

Remember...

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel, ⁹ for which I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But the word of God is not bound. ¹⁰ This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. ¹¹ This saying is trustworthy:

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 will also deny us;
¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful,
for he cannot deny himself. 2 Timothy 2:8-13 (CSB)

Paul was writing his Final Words to Timothy who was in Ephesus.

- False teachers were a problem in Ephesus, really everywhere, just as they are today.
 - Many claimed that Jesus was DIVINE but not Human.
 - Docetism – essentially Jesus was a “Spirit” but not man.
 - The Greeks believed the body was evil but the spirit was pure. “Gods” were pure & therefore would have no contact with mortals (flesh). So Jesus (God) becoming flesh was extremely difficult for them to accept.
 - There was a reason that Jesus ate with his disciples. That he had them touch his side & his scars
 - Today many humanist believe that Jesus was Human but not Divine!
 - A great philosopher. A wise man.
 - But not God.
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- So along comes Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, would write EXACTLY what not only their society needs but what information ours needs also with regards to the TRUTH. We see the truth that Jesus is God and Man expressed in verse 8.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel, v. 8

Remember Jesus Christ.

- **Remember**...Jesus was Risen from the Dead – Proving His Divinity
 - He over-came death! No mere mortal can do that! Only the Almighty!
- Risen from the dead
 - “The tense of the Greek verb which Paul uses does not imply one definitive act in time, but a continued state which lasts for ever.” (Barclay)
 - “Here is the great Christian inspiration. We do not depend on the inspiration of a memory, however great. We enjoy the power of a presence.” (Barclay)
- **Remember**...Jesus was Descended from David – Proving His Humanity
 - He had a physical mother. Mary, a descendant of David.
- Descended from David
 - We follow a God who wasn’t some celestial observer but who is an active participant in our lives! We serve a God who is not only compassionate and merciful but relatable also. The Lord knows what you are going through because He has been through it too!
 - He knows the pain of death
 - He knows the frustration & awkwardness of the teenage years!
 - He knows poverty.

- He knows pain and suffering
 - He knows Joy & celebration!
- All Christian faiths believe that Jesus was fully God & fully Man.
 - God in the flesh. Creator becoming creation.
 - “The truth that Jesus is one person with two united natures has never been easy to understand, but that doesn’t make it untrue.” (Life application)

So What? Why is Christ being Divine & Human important?

This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. V.10

- Salvation is found in him (v.10)
 - “However hard the task the gospel offers, that same gospel is the message of liberation from sin and victory over circumstances for us and for all mankind.” (Barclay)
 - It is the Gospel that saves mankind from their sin.
 - It is the Gospel that calls people from where they are to where God is.
 - It is the Gospel that helped Jesse over-come his addiction
 - Is it the Gospel that showed Kendall a better way for her and her daughter. A way of righteousness. A way of HOPE.

Is the Gospel’s path easy? NOPE! It cost Paul his life and the Bible says it must cost us ours too.

“If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it” Mark 8:34b-35 (Jesus)

“The road to life is death, and the road to glory is suffering.” (Stott)

God has blessed me more than I deserve. His grace is unmeasurable in my life.

- My family.
- My Faith.
- I get to Pastor an amazing church full of amazing people.
- God is doing awesome things!
- God has greater things in store!
 - More souls to call to Him!
 - More addicts He desires to set free!
 - More marriages He wants to restore!
 - More lives He wants to transform through....
 - Through the Gospel!

But that means you, and me, must not keep this amazing Gospel to ourselves.

So when you leave this place...

Remember Jesus Christ. And tell others about Him.

Invitation to...

- Pray
- Ask Questions

PRAY

He magnifies Jesus Christ (vv. 8–9). “Remember Jesus Christ!” is the way this phrase should be translated. It sounds almost like a war cry, like “Remember the Alamo!” or “Remember Pearl Harbor!” Jesus is the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), and our purpose is to bring honor and glory to Him. What an encouragement Jesus Christ is to a suffering Christian soldier! For He died and rose again, proving that suffering leads to glory, and that seeming defeat leads to victory. Jesus was treated as an evildoer, and His soldiers will be treated the same way.

The best way to magnify Christ is through the ministry of the Word. Paul was bound, but God’s Word cannot be bound. “His Word runneth very swiftly” (Ps. 147:15). “The Word of God grew and multiplied” (Acts 12:24).

He thinks of the whole army (v. 10). “The elect” are God’s people, chosen by His grace and called by His Spirit (2 Thes. 2:13–14). Paul not only suffered for the Lord’s sake, but he also suffered for the sake of the church. There were yet many people to reach with the Gospel, and Paul wanted to help reach them. A soldier who thinks only of himself is disloyal and undependable.

