

Remember Jesus to Remain Steadfast

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Well, grab your Bibles and let's go to 2 Timothy. We've entitled this series "Beautifying the Bride" as Paul writes to Timothy, giving him instructions on how to set up, organize, basically the form and the fashion of the local church there at Ephesus and that's, that's what we are, we are his bride and as we honor his word and we are empowered by his Spirit, we reflect his beauty and we'll do that perfectly in heaven one day as his church, but we're to be striving to reflect and glorify him as much as possible in this earthly pilgrimage. This is our time to, um, begin the process, we're that new creation he's now putting together. And by the way, he's going to get rid of the old creation. I keep hearing these people talk about, uh, the answer for the world is Christ. Well, that's certainly true, we all agree with that. The answer is the gospel. Well, that's certainly true, but Christ never promised to clean up nations. He never promised to fix countries' problems. He did promise, "I will build My church." Now when there's strong churches, that sloshes over to make strong nations, but when Jesus returns, he's not gonna fix America, he's gonna get and do away with America and everything else, then he's going to rebuild it and put back a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells and all his children will dwell there with him.

Okay, so Paul is writing, that's a little mini-sermon. I don't know where that came from. Paul is writing to Timothy from prison in Rome, his execution is imminent, and he's giving Timothy instruction but he's spending a lot of energy intertwined here encouraging Timothy, strengthening Timothy, giving Timothy reasons to not quit and remain steadfast. And we're gonna look at one verse this morning, 2 Timothy 2:8, and I've entitled this exposition "Remember Jesus to Remain Steadfast." That's what he's gonna tell Timothy. "If you, if you'll remember Jesus, Timothy, that's going to enable you, that's going to strengthen you to remain steadfast." Are, are you a quitter? Do you think about quitting? Well, you don't need to. You need to do what Paul says here in Timothy in verse 8,

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

That's almost humorous when you read those two words, "Remember Jesus Christ." Of course Timothy remembers Jesus Christ but what else is Paul really saying here? Paul knows Timothy remembers Christ, he's saying, "No, Timothy, what I mean is treasure

Jesus Christ. Hold to Him. Embrace Him and all that He is and all that He has done and will do for us, and all that He is in you right now. Look to Jesus, that is."

You and I live in a troubled and difficult world, do we not? And trials come and we watch the news and another unbelievably bizarre, strange thing that we said would never happen is happening. People are embracing and celebrating things that I could not have even thought of 20 years ago. And so it's, it's, it's a difficult day and we can become anxious and we become worried and we can become fearful. It's just around the corner where there are gonna be high-up leadership say that those who hold to orthodox Christianity and those who preach the word of God and those who hold to those ancient doctrines of Christianity, they are a menace to society. They're gonna say they're detrimental to public health. That's just around the corner. And so these things can trouble us and, by the way, that's basically the cultural context that Timothy finds himself in because Christianity had been outlawed as a detriment to the well-being of the Roman Empire and it was no longer legal to be a Christian, and they started by arresting the leader, the Apostle Paul. That's why he's in prison.

So Paul knows Timothy's gonna face some difficult days also and we're facing difficult days, and if it's not because of the terrible downgrade that we see in our nation and in our world and our culture, there's disease and there's troubles in our home, and there's financial challenges, but we can become anxious, we can become fearful, we can become troubled of heart and that's the situation that Satan can step into and Satan can take advantage. It's during those times that Satan can take a real foothold into our lives.

I think it was William Bennett who wrote the book "Slouching Toward Gomorrah," uh, a figurative, uh, title that says our culture is just slouching toward the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, but that book several years old now, we're no longer slouching, we're running toward Gomorrah. We're running toward wickedness in this day. And what would God say to us, and specifically what did Paul say to Timothy in that troubling context? "Remember Jesus Christ." There's power in that, "Remember Jesus Christ."

Let me glean three things out of this text for us this morning as we think about remembering Jesus to remain steadfast.

