the Basics

2 Timothy 2:8-13

- 1. The Heart of the Gospel (verse 8)**
- 2. The Power of the Word (verses 9-10)**
- 3. The Promise of God (verses 11-13)**

On the cover of the Rockford Register Star last Sunday, there was a large picture on the front with a rose laying on top of a memorial. The headline read, "Never forget." Of course the reference was being made to the terrorist attack on our nation that took place 10 years ago, when two planes flew into the World Trade Center Towers, a third plane flew into the Pentagon, and a fourth plane crashed in rural Pennsylvania. All across our nation, last Sunday, there were events geared toward remembering what took place on that day, ten years ago. Ceremonies took place at ground zero. Community events were held all across our country. Prayers were offered up in many, many churches across the land in commemoration of that day (including ours).

All of this activity was done to remember September 11th. In one regard, it seems rather ridiculous that we would ever forget such a day. My guess is that most everyone in the room over 15 years of age can remember where they were on that day. How could we ever forget such a day? And yet, it's important for us to have these sorts of days of remembrance, lest we forget. They remind us of our history. They remind us of our vulnerability. They remind us of how we need to be vigilant against future attacks. Unless we constantly work to remember this day, we may well forget it. It's how our minds work. We need constant reminders.

It is no different when it comes to the Christian life and the Christian ministry. We constantly need reminders. We constantly need reminders of what God has done for us. We constantly need reminders of how God has been faithful to us.

When God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, He told them to remember His work in rescuing them from slavery. On the night of their redemption, Moses told the nation of Israel, "Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of from this place" (Ex. 13:3). And every year since then, the Jews have remembered this event with a feast. Forty years later, Moses told the people to remember. In Deuteronomy 15:15, we read, "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you." The Psalms also are sprinkled with remembrances of what God did in Egypt (Psalm 77; 78; 105; 106; 136).

Jesus knew that we needed reminders. At the Last Supper, Jesus took the bread. He gave thanks to the Lord and said, "This is my body which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:24). He took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:25). He instituted this ritual for us to follow, to remember Him. At the end of my message this morning, we will celebrate the supper as Jesus commanded, remembering Jesus.

In our text this morning, we find the apostle Paul reminding Timothy of the basics of the Christian life and ministry. Let's read them now.

2 Timothy 2:8-13

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. 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. It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;
If we endure, we will also reign with Him;
If we deny Him, He also will deny us;
If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

Paul isn't telling Timothy anything new here. Rather, he's reminding Timothy of the basics of the ministry, going over it one more time. Indeed, this is how the text begins (verse 8). "Remember Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. Remember Jesus Christ, descendant of David. Remember Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."

Paul continues in verses 9 and 10 to review his life in prison. "Remember why I'm suffering hardship. Remember why I'm suffering imprisonment. It all has to do with the gospel that I preach. It is what happens to those who are faithful to the gospel. Remember that the word of God isn't bound. Remember that the word of God is powerful to convert the elect."

Paul finishes (in verses 11-13) with a review of some well-known words. Many postulate that they were a portion of a well-known hymn in Timothy's day. "Remember that loyalty to Christ will be met with reward. Remember that disloyalty to Christ will face the frown of God."

My message this morning is entitled, "Remember the Basics." I have three points. The first point comes in verse 8. Remember, ...

1. The Heart of the Gospel (verse 8)

2 Timothy 2:8

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

Verse 8 speaks of Jesus. It speaks of His resurrection. It speaks of His incarnation. It speaks of His messianic lineage. And all of these things are crucial to the gospel, the saving plan of God. Now, it's not that these words are the whole gospel. Rather, it's that these words are central to the gospel.

The gospel is all about Jesus -- who He is and what He did. His incarnation implies His humanity. His resurrection implies His crucifixion. His crucifixion is our hope! "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scripture" (1 Cor. 15:3). This is the good news! We believe in Jesus, who died for us. By faith in Him we are made righteous. This is the gospel that we believe.

Paul calls it "my gospel," here, not in the sense that Paul was the source of the gospel. Rather, in the sense that Paul was a minister of the gospel. What a remarkable thing it is that Paul felt the need to tell Timothy to "remember Jesus Christ." Here was Timothy, a minister of the gospel, trained under the apostle Paul, who observed how Paul relentlessly spoke of Christ, crucified and raised from the dead. How could he ever forget Jesus? Apparently, Paul felt that he could.