He trusts his Commanding Officer (vv. 11–13). This “faithful saying” is probably part of an early statement of faith recited by believers. (For other “faithful sayings” in the pastoral letters, see 1 Tim. 1:15; 4:9; and Titus 3:8.) It is faith in Jesus Christ that gives us victory (1 John 5:4). We do not fear the enemies, for He has already conquered them. Through our identification with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection, we have won the victory (see Rom. 6).

What a pair of paradoxes! Death leads to life! Suffering leads to reigning in glory! We have nothing to fear! The important thing is that we not “disown” our Lord; for if we disown Him here, He will disown us before the Father (Matt. 10:33). In that great “roll call” in glory, when the “medals” are given out, we will lose our reward if we disown His name.

But Paul makes it clear (2 Tim. 2:13) that even our own doubt and unbelief cannot change Him: “He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” We do not put faith in our faith or in our feelings because they will change and fail. We put our faith in Christ. The great missionary, J. Hudson Taylor, often said, “It is not by trying to be faithful, but in looking to the Faithful One, that we win the victory.”¹

6. Suffering a Condition of Blessing (verses 8–13)

We come now to a new paragraph before the apostle introduces three more metaphors to illustrate the role of the Christian worker. So far we may summarize his theme by the epigram ‘nothing that is easy is ever worth while’, or rather the reverse ‘nothing that is worth while is ever

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 245). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

easy'. No soldier, athlete or farmer expects results without labour or suffering. Here Paul continues the same theme. But having illustrated it by metaphor, he goes on to enforce it from experience—the experience first of Christ (8), then of himself as an apostle (9, 10) and lastly of all Christian believers (11–13).

a. The experience of Christ (verse 8)

The command to 'remember Jesus Christ' at first sight seems extraordinary. How could Timothy ever forget him? Yet the human memory is notoriously fickle: it is possible to forget even one's own name! The epitaph over Israel's grave was 'they soon forgot', and it was to overcome our forgetfulness of Christ crucified that he deliberately instituted his supper as a feast of remembrance, a fragrant 'forget-me-not'. Even so the church has often forgotten Jesus Christ, absorbing itself instead now in barren theological debate, now in purely humanitarian activity, now in its own petty, parochial business.

How and why, then, are we to remember Christ? Essentially because he is the gospel, the heart of the good deposit. Indeed, Paul expresses it, he is the heart of 'my gospel', the gospel 'not invented by me but entrusted to me', like 'my deposit' (1:12). So then, if Timothy is to guard the deposit, and to hand it on faithfully to others, he must 'remember Jesus Christ ... as preached in my gospel'.

In particular, Christ is to be remembered as the one who is both 'risen from the dead' and 'descended from David'. As we meditate on these two expressions, it is remarkable how full an account of the gospel they give. The birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus are all implicit in them. And these remind us both of his divine-human person and of his saving work.

First, his person. The words 'descended from David' imply his humanity, for they speak of his earthly descent from David. The words 'risen from the dead' imply his divinity, for he was powerfully designated God's Son by his resurrection from the dead.

Secondly, his work. The phrase 'risen from the dead' indicates that he died for our sins and was raised to prove the efficacy of his sinbearing sacrifice. The phrase 'descended from David' indicates that he has established his kingdom as great David's greater Son (*cf.* Lk. 1:32, 33). Taken together, the two phrases seem to allude to his double role as Saviour and King.

There is another reason why Timothy must 'remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David'. It is not just because these facts constitute the gospel which Timothy must preach, but because they also illustrate, from Jesus Christ's own experience, the principle that death is the gateway to life and suffering the path to glory. For he who died rose from the dead, and he who was born in lowliness as David's seed is now reigning in glory on David's throne. Both expressions set forth in embryonic form the contrast between humiliation and exaltation.

'So then, Timothy,' the apostle seems to be saying, 'when you are tempted to avoid pain, humiliation, suffering or death in your ministry, remember Jesus Christ and think again!'

b. The experience of the apostle Paul (verses 9, 10)

Paul is suffering for the gospel. He is having to endure the painful indignity of wearing chains 'like a common criminal' (NEB)—the only other occurrence of the word in the New Testament is of the criminals crucified with Jesus (Lk. 23:32, 33)—although he is a Roman citizen and an innocent

man. But, though he is chained, God's word is not. Even he himself at his first defence had been given the opportunity and the strength fully to proclaim God's word to the court, as he will later explain to Timothy in greater detail (4:16, 17). In addition, God's word could spread (was spreading) through many others, and in particular Timothy must share increasingly in this work.

The relation between Paul's sufferings and the effectiveness of the gospel is not just one of contrast, however: 'I am chained; God's word is not.' is actually one of cause and effect: 'Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain ... salvation.' We notice in passing that the doctrine of election does not dispense with the necessity of preaching. On the contrary, it makes it essential. For Paul preaches and suffers for it (literally) 'in order that' they 'may obtain the salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory'. The elect obtain salvation in Christ not apart from the preaching of Christ but by means of it.

