



Please turn to 2 Timothy 2:8-13 (p. 935). The psalmist praised the Lord, saying, “The unfolding of your words gives light; it *imparts* understanding to the simple” (Ps. 119:130). These are the “ancient words” we just sang about, the “ancient words” that change me and you. In 1 Corinthians, Paul says the wisdom of God and the power of God are imparted through “the word of the cross.” That’s why Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Another translation says, “I decided that ... *I would forget everything except Jesus Christ.*”

Paul begins 2 Timothy 2:8 in a similar vein, saying, “Remember Jesus Christ.” This is Paul’s appeal to Timothy and the Holy Spirit’s word to us. Look with me at verses 8-13:

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him;

if we deny him, he also will deny us;

¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful —

for he cannot deny himself.

As you can see from the title slide of this sermon series, God’s people are ***equipped*** by God’s word to *fight the good fight ... finish the race ... [and] keep the faith*. According to this passage, the way we stay faithful and finish strong is summed up in three words: “Remember Jesus Christ.” This verb is a present imperative. So, it could be translated, “continue to remember” or “keep on remembering.”

Paul isn’t talking about losing our memory, as if we could completely forget about Jesus, his death and resurrection. Rather, Paul is helping us to guard against the more subtle ways we put Jesus on the backburner, where he is no longer our focus. This condition could be called “gospel amnesia.” It’s a spiritual malady that handicaps many Christians. The primary symptom is preoccupation with self and the circumstances in which you find yourself.

On Thursday morning I was at the gym and saw a guy around my age wearing a Batman T-shirt. I can assure you that if they were doing auditions for another Batman movie, this guy would not have made the cut. When I was growing up, superhero movies and outfits were designed mostly for kids. But not anymore.

I think our fascination with superheroes reflects the deepest longings of our hearts. We know that the world is broken, that bad things happen (not just natural disasters but also morally evil acts), and that things aren't the way they should be. We long for someone who is super powerful yet also incredibly kind and compassionate, who can come to the rescue.¹

The problem is, we want to be that person, so we go out and buy the T-shirt. Or someone else wants us to be that person or thinks we are that person, so they buy us the T-shirt.

The problem is: *none of us are that person!* We all know this! That's why movie makers have increasingly highlighted the superheroes' flaws. In some ways, they're no better than we are! The gospel reminds us that there is only one true Hero, and that is Jesus Christ. He is the one who came to rescue us, redeem us, restore us, and empower us to be all that we were created to be – for the glory of God and for the good of this world.

The gospel is Good News, and Jesus Christ is at the heart of the gospel. *He is the Hero!*

In verse 8, Paul distills the gospel into a few descriptive words about Jesus Christ – words that are loaded with significance.

“Jesus” is the name of heaven's Hero. It means “the Lord saves.”

“Christ” is his title. It means that he is the one anointed by God the Father and equipped by the Holy Spirit to rescue and redeem his people.

“Risen from the dead” reminds us of Jesus' divinity.

“The offspring of David” points to Jesus' humanity and also his kingship. For he fulfills God's promise to David that his greater Son would sit on his throne forever.

The combination of the phrases, “risen from the dead” and “the offspring of David,” echo Romans 1:3-4, where Paul extols “the gospel of God ... concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh [his humanity] and was declared to be the Son of God in power [his divinity] ... by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

“As preached in my gospel,” Paul says at the tail end of 2 Timothy 2:8. The good news of salvation originated with God and was appropriated by Paul. That is, he made the gospel his own by trusting in Jesus Christ as his Savior, his Lord, his King, his Hero.

Have you? It's not enough to believe the facts about the gospel. The devil and his demons do that. Salvation involves turning from your and self-sufficiency to Christ as your all in all. A man once asked Paul and Silas the most important question a person can ever ask. He said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...’” (Acts 16:30-31). The same is true for you. The Lord says, “‘At just the right time I heard you. On the day of salvation I helped you.’ See, now is the right time! Now is the day of salvation!” (2 Cor. 6:1-2). I urge you to receive God's gift of salvation today!

Once we *receive* Jesus Christ, we must “*remember* Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:8, italics mine). That is how we progress and persevere in the Christian life.

¹ Arvind Balaram, “The Superhero Phenomenon.” *TGC India*, 27 May 2022 [online]. Retrieved on 16 May 2024 from <https://in.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/faith-not-sight/the-superhero-phenomenon/>.

***Dauntless disciples keep JESUS
at the forefront of their minds.***

Keep in mind the context. Paul has exhorted Timothy to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ and to suffer hardship as a follower of Christ. Timothy must live like a dedicated soldier, a disciplined athlete, a diligent farmer. But as Timothy strives to excel in his service for God, he must not lose sight of his Hero. John MacArthur writes,

[Jesus] was the greatest soldier, the greatest athlete, and the greatest farmer, as it were. He fought the greatest battle and won the greatest victory. He ran the greatest race and won the greatest prize. He sowed the perfect seed and reaped the perfect harvest.²

As we “remember Jesus Christ,” we will be able to meet any challenge, get through any trial, and overcome any crisis. Tony Merida writes, “When your tank is empty, remember that the tomb is empty. ... A lofty vision of the person and work of Christ will keep us in the war, in the game, and on the farm.”³

Paul follows his appeal, “Remember Jesus Christ,” with three reasons why we should.

