

Unstoppable, Unquenchable, Unthwartable

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Bible Text: 2 Timothy 2:9-13
Preached on: Sunday, August 22, 2021

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Grab your Bibles and let's go back to 2 Timothy as we continue through this New Testament epistle. We've entitled this series, the second part of "Beautifying the Bride," of course, 1 Timothy being the first part, as Paul is writing to Timothy, giving him guidance about structuring, organizing, functioning as a local church, and as he gives him this wisdom, that's beautifying the bride which is the church. Now Paul spends an inordinate amount of time encouraging, exhorting, motivating Timothy to stay the course, to stay with sound doctrine, to stay with proven methods and not veer off into so many heresies and, and, um, unsound things that were being embraced and taught in the name of Christianity.

So we come to chapter, um, 2, verses 9 through 13. Would you look there? 2 Timothy 2:9-13.

9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. 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. 11 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we 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.

Unstoppable, that's what the power of God is. Unquenchable, that's the motivation that God gives us. It's unquenchable. Unthwartable, that's the purpose of Jesus Christ. It cannot be thwarted. Now for you scholars out there, I'm well-aware that the word "unthwartable" is not considered a word but I like it, and I didn't like the synonym so we're gonna go with it. By the way, who gets to decide what a word is? I mean, has God said this guy shall tell you what words are? No, so I can make one up just like anyone else can.

First of all, let's talk about the unstoppable power of the word of God. Paul, again, is writing from the prison cell in Rome, his execution imminent, and he wants to encourage Timothy that under any and all circumstances, even the most dire, we don't quit and one reason is because of the unstoppable power of the word of God. Now let's unpack this

beginning in verse 9. He says that he suffers hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal. Now that was a strong word, criminal. A criminal was an evildoer, a malefactor. Uh, he was one worthy of all contempt and disdain. So Paul, Paul basically is saying this to Timothy, "I will wear the title 'criminal' if that's God's will for me to be faithful to Jesus Christ and to his gospel."

Now remember when Christ was on the earth, his enemies could not understand him or explain him. His enemies could not understand the wisdom and the authority he taught and preached with. They couldn't explain the power he displayed through his miracles. So to just undermine him and discredit him, they said, "Well, He's doing all of this in the power of Satan." Matthew 12:24, "But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, 'This man casts out demons by only, only, rather, by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.'" You might as well say he's just of Satan. To which Jesus adds in Matthew 10:24 and 25, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head," that's Christ, "of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!" Paul understood this, "My Lord, my King Jesus was called Satan himself, so why should I expect them to think any less of me, His disciple, His minister?"

Two thoughts here. In the Apostle Paul's mind there is no suffering too great for the cause of Christ and the gospel. Secondly, he's also clearing up the distortion and the lies of his enemies. That's why I've said earlier they're using this imprisonment, this public shame that Paul has put on him to discredit him, to undermine his credibility, and to turn people away from Paul's doctrine and teaching and to their own new twist on Christianity. So Paul says as he said earlier in, uh, chapter 1, verse 8, "I'm Christ's prisoner." His point is, "God's got a purpose in this, Timothy. I'm imprisoned for the gospel as if Christ put me here because He's got a purpose for His own cause and for my good in me being here."

You know, in this life, you can be persecuted for acting beneath the culture. If you violate the laws of the land, then you could be persecuted and prosecuted, but we also find out from history that Christians were often persecuted and even prosecuted for acting above the culture as they brought the light and the holiness of God's superior truth to bear against the culture. And by the way, that's our calling, not to conform to the culture to win it, but to confront the culture to win it. Once Satan convinces us to cease being holy and to cease being righteous and to cease being biblical that we "white, might win more to Christ," we've already abrogated our duty. Paul could have put some twists on some things probably, compromise some things and miss prison but he wouldn't do it

So Paul is imprisoned for acting above the culture. The light and the truth of the gospel Paul preached was just more light than the Roman Empire could endure so they thought, "We'll lock him in prison and shut off the light." But the word of God is unstoppable. It didn't work. The word of God, as he says in verse 9 to Timothy, "the word of God is not imprisoned. I'm imprisoned but God's word, God's gospel is not imprisoned."