Further, it is not just the preaching but also the resultant suffering which are the means of the elect's salvation. Paul's statement that in some sense the salvation of others is secured by his sufferings may at first astonish us. Yet it is so. Not of course that his sufferings have any redemptive efficacy like Christ's, but that the elect are saved through the gospel and that he could not preach the gospel without suffering for it. It is another case of 'glory through suffering', the 'eternal glory' of the elect through the sufferings endured by the apostle.

c. Our common Christian experience (verses 11–13)

Paul now quotes a current saying or fragment of an early Christian hymn which he pronounces reliable. It consists of two pairs of epigrams, which are general axioms of Christian life and experience. They apply equally to all believers. The first pair relates to those who remain true and endure, the second pair to those who become false and faithless.

'If we have died with him, we shall also live with him;
if we endure, we shall also reign with him' (11b, 12a).

The death with Christ which is here mentioned must refer, according to the context, not to our death to *sin* through union with Christ in his death, but rather to our death to *self* and to *safety*, as we take up the cross and follow Christ. The former Paul describes in Romans 6:3 ('do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?'); the latter he expresses both in 1 Corinthians 15:31 ('I die every day') and in 2 Corinthians 4:10 ('always carrying in the body the death of Jesus'). That this is the meaning in the hymn fragments seems plain from the fact that to 'have died with Christ' and to 'endure' are parallel expressions.

So the Christian life is depicted as a life of dying, a life of enduring. Only if we share Christ's death on earth, shall we share his life in heaven. Only if we share his sufferings and endure, shall we share his reign in the hereafter. For the road to life is death, and the road to glory suffering (*cf.* Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 4:17).

'If we deny him, he also will deny us;
if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself' (12b, 13).

This other pair of epigrams envisages the dreadful possibility of our denying Christ and proving faithless. The first phrase 'if we deny him, he also will deny us' seems to be an echo of our Lord's own warning: 'whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven' (Mt. 10:33).

What then of the second phrase 'if we are faithless, he remains faithful'? It has often been taken as a comforting assurance that, even if we turn away from Christ, he will not turn away from us, for he will never be faithless as we are. And it is true, of course, that God never exhibits the fickleness or the faithlessness of man. Yet the logic of the Christian hymn, with its two pairs of balancing epigrams, really demands a different interpretation. 'If we deny him' and 'if we are faithless' are parallels, which requires that 'he will deny us' and 'he remains faithful' be parallels also. In this case his 'faithfulness' when we are faithless will be faithfulness to his warnings. As William Hendriksen puts it: 'Faithfulness on his part means carrying out his threats ... as well as his promises.'¹ So he will deny us, as the earlier epigram asserts. Indeed, if he did not deny us (in faithfulness to his plain warnings), he would then deny himself. But one thing is certain about God beyond any doubt or uncertainty whatever, and that is 'he cannot deny himself'.

The idea that there may be something which God 'cannot' do is entirely foreign to some people. Can he not do anything and everything? Are not all things possible to him? Is he not omnipotent? Yes, but God's omnipotence needs to be understood. God is not a totalitarian tyrant that he should exercise his power arbitrarily and do absolutely anything whatsoever. God's omnipotence is the freedom and the power to do absolutely anything he chooses to do. But he chooses only to do good, only to work according to the perfection of his character and will. God can do everything consistent with being himself. The one and only thing he cannot do, because he will not, is to deny himself or act contrary to himself. So God remains for ever himself, the same God of mercy and of justice, fulfilling his promises (whether of blessing or of judgment), giving us life if we die with Christ and a kingdom if we endure, but denying us if we deny him, just as he warned, because he cannot deny himself.

Looking back over the first half of this chapter (verses 1 to 13), the apostle Paul seems to have been hammering home a single lesson. From secular analogy (soldiers, athletes, farmers) and from spiritual experience (Christ's, his own, every Christian's) he has been insisting that blessing comes through pain, fruit through toil, life through death, and glory through suffering. It is an invariable law of Christian life and service.

So why should we expect things to be easy for us or promise an easy time to others? Neither human wisdom nor divine revelation gives us such an expectation. Why then do we deceive ourselves and others? The truth is the reverse, namely 'no pains, no gains' or 'no cross, no crown'.

It is this principle which took Jesus Christ through a lowly birth and a shameful death to his glorious resurrection and heavenly reign. It is this principle which had brought Paul his chains and prison cell, in order that the elect might obtain salvation and glory. It is the same principle which makes the soldier willing to endure hardship, the athlete discipline and the farmer toil. It would be ridiculous, therefore, to expect our Christian life and service to cost us nothing.