I. Remember the truth of his person and work. That's what he says here among other things, remember the truth of his person and work. When he says here in verse 8, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David," among other things, he's saying his person is that he's human and he's divine. He's descended of David but he rose from the dead. He's, he's of, of God. He is God, God of very God, the theologians would say, 100% man as if he were not God at all, and 100% God as if he were not man at all. He's the God-man. So Paul is making something of a statement of the doctrine of Christ's person and then, of course, in his resurrection that's part of his essential work. So remember Christ and the truth of his person and work.

Now no doubt the phrases here, uh, one of their purposes as Paul writes to Timothy is to refute the false doctrine of the day. When he says he's a descendant of David, that refuted

the teachers of his day that denied Jesus' humanity. Brothers and sisters, it's very important you should contemplate, you should think weightily on the fact that God came in human flesh but in the person of Jesus Christ he was also fully human. He was man. He's the descendant of David, Paul writes to Timothy. And of course, this is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy that said that the Messiah would come of the seed of David.

Then he says not only that, risen from the dead, he said. Remember him risen from the dead. In other words, he was gloriously raised from the dead. Now here's the point, "A human has overcome the clutches of death. Timothy, remember that." Did you hear that, church? There is a human who went into death, faced it, conquered it, and came out victorious and lived again, Jesus Christ. This refuted some of the heresy of the day, of Paul's day. We know later in verse 17 Paul mentions a couple of guys who have begun to teach that the resurrection had already passed, and there's some who teach that there is no resurrection, and these same heresies are around today and always have been. Matter of fact, in every age these false teachings are variations of them abound in society.

And I thought about that and I thought why is that? Well, the Bible says Satan is our enemy. The Bible says Satan is the enemy of all righteousness. Well, the church is the friend of God. We're the family of God and we're striving in the righteousness of Christ to build a righteous fellowship in the earth. So we're radically contrary to everything Satan's about. He strives, therefore, to weaken our confidence and undermine our strength. He has many schemes, the Bible calls them fiery missiles he tries to fire at us. But one that he constantly employs against us is to question, if not remove, sound doctrine, sound teaching concerning Jesus Christ, his person and his work. Some will deny the fullness of his humanity. Some will deny the fullness of his deity and his bodily resurrection, and then all points in between.

Now I want you to listen to this and, and, and I think this is so applicable to us today but actually it's been applicable to every generation of Christianity. If Satan cannot get you to outright deny these doctrines, that's the person and work of Christ, he will do something worse. He will teach you to hold these doctrines but in word only. Satan will say, "Hold these doctrines but just in cold formality, but abandon them when it comes to your personal faith and practice and when it comes to your church's corporate faith and practice." Now that was happening in Paul's day. There were many who called themselves Christians, many who said they were preaching the gospel, and it was nothing but a cold formality and really their lives and their churches had drifted from the doctrines of the faith. In contrast to that, the Apostle Paul held to the gospel from the core of his being. The gospel fashioned the totality of this apostle's life. It was his only message. It was his only ministry. It informed his motives and it dictated his methods.

Now again contextually for Paul here, Christianity has been deemed illegal. It's been deemed a menace to the Roman Empire and it's to be stamped out, at least true Christianity was deemed that way. So Paul in verse 9 as we look a little ahead in our text, what we'll do next week, Lord willing, he said, "I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. I was considered an outlaw. What I

preached was considered an outlawed message but I didn't change. I accepted the hardship. I didn't alter the message. I didn't adjust the doctrine so that I might fit in with modern Rome. I stayed by the stuff and I accepted the persecution of the governing authorities."

Now I do not think it a stretch at all that the rejection of Christ's humanity, that work Paul's dealing with and he's telling Timothy to be aware of, and the rejection of Christ's deity and his resurrection from the grave that they're dealing with, I don't think it's a stretch at all to, to assume that this happened in the culture because many who professed to be, professed to be Christian preachers and many who professed to be Christians felt the pressure of the culture, felt the pressure of the day and begin to decide, "Hey, you know what? We might want to sidestep, leave behind, not emphasize some of those old doctrines because we could end up in prison with Paul." That's the way these things start. It's central to Satan's strategy to weaken individual believers and weaken local churches to convince them that, "Well, maybe you can get by by holding to a form of the true doctrine but in your faith and practice, you know, get along with Rome, get along with the world." That's what was happening.

