

Paul Encourages Timothy to be a Faithful Christian

2 Timothy 2:8-13

2 Timothy 2:8-13: *“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, ⁹ for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the Word of God is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ¹¹ This is a faithful saying:*

*For if we died with Him,
We shall also live with Him.*

*¹² If we endure,
We shall also reign with Him.*

*If we deny Him,
He also will deny us.*

*¹³ If we are faithless,
He remains faithful;
He cannot deny Himself.*

Background Notes

The primary reason why Paul wrote this Second Epistle to Timothy was to encourage Timothy to be a faithful and dedicated servant of Jesus Christ. Timothy was in Ephesus, helping to build up the believers there. Meanwhile Paul was imprisoned in Rome, awaiting martyrdom. The Roman persecutions had already begun, and some Christians were falling away from the faith. In his final letter, Paul wrote to Timothy to encourage him to remain steadfast and dedicated and faithful.

In chapter 2, Paul gave Timothy several models of the faithful Christian. We have already discussed the soldier, the farmer, and the athlete (v3-6). In verses 8-13 Paul listed several motivating factors that would help Timothy in moving forward in the ministry, as a steadfast and faithful Christian.

Remember, 2 Timothy is not just a 1st century letter from the apostle Paul to Timothy - it is the word of God to us today. These same motivating factors should help to keep us moving forward as steadfast and faithful believers.

Four motivating factors are listed in these verses:

- 1) The presence of Christ (v8)
- 2) The power of the Word (v9)
- 3) The position of the elect (v10)
- 4) The possibility of rewards (v11-13)

Doctrinal Points

1. The presence of Christ should motivate the believer to be a faithful Christian.

Verse 8: *“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel.”* How do you normally think of the Lord Jesus? Do you think of Him as He was here on this earth in history? Or do you think of Him as He is now, risen and glorified, and present with us at this very moment? Both ways of thinking of our Lord are proper but the point here is that our Lord is alive right now, and He is present with us. We are to remember that the Lord Jesus is our **risen** Savior. **He’s alive!** This should encourage us and motivate us to be more faithful as believers.

The phrase *“descendant of David”* emphasizes both the fact that Jesus is the Messiah and the fact that He was fully Man. As Man, the Lord Jesus suffered for us. Now He’s alive and present with us. Are we willing to suffer for Him? 1 Peter 2:21 says, *“Christ suffered for us leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps.”* The presence of the living Christ should motivate the believer to be a faithful Christian.

2. The power of the Word should motivate the believer to be a faithful Christian.

Verse 9: *“For which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.”* When Paul referred to the gospel as *“my gospel”* (v8), he didn’t mean that he came up with the gospel. No, of course not! The Lord had specifically entrusted him with the gospel, thus it was “his” gospel.

Now Paul was in prison because he was spreading that gospel - but the gospel was not imprisoned! That’s the point of verse 9. Paul was in prison and in chains, but the gospel was not chained. You can’t imprison the gospel of Jesus Christ. People have tried to chain up the gospel, but it can’t be done!

Listen to a quote about Voltaire, a French philosopher. “Voltaire, the noted French infidel who died in 1778, said that 100 years from his time, Christianity would be swept from existence and passed into history.” But what happened? Voltaire has passed into history, while the circulation of the Bible continues to increase, carrying blessing wherever it goes. It’s quite an irony of history that only 50 years after Voltaire’s death, the Geneva Bible Society used his house and his press to produce Bibles!

You can't imprison the gospel of Jesus Christ! People are constantly putting the gospel of God's grace on trial, but they have never been able to send it to prison. Messengers of the gospel have been sent to prison, as Paul was and as Christians are today, but the gospel cannot be imprisoned.

That fact should not only encourage us but should motivate us to be faithful, even to the point of suffering. The power of the Word should motivate the believer to be a faithful Christian.

3. The position of the elect should motivate the believer to be a faithful Christian.

Verse 10, *"Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."* Notice - the fact that the saved and elect are chosen by God did not in any way cause Paul to slack off in his efforts to preach the gospel. He was willing to endure all things that people might obtain *"the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."*

Paul was motivated by the fact that guilty sinners, even vile sinners, could be transformed by Christ, and could share in His eternal glory. Does that fact motivate you? Think of a non-Christian that you know – maybe someone you don't like, like a teacher, a boss, a local politician, a world leader. God can save them, believe it or not! They can be transformed and share with us in the glory of the Lord. The position of the elect should motivate the believer to be a faithful Christian.

4. The possibility of rewards should motivate the believer to be a faithful Christian.

Verses 11-13: *"This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful. He cannot deny Himself."*

These verses may have been a quote from an early Christian hymn or confession, or even part of a baptismal ceremony. In any case, we have two positive "ifs" and two negative "ifs" in these verses. The essential truth of these verses is that trust in and faithfulness to Christ brings positive results, but unbelief and faithlessness brings negative results.

a. Two positive "ifs"-

- "If we die with Him" - if we have identified with Christ in His death (as our baptism pictures), then we will also live with Him, both now and forever.

- "If we endure" - if we are willing to suffer hardships for the sake of Christ and the gospel, then we shall also reign with Him. Our place in the coming Kingdom, when Jesus Christ will reign here on this earth, is determined by our faithfulness now.

b. Two negative “ifs”-

- “If we deny Him, He also will deny us” - Is this in reference to the unbeliever and has to do with salvation? Or is it in reference to the believer and has to do with rewards? Because of the context, I think it has to do with rewards. Look back at the model of the athlete (v5): *“And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”* Don’t expect much reward in heaven if you’re not willing to let it be known that you’re a Christian. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. I think the context here is the matter of rewards, not salvation.

- “If we are faithless, He remains faithful. He cannot deny Himself” – Once again, I believe the context is rewards. If we are faithless as Christians, and don’t serve the Lord but live a selfish life, He must be faithful to His principles. We will not be rewarded. God cannot deny Himself.

“He remains faithful” does **not** mean that we can be faithless, and even deny Him - but the Lord will be faithful to us and reward us anyway. No! God cannot deny His own principles! He remains faithful to the principles of rewards that He has set up.

If we’re willing to take up the cross and follow Him, then we can expect that we’ll be glorified with Him. But if we’re not willing to take up the cross and follow Him, then we’re going to suffer loss. There’s not going to be much reward. The possibility of reward should motivate the believer to be a faithful Christian.

Practical Application

Are you willing to be chained for the sake of the gospel?

The apostle Paul was willing. Verse 9: *“For which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains.”* We might say, “Yes, I’d be willing to go to prison for the sake of Christ.” But would we be willing to endure other “chains”?

Are you willing to be chained to a particularly unpleasant job, or to an undesirable home location, because God wants you there as His witness? Are you willing to be chained to a particular small unrewarding ministry because “somebody has to do it” - and God has chosen you? Are you willing to be chained to a hospital bed because there are medical professionals and other patients who need you hear your testimony?

Are we willing to be chained for the sake of the gospel?