This was Paul's passion that the word spread and if it can spread at least for this season effectively by him being imprisoned, Paul would say, "So be it." Now we know at times

Paul stayed in some very nice places. He, he had his own place at, for a time and it was probably very comfortable and nice. He, he stayed with Lydia who was a very wealthy lady, most likely, and probably stayed in very fine accommodations. He, he stayed with Philemon who was a well-to-do man, had his own room or suite there in Philemon's household. When it was God's will he did that, but when it was God's will to be in prison he said, "So be it. Whatever gets the word out. God's way to do it is better than my way."

2 Thessalonians 3:1 shows Paul's heart on this, "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you." That's his heart and that should be our heart, "O God, from our ministry here called Grace Life Church of the Shoals or our missions arm, Anchored in Truth missions, God, let the word of the Lord spread rapidly and people be converted and churches be planted and built up true to You, and therefore You be glorified to the ends of the earth." My friends, the gospel breaks through any and all barriers. Churches and I'm sure many of them and many pastors with sincere motives have errantly modified the gospel to make it more effective, palatable to this culture, and that's a mistake. The gospel, just let it loose. It'll do its work. It can, it can transcend all barriers. It cannot be stopped. The gospel is essential to the building of the church and the almighty Jesus said, "I will build My church," Matthew 18.

So it's going to be built and it's going to be built the way he wants to build it and that's through the word, the gospel going out. In fact, when the world tries to stop the light of the gospel of the word of God, they only make it stronger. It's as if when the world persecutes God's preachers and God's message, it's as if God puts the church and the minister through a strainer so that he comes out and the message comes out purer on the other side. It even makes it more powerful.

I'll never forget and I mentioned to this, this to you several times through the years, but actually in the last few years as I've thought back on this experience, it was a once in a lifetime, maybe once in a generation or many generation experience that I had. We were asked to do some ministry work in Romania and this was right at the end of the Romanian Communist dictator Ceausescu's execution. People had been under decades of severe oppression from Communism. I'll never forget going into those churches and I'm not exaggerating, I, I preached in pulpits where I would be in this pulpit and people's faces would be as close as those flowers all the way around me because they were packed in as tight as human beings could be packed all the way back to the doors, every aisle packed, all the foyer area packed and people outside the doors not to hear Jeff Noblit but to hear the word of God. And they told me the stories of their pastors, Baptist pastors, who had been beaten and whipped and locked in prisons, and all it did was make the word of God more powerful. I've never been in a place like that. The service lasted for like two hours and I'm telling you, those people didn't move.

Now what was strange at first was that the people were totally expressionless but they'd learned to be that way because under the central government's authority, any even facial expression, affirmation of a statement could get you in trouble, much less if you said anything that might look like you're not honoring the central authorities. So they learned

to be stoic in expressions but they would have stayed there all day long if you'd preached God's word all day long. It was that precious to them.

I'll never forget one of the Baptist pastors told me that their membership process required a year of testing. I said, "Wow." He said, "We're not saying that's required biblically but we're suffering for the gospel, we don't want any false professors among us. We don't have time to fool with that stuff." It's funny, that was a day when there was a lot of theological liberalism in Baptist circles, still is but it was very, I guess a little more pronounced in that day. And I asked him about that, I said, "Do you have any of these problems we have with people saying the Bible contains the word of God but it's not the word of God? All of those liberal concepts like the first 11-12 chapters of Genesis are not historical, there's just, uh, metaphors or allegories etc. etc., the miracles aren't really true?" He said, "No. No, you don't suffer for something that's not true. You don't suffer for something that's just a myth or an allegory." He said, "No, everyone here, that's not even a debate in Christian and Evangelical circles in our country."

It was just powerful. Listen to me, Ceausescu and his Communist regime said, "No more word of God. No more preaching. No more gospel." And the end result is the purest, most powerful churches I've ever been in. The word of God is unstoppable. It's absolutely unstoppable. That's why Paul when he wrote to the Philippians about his imprisonment said, Philippians 1:12 and through 14, "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel," wow, because it's unstoppable, "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 another place he says, "By the way, all of Caesar's household greets you. I'm in prison but I've been winning these folks to Christ here in prison, in Caesar's household." The point is the power of the word is unstoppable.

One other quick illustration. What did Paul do in prison? He wrote a lot of these New Testament epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy for sure, Philemon and many other books. And so God used his imprisonments. It made me think lately as I had a pastor again this week said, "Pastor Jeff, you've gotta write some of this stuff down." And I thought, "I just don't feel like I have time." And I thought, "Well, if God puts you in prison you'll have time." Because that's what happened to Paul. He couldn't go and preach so he starts writing and we get these books of the Bible, the, the majority of our New Testament written by the Apostle Paul which has been used for 2,000 years to convert the lost and build the church. It's unstoppable power of the word of God.