Uh, in 2 Timothy, uh, 3, verse 5, Paul, we'll get to this in a few weeks, "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these." So what does it mean "a form of godliness"? It, I think it's just like Amos faced when he was preaching, um, in Bethel in the Old Testament. Uh, they had what the scholars called a Jehovah Baal cult. They hold to the form of orthodox Jehovah worship, the old religion handed down by Moses, but really they left that for what they were actually involved in, what their hearts were committed to, and they functioned just like sensual sexually immoral Baal worshipers.

So Paul tells Timothy, "Timothy, I want you to remember the person and work of Jesus Christ and don't hold to it in formality, hold to it from the heart." It doesn't say that in the text but it's certainly implied in the text. Alright, II. Now if you're gonna remember Jesus and remain steadfast, remember his person and work. Church, I'm gonna say this one thing and I'll leave point I: it's vitally important that we faithfully preach these old doctrines, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth of Christ, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, the imminent return of Jesus Christ, and salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone.

II. Now if you're gonna remember Jesus to remain steadfast, not only remember the truth of his person and work but remember the power and provision Christ has granted to us. "Oh, Timothy, Timothy, remember these things." Now, now, now remember the context. Paul is writing from prison facing execution. Paul ought to know what it is that keeps you going strong when you're facing real trouble for being a faithful Christian witness. I mean, he's right in the middle of it.

So he says here in verse 8 again, "Remember Jesus Christ," and, uh, the word "remember," the verb here is an imperative and it's in the present tense which means it's a

command and it's something to continue. Like I've said to you before, I don't think Paul is saying, "Timothy, you've backslidden." He's not saying that. He's saying, "Just keep on keeping on," present tense. "Keep remembering. Keep remembering. Keep remembering, Timothy. Stay faithful. Stay steadfast. Don't drift away. Don't drift into these false doctrines. Don't compromise because of the threat of Rome. Stay faithful."

Paul is basically telling Timothy that, "Our forerunner, our Captain, our King, our God Jesus Christ is the one risen from the dead. He's the one who's the descendant of David and He has set a preeminent example and blazed the trail that we all will travel." Now don't just hear that, hear that. He's blazed a trail that all of His children will soon travel. If you'll remember that, that'll help you be steadfast and remain faithful." He did it for the truth. He did it for the gospel. He did it for the church. He became a man descended of David. He was viciously hated. He was maliciously maligned. He was physically beaten. He was violently murdered. But God the Father raised Him from the dead, and in Him so we will also." That's Paul's point. "A man rose from the dead and in that man, Timothy, we too will get through death." It's as if Paul says, "Now what's Rome gonna do to us that's gonna hurt us? How can Rome hurt us, Timothy? All their threats, all their intimidations, all their vicious hatred and physical torments, or whatever they may...what can Rome really do to men who follow the man who conquered death?" This is good stuff.

I'm gonna tell you a little pop psychology on Sunday morning won't work when the culture's against you for being a child of God. You better have the truth. You better remember the power and provision we have in Jesus Christ. You've been watching this stuff on television where these parents are going to school board meetings because our school boards are teaching wicked heresy in our schools. Critical race theory is right out of the very pit of hell. Well, to be teaching red, yellow, black and white skinned people, you're all made in the image of God and you're all equal before him and strive to love and treat each other that way. This nonsense of declaring one skin color inherently evil or without virtue and another one inherently good is wicked. It's not of God and it will not help those they claim to be helping. And by the way, at the end of the day I don't think it's about helping anything, I think it's about, anyone, I think it's about power and control.

Hebrews 12:1-3 emphasizes this same thing of strengthening and being encouraged to carry on. "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." Well, how do we keep running and having this endurance? Verse 2, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame," and here it is, same thing Paul tells Timothy, "and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God," and he rose again. He endured. He pleased the Father. Endured more than any of us will endure but he's risen from the dead and so will we. The resurrection is a powerful motivator.