What was a possibility with Timothy is a possibility in our day and age as well. I would contend that there are plenty of people (and churches) in our nation that forget Jesus Christ. Many in our day and age label themselves as Christians. They go to church. They socialize with their church friends. They aren't involved in many of the social sins. They aren't divorced. They are "nice" people. They give to charity. Their religion is moralism. "Be nice" is what you need to be.

Let me ask you, where is your comfort derived? Do you find comfort in your church attendance? Your Bible knowledge? The state of your family? Your wealth? Or, do you find your comfort in the cross of Christ? Those whose religion is moralism no longer see that the cross of Jesus is important to them. What's important to them is living morally and serving humanity. These are good things, to be sure, but empty apart from the work of Christ upon the cross. And without Jesus, you become a modern-day Pharisee.

Many have forgotten Jesus. Many have forgotten His resurrection. As a result, they have lost the power. Later in 2 Timothy, we will see Paul mentioning those who "hold to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power" (3:5). That fits the liberal church exactly. There is a form of godliness. Profession of Jesus is made. But, there is no genuine resurrection power of Jesus in their lives.

And this is what Paul is getting at. His emphasis isn't upon the fact of the resurrection (from a doctrinal standpoint). His emphasis is upon the reality of the living Christ, who has raised from the dead and is a present reality in Timothy's life.

The living reality of Jesus in Timothy's life will help give him the sustaining power needed to live. The living Christ will help him to be committed like the soldier. The living Christ will help him to be dedicated like the athlete. The living Christ will help him to be motivated like the farmer. This is the point of verse 1, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Let Jesus be your strength.

See, the Christian life isn't difficult. It's impossible. You can't live the Christian life, unless you have the risen Christ actively strengthening you on a moment by moment basis. So, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David."

The fact that Jesus is "descendant of David" places Him in history. He isn't some comic strip character like Superman. He isn't some television character like Batman. He isn't some fictitious man, like Paul Bunyan. He is real. He was born in the line of David. We have two records of the genealogies of Jesus (Matthew 1; Luke 3), tracing the lineage of Jesus back to David. We are dealing with reality here. Jesus was a real man, born in the line of David. He was born in Bethlehem, according to the Messianic promise, baptized in the river Jordan by John the Baptist, anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power (Acts 10:38), mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people (Luke 24:19). Jesus touched people. Jesus walked and talked with people. Jesus was crucified upon the cross, breathing His last breath. His physical death paid for the reality of our sins.

The fact that Jesus was "descendent of David" particularly places Him in the messianic line. All the Jews knew that the Messiah would come from the line of David (Matt. 22:41). It was no accident that Jesus was crucified as "the king of the Jews" (Matt. 27:37). Indeed, He is the king of the Jews. Indeed, He demands our loyalty. But, with our loyalty comes all the blessings of the Messiah toward us, which are great! This is why we follow Jesus. We have found Him to be our all! Let us never forget.

Let's turn to my second point. Remember, ...

2. The Power of the Word (verses 9-10)

Paul can hardly speak about the gospel without speaking about his own suffering. Back in chapter 1, verse 8, Paul wrote, "join with me in suffering for the gospel." In chapter 1, verse 10, Paul spoke of the gospel -- how Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Following up on this, he writes in verse 12, "for this reason I also suffer these things."

Here it's no different. He mentions the gospel in verse 8, and follows immediately with his suffering.

2 Timothy 2:9

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

You can't imprison the word of God. You may threaten those who speak it. You may imprison those who preach it. You may kill those who spread it. But, to no avail. The word of God will never be bound.

It's a bit like this story ...

When the daughter of the Mayor ... had lost her canary bird. Her wise father gave strict orders that all the gates of the town should be shut that the creature might not escape. But, the bird was soon over the hills and far away, despite the locking of the gates. [\[1\]](#)

Of this story, Spurgeon writes, ...