Isaiah 40:8 reminds us, "The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." That's why, church, listen to me, we're not gonna get cute and clever and creative and culturally relevant about our preaching and teaching. It's going to be line upon line, truth upon truth, precept upon precept from this sacred holy book because that's powerful. Look, people will forget Jeff Noblit's antics, people will forget whatever charisma or enthusiasm or passion I have, that's not the issue but the Spirit of God will not let them forget the word of God if it's faithfully preached.

Well, number 2, Paul tells Timothy about the unquenchable motivation of being glory of God focused. Now you've gotta think with me here. I'm trusting the Spirit to enable us to, to grasp this because we can't really comprehend it but the Spirit enables us to grasp it. Does that make sense? The unquenchable motivation of being glory of God focuses. How you gonna keep on keeping on being a godly wife in this kind of godless culture? How are you gonna keep on keeping on being a godly husband in this ungodly culture? How are we gonna keep on keeping on being a godly man or woman in the workplace in this ungodly culture? How are we gonna keep on keeping on about being a godly church when churches are all over the map in what they're calling Christian ministry today? We're gonna have to have a motivation that is glory of God focused.

Now note verse 10, there's a real cause and effect here. He says, verse 10, "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory." So, "I'm enduring all things right now, this imprisonment, to the end that there's an effect coming, the winning of the lost and bringing them into eternal glory." So cause and effect. Again, Paul is saying, "Whatever it takes to build the church, whatever the cost, I'm up for it." And by the way, the building of the new creation is worth any sacrifice to the old creation. The church and those who are saved is the new creation God started. The old creation started with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden and that's where our physical being comes from. It's a part of the old creation but we're ready to sacrifice that if necessary, if called upon, that we might be a part of building the new creation that's eternal and lasts forever. So the building of the new creation is worth any sacrifice of the old creation.

Now Paul uses the phrase "I endure. I endure all of this that they might be saved, the chosen can be saved, and have eternal glory." Endure is a word that means "to stay under; to remain." So Paul says, "I stay under this hardship. I stay under this persecution for the cause of Christ that He might save His chosen and bring them into eternal glory." Now Paul is not saying, "I go out looking to endure persecution." Paul didn't go out trying to find trouble. I, I run into Christians every now and then, that they think a badge of their spirituality is how much trouble they can get in out in the world, and they're really obnoxious and irritable, they're not holy and spiritual.

Paul says, "I don't go out looking for it, I just go out trying to stay under Christ." And I think that's part of the parallel meaning here. "I, I go out and I stay under Jesus. I stay under His Lordship and that often leads me into trouble." In a cross reference that shines some light here, Colossians 1:24, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake," who is "your"? The chosen, for the church's sake, those who are being saved, "and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." Now Paul is in no way, again, saying in this text, "I helped redeem the church through my bodily suffering." He's just saying, "Jesus died to redeem them, now he uses our dying, our suffering to keep the process flowing."

As we try to equip and train and mentor pastors, I find that every single young pastor is just like me in this respect: they think they're gonna be the guy who has a true glory of

God focused, Christ honoring, Bible saturated church that never has any real troubles. And I always say to them, "I hope you are. I'll be the happiest guy in the world to be wrong." But so far I'm 100% right. Every pastor that strives to build a true church will go through hardships, will go through persecutions and difficulties, and part of that is God maturing us and humbling us to be usable. You do understand I'm not naturally usable, neither are you, but through the difficulties he humbles us, he breaks us, we become better repenters and more usable vessels that he might use to build his church.

Now he says, "I'm enduring all this," let's unpack a little bit that phrase, "for the sake of those who are," he doesn't use, "who are believers or who do believe," he says, "who are the chosen." Ekkletos is the Greek word. It's very simply and literally means "to pick out." You could literally translate it, "I suffer, I endure," Paul is saying, "for the sake of those who are those God's picked out." Now this same word is used of picking out the best of a certain kind. For example, in Romans 16:13, it speaks of Rufus, a chosen man. He was picked out as the best of a kind. This word "chosen" is also used of Jesus. In Luke's narrative of the transfiguration, Luke says, God speaking from, God the Father speaking from heaven said, "This is My Son, My chosen One, listen to Him. Not the others, this One."