Well, he says, "Remember," that's a command in its present tense. "Keep on remembering Jesus." Then he says, "descendant of David. Remember him as the

descendant of David." Now the Old, Old Testament prophets set forth that the Savior, God's promised Messiah, would come from the seed of David. One, one example, Jeremiah 23:5, "'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.'" Well, that's Jesus. He's that righteous branch of the lineage of David.

So when Paul writes to Timothy, it kinda, kinda curious, isn't it? He says, "Remember Jesus Christ," then he points out two things but those two things are packed, "He's risen from the dead and He's the descendant of David." I think the point is that being the descendant of David again refers to his humanity, and what a glorious truth this is and we too often neglect this truth that our Lord was fully man, fully human yet without sin. Here's the point: this one who is our leader, this one who is our Captain, this one who is fully man is the one who defeated death and was raised from the grave, and now he has entered into the immense dimensions of heavenly joys and pleasure. "Timothy, that's not a bad deal. Timothy, that'll encourage you if you'll think on that, if you remember that."

Jesus faced death and tasted death for us all. He kicked death's teeth in and now death is toothless. Death has no holding nor harming power over the children. We can face the hardship, we can face the toil, we can face the ridicule, we can endure the physical persecution in this temporal life because death has no power to define us, death has no power to determine our future, and death cannot deter our pleasures. I have nothing for you but the confidence that our King has gone before us through death and so will we.

This one, Jesus Christ, who became fully human and then conquered all of our enemies is the one who calms our fears and settles our hearts. The Bible says in Romans 8:29 in this vein of thinking, he is "the firstborn among many brethren." That means he's the first of this kind. He's the first fully human who went through death and came out on the other side glorified and settled for all eternity in his glorified state. And he says he's the firstborn among many brethren, that means all of his children are gonna be just like him.

Hebrews 12:11 says he's not ashamed to call them brothers. He's not ashamed to call you his brothers because through his vicarious atonement and death for you, he's cleaned you up and given you his own righteousness. What a beautiful thing.

So this remembering Jesus that Paul is telling Timothy is like the Hebrews 12:2 phrase "fixing your eyes on Jesus." It's in the same vein of thinking as Romans 10:14 and 17, faith comes by hearing and hearing the things concerning Christ. You keep hearing the things concerning Christ and it helps you to think on Jesus. This may not mean much to you on this Sunday morning if your life's pretty much going okay. They hadn't, uh, sent you a memo from work and given you the things, hoops you gotta jump through to, uh, go along with the new company policies that violate the word of God. You and I may be coming into a tough day to be a Christian. You're gonna have to remember Jesus Christ to remain steadfast.

So bringing in the balance of biblical teaching here, we remember Jesus, that he was human, he faced the persecution, he endured through it, he was resurrected and so will we. Hebrews 12, we're to fix our eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 10, we're to keep hearing of Jesus. That builds faith and it builds hope, and we do not have to conform to this world, we do not have to fear what this world thinks of us or may do to us, and we do not even worry if they put us to death for death has had its teeth kicked in. Death cannot hold me or harm me. In fact, death can only help me. He, indeed, has been reassigned, death has been reassigned as my faithful servant who will usher me into eternal realms of supreme and unending pleasures. Wow.

"So, Timothy, remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, as a man the descendant of David, and you are a man, you're human, and you will too." Because we are human but we're Christ's children. We're not just human beings, though we are, we're not just citizens of earth, though we are, we are Christ's children and those who are of the royal lineage of Jesus Christ. Jesus came from the lineage of David that we might be of the lineage of Christ. Our great ancestor, Jesus, has conquered death. Remember that as we journey through this world striving to be steadfast. Remember the children will not be separated from their loving parent. The body cannot be separated from the faithful head. As he became one of us, fully human, he did so that he could, that we, rather, could become like him, that is, a citizen of eternity, a death-defier, even an everlasting child of the everlasting God.