When a truth is once known, no human power can prevent its spreading. Attempts to hinder its progress will be as ineffectual as the mayor's proclamation. As a bird of the air, truth flies abroad on swift wings. As a ray of light, it enters palaces and cottages. As the unfettered wind, it laughs at laws and prohibitions. Walls cannot confine it nor iron bars imprison it. It is free, and makes free. Let every freeman be upon its side, and being so, let him never allow a doubt of its ultimate success to darken his soul. [\[1\]](#)

Such is the freedom of the word of God. During the days of the reformation, Martin Luther knew full well what made his work successful. It wasn't his ingenuity. It wasn't his talents. It wasn't his ability to escape the papists. No, it was the power of the word. He wrote, ...

I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never with force. I simply preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything. [\[2\]](#)

In his most famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," Luther writes, "The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still." Such is the power of the word of God. It can't be stopped.

And this is the very reason why Paul is willingly in prison -- because he knows that his imprisonment isn't preventing the word of God from spreading. In fact, in some measure, his imprisonment has become the very reason that the word of God was spreading. In Philippians, he spoke of the time that he was in prison. He told those dear believers, ...

Philippians 1:12-14

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

In other words, Paul was able to spread the gospel throughout all who were in the prison, both to prisoners as well as to the guards in the prison. We can read of this Philippian jailer in Acts 16. Furthermore, when believers heard of Paul's suffering imprisonment for the gospel, they were emboldened in their own speech. Such is the manner of the word. Try as you might to suppress it, and it will spread further, especially as people suffer for it.

Case in point: China. In an effort to suppress Christianity in their country, all of the Protestant missionaries were expelled from China in 1953. Estimates were that there were a bit fewer than a million Christians at the time in China. [\[3\]](#) What happened since then? What happened when all of the well-trained and well-taught missionaries were no longer able to teach and lead the church in China? Christianity has exploded in China. That's what has happened. Only God knows how. Current estimates are somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 to 100 million Christians in China today. Why has this taken place? This is what persecution does! It actually adds fuel to the fire.

Try as you might to suppress the word of God, it will continue to flourish. Try as you might to destroy Christianity? Let everything be easy. Let your culture be rich, so that you have no need of God. Let it cost you nothing to be a Christian. And the word of God will stagnate. Now, it won't be bound. But, it won't have the power.

What do you think has happened in America? I do believe that is what has happened here. Why do people need God here? They don't. They already have everything they need.

But, the days were different in Paul and Timothy's day. If you professed Christ, you may very well spend your days in a prison cell. Paul was in no way discouraged by these things. Rather, he said, (in verse 10), ...

2 Timothy 2:10

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.

He "endured" these things without complaint. He "endured" because he had an eternal perspective. He knew that his sufferings were instrumental in the salvation of the elect. That's what he says in verse 10, "For this reason, I endure all things for the sake of the elect" (which

is how most translations have it). The elect are those whom God has chosen from the foundation of the world to be with him in glory. They were chosen, not because of any goodness in them, not because of any foreseen action on their part, not because they deserved to be saved. Rather, they were chosen as a sheer expression of God's grace. And they will come to Christ, as they hear the powerful word of God.

And Paul knew that the way that some of them would hear the word was through his imprisonment. So, he wasn't bothered by his imprisonment. Just as God ordained the salvation of souls before the foundation of the world, so also He ordained the means. In other words, it was no accident that Paul was suffering as a prisoner. It was all in God's plan to save the elect. Sure, it was painful. And Paul didn't particularly like the discomfort (over in chapter 4, he asks Timothy to bring a cloak for him, because he is cold). And yet, there was a greater reality going on.

Paul knew that his imprisonment wasn't going to be wasted. He had read the book, "Don't Waste Your Imprisonment." And he was in prison, suffering and enduring, because he knew that it would turn out for the greater progress of the gospel (Phil. 1:12). But, this imprisonment was just one of many experiences of suffering that Paul faced.

Perhaps you remember what took place during Paul's second missionary journey. He went out to visit the cities he had visited during his first missionary journey (Acts 15:36). So, off he went to Derbe and Lystra and Iconium. Then, he continued on to Macedonia and Philippi. After Philippi, Paul and Silas continue to Thessalonica, where they are kicked out of town. The same thing happened at Berea.