So he says, "so that they may obtain salvation which is in Christ Jesus," and here, here we have Paul's biblical theology coming out. What I mean by that is what's God's overarching purpose for time and eternity? What, what's God in the broadest understanding, what's God up to? Well, Paul says, "Foundational in what God is up to is this: He's using His preachers and offering putting His preachers through suffering and other Christians too, by the way. He uses Christians' suffering that they might be better able to be instruments He will use in saving the chosen ones." Exactly what God's purpose is. There's more than that and we're about to get to that.

So God has picked out his children. That's his purpose, he wants them saved, and he uses preachers to preach the word which the Spirit uses to bring those chosen ones to faith in Jesus Christ and Paul says, "That is a primary part of what keeps me going." Now note in verse 10 that if you have the New American Standard, which you ought to, you ought bring one when I preach so we'll all be together, but some of you won't but you ought to. If you have the New American Standard, in the last phrase of verse 10, the interpreters, sorry, the translators said it this way, "so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory." However the conjunction "and" and the pronoun "it" are not in the original Greek. They're not in the original manuscripts. The translators interpolated, if you will, put those in to better make the verse understandable. In this case, I think they missed it a little bit. I think they missed it a little bit. So it's better to read the verse without the conjunction "and" and without the pronoun "it," I think. Then it read this way, "that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." That's exactly what it says in the original, with eternal glory.

Here's what I'm getting at. Are you listening to me this morning? I don't want to run up in the balcony and stand in front of you and say, "You've gotta listen." Are you listening to me? Paul cannot get over the glory of God so he doesn't just say the salvation but their

salvation brings with it eternal glory. And, and Paul and I, I get this in my heart, it, it just consumes me and controls me, Paul said, "There's this ultimate eternal glorification thing and the church is at the center of that whole thing and it keeps me going and I can't get over it." Yes, the salvation of the chosen, not just saving them from hell but eternal glory that they're gonna be a part of.

Let me continue to unpack this a little bit. When we talk about eternal glory and I think in the broad context of this verse and the balancing biblical understanding of God's eternal glory, two thoughts should come to our mind: the glory he shares with us will be a part of the eternal glory, and the glory he receives from saving us and glorifying us is a part of his eternal glory. Did you get that? The glory he shares with us and the honor, the esteem, the glory he receives for doing such a wonderful thing is all a part of the glory of the eternal state. So us being saved, the church being saved, clothed in his righteousness, bathed in his glory, is a key part of the out-shining of the eternal glory of God. God the Father and God the Son all are involved in this process, this purpose that will be culminated at the end time in the eternal state. Here's what I'm pointing out: this motivated Paul to stay faithful in the time, in the temporal season of serving, even being imprisoned.

Now if you will, go back to Ephesians right quick. Would you do that? Go to Ephesians 1 and let's see how this just is all through Paul's teaching, this aspect of being glory of God focused and the glory God's gonna have and give us and we'll share in the eternal state is part of what drives, not part, the main part, the core of what motivates us to stay faithful. Verse 4 of Ephesians 1. Now follow along with me. Don't go to sleep. Listen to me, "just as He chose us," same word Paul used over here in 2 Timothy, "just as He chose us in Him," in Christ Jesus, "before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us" marked out beforehand, "to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will." In other words, why did God do it, why did he choose certain ones, why did he predestine certain ones to be adopted as sons, to be holy and blameless before him in love eventually? Because it's according to the kind intention of his will. Here's what that means: he just wanted to do it that way. It's according to his will. He just wanted to do it that way. He didn't consult the Southern Baptist Convention to form a committee to study it, or the Roman Catholic system in Rome. He said, "No, this is the way I chose to do it." And I want to add, "So shut up. This is the way I want to do it." But what's the purpose for all this? Verse 6, "to the praise of the glory of His grace." So what's the ultimate purpose? That God's gonna get great honor, esteem, praise, i.e. glory for doing such a marvelous wonderful thing and we get to get in on it.

Then Paul says, "This is what keeps me going. That's true. That's going happen and I get to be a part of the preparation work of getting all these chosen predestined ones ready for eternal glory which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." Verse 7, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us." He lavished on the predestined and the chosen ones this grace and it came out, verse 8, it came out of, "all His wisdom and His insight," in doing it this way, that no man would have ever thought of doing it this way.