I read these books about the martyrs of Christendom and it's a historical fact that so many of them as they were tied to stakes and had hot oil poured over them and torches put to them to set aflame, they sang joyously the praises of God as they were dying. How did they do that? The grace of God gave them the ability to remember Jesus Christ. They knew that, "Any moment I'm gonna go right into the glory my elder brother has already gone through and blazed a trail and gone before me and settled it all for me. That's my destiny."

"Timothy, remember Jesus Christ and remain steadfast. Remember the truth of his person and work. Remember the power and provision He's granted us primarily of overcoming death." Thirdly, remember the gospel of Christ is of divine origin. "Remember the gospel of Christ, Timothy, this thing we're about didn't come from man. I didn't think it up. This is God's good news. It's God's gospel."

Look at verse 8 there, the last phrase, "according to my gospel." What does Paul mean "my gospel"? "Timothy, this truth I'm laying out here and the truth you preach and the truth I taught you to preach, and the truth I preach, this gospel that's got me locked in prison, it came from God. But it's my gospel." Now again, Paul doesn't mean he made it up. In fact, in Romans 1:1 he calls it the gospel of God. Which one is it, is it Paul's or God's? It's both. Galatians 1:11-12, "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

So Paul's point in saying, "This is my gospel," means it's the true gospel. "It came from God. It's the one I've held to." Maybe three thoughts here under this phrase "my gospel." First of all, it just means it's the true gospel in contrast to the false gospels spread all over the place in this day. He's saying, you know, earlier in, in verse 2 of this chapter he said, "You know, you've heard me preach these things in the presence of many witnesses. You know what my doctrine is and it's the true doctrine of Christ given by God and it's in contrast to the false gospels that abound in this day."

Secondly, I think Paul means by "my gospel, it's personal with me." This is not just a cold form of doctrine on a doctrinal statement in a file stuffed away in a church office somewhere. "This is real to me. This Christ has changed me. This gospel has transformed me. It's personal with me. It's my gospel." And by the way, is it your gospel? You can say this with Paul? Is it your gospel? That's the gospel I hold to and I hold to the Christ of the gospels. I don't just love the gospel, I love the Christ of the gospel.

It's the true gospel, it's personal, and thirdly, "It's all I've ever preached." It synonymous with the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. Isn't it paradoxical that the gospel is the cause of Paul's imprisonment? He tells us that. He says, "I'm God's prisoner. The gospel is the cause of my imprisonment and my soon coming execution, yet the gospel is the joy and the treasure of my heart and life." And he's hardly commending, yes, even commanding Timothy to remember this Jesus. The gospel of Jesus Christ came to us from God and it is the true gospel.

So church, hold to the old true gospel. It's God's gospel. Because the old true gospel is the new true gospel. It doesn't change. It can't change. It's God's gospel so it cannot be improved upon. If you change it, you lose it. All this that we see in evangelicalism today where they're massaging and adjusting and manipulating the gospel message so that we might be on better terms with the culture is nothing more than abandoning the gospel. The old gospel is the only gospel. The old gospel is the new gospel. The new gospel is the old gospel. The gospel of your mother and father, the one that they embraced is the same gospel you must embrace. The gospel your grandparents loved is the same gospel you must love. The gospel your great grandparents treasured is the gospel you must treasure. All the way back to the Apostle Paul, all the way back to Christ, and all the way back to the eternal council of the Godhead when they in infinite wisdom, beauty and power conceived the gospel and set it forth.

"Timothy, I'm locked in prison. I'm in prison for the gospel. I'm imprisoned for Christ. And Timothy, I can testify to you because nobody on earth knows this better than me, if you're gonna remain steadfast, you've gotta remember Jesus. Set your eyes on Jesus. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Consider Jesus. Remember Jesus." That's the, listen, church, that's the only thing that'll get you through steadfast to the end and that's why Paul leaves Timothy with that central, simple exhortation, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the descendant of David, according to my gospel." Remember Jesus Christ.