1. God’s *supreme power* keeps the gospel advancing (v. 9).

In verse 9, Paul says, “I am suffering [for the gospel], bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!” The Roman and Jewish authorities thought that if they could lock Paul up and throw away the key, then the Christian movement would fizzle and fail. But the opposite happened!

In another letter that Paul wrote from prison, to the church at Philippi, he testified,

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that my situation has actually turned out to advance the gospel: The whole imperial guard and everyone else knows that I am in prison for the sake of Christ, and most of the brothers and sisters, having confidence in the Lord because of my imprisonment, now more than ever dare to speak the word fearlessly.

- Paul the Apostle
(Phil. 1:12-14)⁴

Persecution fans the flames of evangelism. We see this principle at work throughout the book of Acts. For every advancement of the gospel, there is a corresponding resistance to the gospel, but the word of God overcomes the resistance.

- In Acts 4, Peter and John preach the gospel in Jerusalem. The religious leaders apprehend them and tell them not to speak anymore to anyone in Jesus’ name.

² John MacArthur Jr., 2 Timothy. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 56.

³ Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, edited by David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 167.

⁴ NET Bible copyright ©1996-2017 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://netbible.com>.

Peter and John reply, “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard” (vv. 19-20 NLT). Once they’re let go, they gather with the church and pray that they’ll continue to speak God’s word with all boldness. Then “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to preach the word of god with boldness” (v. 31 ESV).

- In Acts 5, the apostles are arrested again. This time they’re beaten and warned again not to speak in the name of Jesus. After the authorities release them, they “rejoiced that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus. And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: ‘Jesus is the Messiah’” (Acts 5:41-42 NLT).
- In Acts 6-7, the authorities turn up the heat even more. They arrest a bold witness named Stephen who preaches the truth to them! They get so mad that they stone him to death. Luke, author of Acts, notes, “And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria...” (8:1). “Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went” (Acts 8:3 ESV, 8:4 NLT).

This pattern continues throughout the book of Acts. For every advancement of the gospel, there’s a corresponding resistance to the gospel, but God’s word overcomes the resistance! One of the most powerful demonstrations of this occurs in Acts 12. At the beginning of this chapter we’re told that Herod killed James and put Peter in prison. So, the chapter begins with James dead, Peter in prison, and Herod triumphant. The chapter ends with Herod dead, Peter freed, and the word of God triumphant. Luke writes, “The word of God continued to spread and flourish” (Acts 12:24 NIV).

The same holds true today. Consider China, for instance. Even though persecution against Christians continues to spread throughout most of the country,⁵ and children under 18 are still forbidden from attending church, the average annual growth rate (AAGR) of Christianity in China is eight times greater than the AAGR of the population. Currently China has the third highest number of Christians in the world. If the high growth rate continues, China may become the country with the most Christians by 2030.

Of the “Top 20 Countries where Christianity is Growing the Fastest,”⁶ nineteen are in Asia and Africa, and eleven are Muslim majority countries, and none of them are from Europe, North America, or Latin America.⁷ – As Christians, we should be grateful for the freedoms we enjoy and do what we can to uphold them. But we must not think that religious liberty is the key to gospel advancement. *God* is!⁸ It is his power that keeps the gospel spreading and flourishing. So, “remember Jesus Christ!” He is in control! He is building his church, and all the powers cannot prevail against it (Matt. 16:18)!

⁵ “China.” *Open Doors* [online]. Retrieved on 16 May 2024 from <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/china/>.

⁶ *Disciple All Nations* [online]. Retrieved on 16 May 2024 from <https://discipleallnations.wordpress.com/2013/08/25/the-top-20-countries-where-christianity-is-growing-the-fastest/>

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ John MacArthur rightly notes, “The power of God’s Word has never been dependent on man’s protection or subject to man’s restriction.” MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 59.

2. God's sovereign election keeps his messengers persevering (v. 10).

“Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal joy” (2 Tim. 2:10). Paul knew from personal experience that the word of God cannot be bound because when he did his utmost as a non-Christian to stop the spread of the gospel, Paul himself was miraculously converted and began “preaching the faith he once tried to destroy” (Gal. 1:23). What accounted for this dramatic turnaround? The Lord himself gave Ananias the answer in Acts 9, saying, “this man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel” (v. 15 NET).

Jesus made a similar declaration to his disciples in John 15:16: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you” (NIV).