Verse 9, "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times," what's that? The future state, the future glorified eternal state, "that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined," there he goes again, "according to the purpose, His purpose, rather, who works all things after the counsel of His will." I mean, after all, if God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are infinite in wisdom, power and beauty, why would they counsel with anybody else's will about it? "We're gonna save Our predestined, Our chosen ones to the praise, or, or after the counsel of Our own will," then verse 12, "to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory." There it is again, glory, glory, glory, glory, glory, glory. It's all about God's gonna glorify himself wonderfully. "Ultimately you'll see it," Paul's saying. "One day you're gonna all see it. With your, with your eyes you're gonna see it. It's all about Christ. It's all about God's glory and all about God's purpose, purposes to save His people, His church, and bring them into this unimaginable, unfathomable eternal glory that lasts forever." And Paul said, "This is the motivation that keeps me going."

Verse 13, Ephesians 1, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation having also believed," not after you have believed but having also believed. There is the point in time when man's responsibility kicks in, man has to repent and believe. You say, "Wait a minute, pastor, is it election, choosing, predestination, foreknowledge, or is it man is responsible to believe? How do you reconcile the two, pastor?" I never try to reconcile old friends. These truths have always been parallel in God's word.

Verse 14 talking about the Holy Spirit, "who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession," the redemption of God's own possession. God already possessed you before he redeemed you. Are you thinking, are you going to sleep on me? God possessed you before he redeemed you and he redeemed you because he already possessed you. I'll remind you again that one of the reasons we know God will never quit loving us is he never started loving us. He's always loved us. "I loved you with an everlasting love and I just worked it out in time and space history so that you heard the gospel and repented and believed." And one day you'll all get to heaven and think, "Oh, my goodness, oh, my goodness, look what this has all come to." You say, "What's the world coming to?" I'll tell you what the world's coming to, the world's coming to being banished and then he'll make a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells and the elect glorified church will be all that's left with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and the holy angels. Then Paul said, "That eventuality keeps me going."

So all of this stuff, and not, I'm not even getting over to Ephesians 3:21, "to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." We want to be as biblical and honorable and, and, and, and spiritual as a church now, [unintelligible] now so that we reflect as much of his glory possible in this temporal, imperfect, sin-

polluted state because that's where we're gonna ultimately end up is being perfected, sharing his glory, and bringing praise to him not just from our lips but praise to him from the holy angels who will see what he did with us to make us worthy of his eternal presence and eternal glory.

And I will submit to you, pastors out there, small group leaders out there, you can grab 1,001 other motivations but until you begin to grasp a glory of God focused as the reason why you do what you do, and I might add not glorifying God the way you think of glorifying God but glorifying the God the way he wants to be glorified, by building his church his way and looking forward to that eternal state of ultimate eternal glory. That's got to keep you going. It's, uh, you know, right now we have a little glory, there's a little out-shining of God's infinite wisdom, beauty, truth through us right now, but it's dulled, it's muddied, it's muddled right now because we're in such an imperfect, we're down here in this unredeemed humanity and it doesn't shine out as good.

I, uh, gave all my girls when they were 13 a purity ring and I, I think it was Anacaire's but we went to the jeweler one day and she'd been playing ball and sweating and all that stuff and her ring was just, it still had some glory but it was awful looking, just, there was just stuff growing on it or something. It was just awful. So we took it to a jeweler and he cleaned it up and honestly when he brought it out and showed it to us, I thought, "Is that the same ring?" It was... That's what God's doing, there's a little glory right now but we've got junk growing on us kind of like those barnacles on "Pirates of the Caribbean." Just junk, but when we get to heaven, we'll be like him. We'll bear his glory. We will shine like the noonday sun having been bathed in the glory of God and God will be exalted and esteemed for this great work he did with such unworthy, worthless, wretched, blind, Satan-controlled, sin-deserving wretches that we naturally are.