Eventually, they landed in Corinth. Paul was expecting the same thing. And yet, something different happened in that place. The Lord appeared to Paul in the night by a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent; For I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10). It's safe to assume that Paul was fearing for his life in Corinth, expecting the Jews to come and stir the people again, which would send him out of Corinth and on his way. And yet, God had a different plan. There were many in Corinth who God called "my people." When Paul arrived there, they weren't believers. Paul was bringing the gospel to Corinth for the first time. Rather, they were the elect, who needed to hear the gospel. So, God protected Paul, long enough for him to remain in Corinth for 18 months, teaching the word of God to them (Acts 18:11).

This past week, a friend of mine commented on Facebook, "Heaven knows how many souls are going to Hell, so we gotta go in and get 'em." Such a perspective sees the world as lost and going to hell and in need of rescue. So, we have to go and go into the war and rescue the people from their perdition. Now, such is a true perspective. It's the perspective that Jude had, when he talked about "[saving] others, snatching them out of the fire" (Jude 22). But, the perspective here in 2 Timothy is a bit different. It comes with an assurance of the power of the word. Indeed, there are hell-bound people. But, we know that among those on the road leading to hell, are the elect. They are chosen by God to be in heaven with Him. We simply need to find them and tell them of Jesus. They will repent. So, I posted my response to my friend's comment, "God knows how many will be in heaven, so we gotta go out and get 'em."

This is God's plan: the elect are out there, but are currently unbelieving. We go and share the gospel with them, so that when they hear it, the Lord will open their heart to respond to the gospel, that they might be saved. Now, we don't know who the elect are, so we freely speak to everyone. But, God will work in the hearts of the elect.

As Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27-28). This is my point. Remember The Power of the Word (verses 9-10). God's Word will go out. God's Word will accomplish all that God desires. God's Word will not return empty (Is. 55:11).

This was a big motivating factor for Paul. It gave him the strength to persevere through the most difficult of trials. He could persevere because he knew that his trials would set a path for the word of God, which would lead people to Jesus, which would lead them to eternal glory (verse 10) -- eternal glory with Jesus.

Don't you think a little suffering is worth eternal glory with Jesus. Don't you think a little suffering is worth bringing others to eternal glory with Jesus? Paul was ready to be cast into hell (if possible) for the salvation of the Jews. He says, "I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my kinsmen according to the flesh" - Rom 9:3. Now, this is impossible, but such was the heart of Paul. Such ought to be the heart of Timothy. Such ought to be our heart as well.

Remember The Power of the Word (verses 9-10). The end result isn't a mere hope. The end result is a guaranteed victory. Remember The Plan of the Gospel (verse 8). Remember The Power of the Word (verses 9-10).

Finally, let's look at my third point. Remember, ...
3. The Promise of God (verses 11-13)

This comes in verses 11-13. Paul writes, ...

2 Timothy 2:11-14

It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;
If we endure, we will also reign with Him;
If we deny Him, He also will deny us;
If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

Five times in the pastoral epistles, Paul mentions these "trustworthy statements." (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; Titus 3:8 ... and here). Most theologians believe that they introduce a commonly known hymn of the early church, which was sung (or chanted or quoted) by the early believers, as an encouragement to their walk. Each time, Paul places his stamp of approval upon these lines.

Here we have four stanzas, all beginning with "if." "If we died. ... If we endure ... If we deny Him, ... If we are faithless." Each of these stanzas end with God's response to us. "If we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."

The first three stanzas are easy to interpret. The last one is a bit of a challenge. The first two speak of loyalty to Christ, and the reward that will follow. The third speaks of disloyalty to Christ, and the tragic result that will follow. The fourth speaks of our failures to follow Christ completely, and the result may be either encouraging to our failures. Or the result may be a warning to our failures.

In other words, the fourth stanza might read like this: "If we are weak and lacking complete fidelity, God won't abandon us. He is faithful. He will help us in our weakness." Or, the fourth stanza might read like this: "If we are unbelieving, God will remain truthful to His promises. He will judge those who don't believe."