The noun *eklektos* appears 22 times in the New Testament and refers to those whom God appointed for salvation – not because of anything good God foresaw in them but because of his own good pleasure. Paul affirms this truth in Ephesians 1:4-5, saying,

[God the Father] chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless before him. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.⁹

This text, like so many others, celebrate the beautiful doctrine of election. This biblical teaching should fuel not only praise to God for our salvation, but also our evangelistic witness to others so that “they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal joy” (2 Tim. 2:10). We can be sure that as the gospel is proclaimed, God's elect people will trust in Christ and be saved. Whatever God calls us to endure for that purpose will be worth it, because our temporary suffering will result in eternal glory for us and them.

- ⇒ Think again of Stephen. He was a faithful witness for Christ who got murdered. But the man who consented to his death got converted after his death!
- ⇒ What co-worker, friend, or loved one in your life is resistant, perhaps even hostile, to the gospel? Who would you consider to be the least likely to be saved? Don't write them off! Your responsibility is to be faithful and leave the results with God.

“Remember Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:8), “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2a). Jesus' experienced “immeasurable pain, followed by infinite joy” – the joy not being in the cross itself but the glory it would win for God and the salvation it would work for a multitude too vast to be counted from every nation on earth (Rev. 7:9).¹⁰

⁹ The translation for verse 4 was taken from *The Mounce Reverse Interlinear™ New Testament* (MOUNCE) Copyright © 2011 by William D. Mounce. The translation for verse 5 was taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation.

¹⁰ Andrew M. Davis, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Isaiah*. edited by David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 323. Davis notes, “The delight of the Father in Isaiah 53:10 is eh same as the joy of the Son in Hebrews 12:2....”

Romans 8:17 says, “Now if we are children [of God], then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may share in his glory” (NIV). This takes us to the third reason we should “remember Jesus Christ”:

3. God’s *steadfast character* keeps his word unchanging.

In verses 11-13 of 2 Timothy 2, Paul writes, “The saying is trustworthy, for:

*If we have 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.” This section is poetic and may have been an early Christian creed. It reinforces the idea that all believers must endure hardship.¹¹ It consists of four conditional clauses that all begin with the words “if we.” The first two lines relate to those who endure faithfully. The last two lines describe those who don’t. In each case our actions carry consequences.

The promises conveyed in the first pair of clauses are of great comfort to Christians. It’s been said that “endurance pays off.” This is never truer than when it comes to the Christian life. “If we have died with [Christ], we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.”

The concept of dying with Jesus to live with him probably refers to dying to self as we take up our cross and follow Jesus (Matt. 16:24). Jesus said, “Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it” (Mark 8:35). “Dying and living, enduring and reigning” are experiences we share “with Christ.” These realities are symbolized in the ordinance of baptism. Paul writes in Romans 6,

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.

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.

- Romans 6:4-5

The second pair of clauses describe the awful picture of denying Christ. “If we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself.” Jesus said, “Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven” (Matt. 10:32-33).¹²

¹¹ Merida, 168. The summary of this section in the paragraphs that follow are adapted from this source.

¹² *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation.

There's a direct correlation between Paul's warning in the second half of 2 Timothy 2:12 and Jesus' warning in Matthew 10:33. But what about the next statement – the clause at the beginning of 2 Timothy 2:13: “If we are faithless, he remains faithful”? Some see this as a word of comfort, taking it to mean that even if we turn away from Jesus, he will never turn away from us. Others see it as a word of warning – that Jesus will be faithful to punish faithlessness because God cannot act contrary to his character.

I believe the second view is correct. This is a warning. It fits the parallel structure of this section and reminds us that God is both merciful and just. In Deuteronomy 29:19, Moses warns that no one should think, “I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my own heart.” It's one thing to falter and fail like Peter did when he denied Christ but then repented and boldly confessed him, even when it cost him his life. It's another thing to persist in faithlessness, settling into a “final kind of denial that does not repent and thereby evidences an unrepentant heart.”¹³

Jesus will be faithful to punish such faithlessness because he cannot act contrary to his own character. In the book of Revelation Jesus Christ is called “Faithful and True” (19:11). Christ will be faithful and true to his promise to judge the faithless, the wicked, and to vindicate his name and his followers. “The word of our God shall stand forever” (Isa. 40:8) because “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

In his book, *Gentle and Lowly*, Dane Ortlund writes,

What elicits tenderness from Jesus is not the severity of the sin but whether the sinner comes to him. Whatever our offense, he will deal gently with us. If we never come to him, we will experience a judgment so fierce it will be like a double-edged sword coming out of his mouth at us (Rev. 1:16; 2:12; 19:15, 21). If we do come to him, as fierce as his lion-like judgment would have been against us, so deep will be his lamb-like tenderness for us (cf. Rev. 5:5-6; Isa. 40:10-11). We will be enveloped in one or the other. To no one will Jesus be neutral.¹⁴

So, “remember Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:8)! He is the Hero worthy of your allegiance. Receive him as your Savior and King. Keep him at the forefront of your mind, and you will be a dauntless disciple, a fearless follower, a bold believer who lives without regret and whom Christ will be faithful to reward.

¹³ MacArthur, 65.

¹⁴ Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 54.