Philippians 3:20-21, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." What's motivating you, Paul? Verse 21, "who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory," there it is again, glory, glory, glory. Paul said, "I can't get over it." Are you listening to me? Now, now take what I'm gonna say in balance. It should powerfully motivate us to save men from eternal hell. It should grieve us and trouble us deeply that anyone be cast away into eternal hell, but that's not our ultimate motivation. It was not Paul's ultimate motivation. Our ultimate motivation is that God's chosen be saved and they make it through the sanctification of this life and they will one day have eternal glory which will exalt God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit for the power, wisdom and beauty of what they did. That is the motivation. It's unquenchable. Paul says, "Lock me in prison, give me the date of my execution, it will not stop me because I'm glory of God focused." Y'all getting this? All of you that don't get it, you'll stay after church and we're gonna go over it again. I've never preached anything more important than this. This is the heart of God and God's leading apostle Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:24 and 25, "then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He," this is Jesus, "has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet." 1 Corinthians

15:25 now, "When all things are subjected to Him," that's Jesus, "then the Son Jesus Himself also will be subjected to the One who subject all things to Him so that God may be all in all." Now going back up to 1 Corinthians 15:24, it talks about when he hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, here Jesus is, and you can't help but, but, but put this in your heart and mind in, in a visual, if you will. Jesus, the eternal state has begun, he said, "Father, You know the primary, overarching, central, one thing that We were 100% totally God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit all committed to, here they are." Paul said, "He'll deliver up the kingdom to God the Father." That's God the Son Jesus delivering up the kingdom to God the Father and do you know what the central crown jewel of the kingdom is? The elect. The chosen. The predestined. The foreknown. The church. You are the crown jewel of the glory of the eternal kingdom Jesus will give to God the Father. "Father, You know what You sent Me to do, You know what We decided We would do and how We would do it and I would be the agent that would get it all accomplished? Here it is, Father. Here it is."

Paul said, "That keeps me going. That reality, that conceptualizing, that truth is relative." Now, now some may say, "Pastor, you're talking about the church being so glorified and getting so much glory, I thought Jesus was to have all the preeminence? I thought Jesus was to get all the glory?" Well, he is to get all the glory and he does get all the glory. Let me illustrate it this way. When a man takes his wife out on a special evening, she's beautifully adorned, hopefully the radiance of her virtue is coming through her countenance, something this world knows nothing of, our world is so base and sensual in its concept of beauty. They wouldn't know, they wouldn't see a beautiful, they couldn't recognize a beautiful woman if she stood right in front of them. And he goes to the door and he steps back and he lets his bride go in first. They go to the table and he steps back and he seats his bride first. The waiter comes out to take the order and he orders for her or lets her order first. You see, he didn't dishonor himself by putting her first. He actually honored himself because they're one. That's his bride. She bears his name. She, she shares his character, his convictions, his values.

So it is with the church. The church is the bride of Christ. We bear his name. We, we share his convictions, his values, his truth, and so when Christ exalts his church, he honors and exalts himself because we're his work, we're his product, if you will. I think this is all behind. "Brother Jeff, how did you get that out of the last half of verse 10 of 2 Timothy 2:2?" Because you've let me study for 40 years and you're in trouble, you're in trouble. I just cannot help but say it because if you don't get this, you miss so much. Let's read verse 10 again, "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." Not with and within the eternal glory. That's okay but it's better with eternal glory. That glorified eternal state's coming and I'm a part of God's means to help get the preparations set for it. And by the way, so are you. Yeah, you in the balcony. You and me. We have our role to get all this ready for that time when God will be all in all. People will look at us, the church, in heaven and think, "Oh my goodness, you are wonderful looking. The righteousness you bear." Christ's righteousness. "The glory you have now." Christ's glory. And then God the Father will stand up and say, "I thought all this up."

So even God the Son, in a sense, God the Holy Spirit, the holy angels and the elect church will just praise God for what he's done for all eternity. And not only that, one more thing. I say this a lot, every day in eternity, there's not a day in eternity but this is a figure of speech because I don't know how to say it any other way, every day in eternity you will learn more about the power, wisdom and beauty of God in getting this accomplished and you'll praise God with deeper and more meaning and be more pleasure every day in eternity. I mean, on day 1,000,129 you'll think, "Oh my goodness, I learned something else about all He did in getting us wretches there." Paul said, "That..." That's why you're doing a Sunday school, small group Sunday school class because you want to be a part of getting the bride ready for that eternal state and that's why when many times I wanted to quit, part of what kept me from quitting and leaving is nobody would have me and that's just the truth. I'd preached myself and talked myself to a place where Baptist churches didn't want me so I thought, "I have nowhere to go," and God said, "Good, because I don't want you to go anywhere." But behind all of that was God enabled me, enabling me, enabling us to begin to grasp to have a glory of God focus.

I'm gonna end right here because my time is gone, but I pray the Spirit of God has enabled all of us to turn our eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth, this temporal stuff grows strangely dim in the light of his, here's Paul's word, glory and grace.