Both of these options are true. Consider Peter, he was weak and denied Christ three times. But God didn't give up on him. Rather, Peter found help from God, helping him in his weakness. Or, on the contrary, consider Judas. He was unbelieving, and betrayed Jesus. Jesus said of him, "Woe to that man! ... It would have been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. 26:24).

The question here in 2 Timothy comes, so which is it? Will God be faithful to come and help us? Will God be faithful to His word and judge us if we don't believe? Is it an encouragement to us in our weakness? Or, is it a warning for us to in our temptations?

As I read commentators, they split about 50-50 regarding the interpretation of this stanza. So, who am I to tell you what's correct. Either way you take it, it's all consistent Biblically. But, I tend to think the latter. God will be faithful to His word. God will condemn the unbelieving.

I think that such is the thrust of the context of 2 Timothy. The whole epistle is a call for Timothy to find strength in the ministry to endure until the end. Paul calls him to fan the flame, and fight the fight. And the first two stanzas would come a great encouragement (and incentive) to do this. "If we died with Him, we will also live with Him." Here is the promise of reward that comes after the suffering.

Paul wasn't in prison without a promise. He wasn't a masochist, looking to inflict harm upon himself. No he was in prison, because he trusted in the promise of Jesus. In Mark, we read: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:34-36).

Paul believed that to give up his life would ultimately mean gaining his life. That's why he told the Ephesian elders, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). In coming to Christ, Paul had died to himself. In his case, it would mean martyrdom. But Paul was fine with that, because he knew the life that would follow.

He's calling Timothy to do the same, embrace your suffering by looking to your reward! It's my call to you this morning -- Remember The Promise of God (verses 11-13).

Here is the next stanza: "If we endure, we will also reign with Him;" Again, the message is the same. Rather than speaking about death and life, Paul here speaks about suffering and glorification. The endurance here is the same endurance that Paul spoke about in verse 10, "I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen." Mocking, scourging, imprisonment, even death -- if we continue faithful through these things, glory awaits us.

Paul once said, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:17). You put the sufferings of today in one hand, and the glories of the future in the other, there is no comparison. The glories of the future far outweigh the minor difficulties of today. The promise of the Scriptures is that we who endure until the end will "reign upon the earth" (Rev. 5:10).

Jesus said to those who were faithful with the talents that were given to them, "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with few things, I will put you in charge of many things; Enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 25:21). We simply need to endure until the end. It will be worth it. So press on! Remember The Promise of God (verses 11-13).

The third stanza is a warning: "If we deny Him, He also will deny us;" Jesus said it about as plainly as could be said, "Whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:33). If we are not willing to align ourselves with Jesus. He will not be willing to align Himself with us.

Now, it doesn't mean that we temporarily fail of faith. Peter is the best example of this. He denied Jesus three times, and yet, Jesus never ultimately denied him. Rather, it means permanent denial. The denial of unbelief. The denial of needing a Savior. The denial of the truth of God's word. The denial that continues until the end. We're talking here about apostates -- those who turn their backs upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is why Timothy shouldn't give up! The consequences are too great. Your life would be useless. You will be thrown out like a bag of garbage. And the same comes to us. The consequences are too great!

I guarantee you: in eternity, you will never be disappointed by any suffering that you experienced because you aligned yourself with Jesus. I

guarantee you: in eternity, if it is possible to regret, you will regret every way that you backed down from the claims of Christ.

So, don't deny Him. Rather, remember The Promise of God (verses 11-13).

Finally, this last phrase: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." Probably the best way to translate these words is like this, "If we are unbelieving, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."

John MacArthur said it well, "As faithful as Jesus is to save those who believe in Him (John 3:16), He is equally faithful to judge those who do not (John 3:18). To act any other way would be inconsistent with His holy, unchangeable nature (Heb. 10:23)" ^[4]

God is going to be true to His word. God is going to be merciful to the penitent. God is going to be wrathful to the proud. Let's believe Him. Let's trust Him. Let's endure. Let's fan the flame and fight the fight.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 18, 2011 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Charles Spurgeon's study notes, http://www.preceptaustin.org/spurgeon_on_2timothy.htm

[2] Luther's Works, volume 51, p. 77

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_missions_in_China_1807%E2%80%931953

[4] MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1807