In the second part of 2 Timothy 2 (verses 14–26), Paul continues his vivid portrayal of Timothy in his role of teaching and transmitting the faith, and therefore by derivation of every Christian minister, teacher or worker. He now uses three more metaphors—the 'workman who has no

need to be ashamed' (15), the 'vessel for noble use' (21) and 'the Lord's servant' (24). Each adds a further feature to the portrait.²

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, (2:8)

"Timothy," Paul is saying, "your service will be more aggressive, you will have greater courage, greater boldness, greater endurance of evil treatment and of suffering for the Lord if you **remember** His preeminence, who He really is—none other than God incarnate, Jesus Christ."

As with the preceding verbs "be strong" (v. 1), "entrust" (v. 2), and "consider" (v. 7), the Greek verb rendered **remember** is an imperative—as also are the following: "remind" (v. 14), "be diligent" (v. 15), "avoid" (v. 16), "abstain" (v. 19), "flee" and "pursue" (v. 22), and "refuse" (v. 23). These are gentle commands, but commands nonetheless. For a faithful and productive spiritual life, they are not options but imperatives, because they all characterize the sinless life of our supreme example, **Jesus Christ**. As John reminds us, "The one who says he abides in Him [Christ] ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:6). Peter asks, "For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:20–22). We are to fix "our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

Because the Greek verb behind **remember** is in the active voice, it carries the idea of "continue to remember" or "keep on remembering." The preeminence of our Lord **Jesus Christ** should always be in the forefront of our minds. He is the supreme and ultimate teacher of teachers. He 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.

We must keep in mind that Jesus' path to glory was marked by pain before pleasure, sorrow before joy, humiliation before glorification, persecution before exaltation, death before resurrection, earthly hatred before heavenly worship. To remember those truths about our Lord's earthly life will protect us from the foolish and ungodly promises of the so called health and wealth gospel, which vitiates His command to take up our crosses as He took up His. If Jesus' perfect and sinless obedience of His heavenly Father did not bring Him earthly prosperity

² Stott, J. R. W. (1973). [*Guard the Gospel the message of 2 Timothy*](#) (pp. 60–65). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

and well-being, how much less can we expect to receive those things because of our imperfect service of Him? If our Lord Jesus Christ, “although He was [God’s] Son,... learned obedience from the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8), how much more should we?

We are to **remember Jesus Christ** first of all because He is **risen from the dead**, more literally, “having been raised from the dead.” It is that great truth on which Paul focuses in 1 Corinthians 15. “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received,” he said, “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3–4). That truth is of “first importance” because, “if Christ has not been raised, [our] faith is worthless; [and we] are still in [our] sins.... If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied” (vv. 17, 19).

Our Lord Himself promised difficulty. “You will be hated by all on account of My name,” He said, “but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master” (Matt. 10:22–24).

Paul is not speaking of remembering the resurrection, important as that is, but rather of remembering **Jesus Christ**, who is alive because of the resurrection, having been **risen from the dead**. We do not serve a past event or a merely historical person. Jesus did indeed live a human life and die a human death. But we worship and serve Him because He is no longer dead but alive. We **remember** and worship and serve the *living Jesus Christ*.

By His resurrection, Christ became “the firstborn from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place [preeminence] in everything” (Col. 1:18). Not only that, however; for our sakes, He also became “the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29), in order that we might be raised and live with Him through all eternity, as “the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” (Heb. 12:23).

When we remember Christ as our resurrected Lord, we focus on His nature as God and His role as Savior. Through His death and resurrection, Christ broke the shackles of sin and of its wages, death, which is the greatest weapon of Satan. When we trusted in Him, He became *our* Savior and *our* Lord, breaking the power of sin, of death, and of Satan in *our own* lives. What greater motivation for service to Him could there be than to serve the One who conquered death and did it for us (John 14:19)?

We also should remember Jesus Christ in His humanity, in His identification with fallen mankind as a **descendant of David** “according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:30). His human descent from David not only speaks of His humanity as our sympathetic and merciful High Priest, who knows all our suffering and has felt all our pain (Heb. 2:14, 18), but also of His royalty and majesty. Before Jesus’ conception, the angel proclaimed to Mary, “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end” (Luke 1:32–33). In his last direct words to the apostle John on Patmos, Jesus spoke of Himself as “the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16).

Therefore, if Jesus Christ is our divine Savior and sovereign Lord, why should we worry about what happens to us in this life? As our perfect High Priest, He is able to “sympathize with our weaknesses,” because He “has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us

therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

As our sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ controls everything that we are and everything that happens to us. We must resist temptation, but we need not fear it, because our Lord “will not allow [us] to be tempted beyond what [we] are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that [we] may be able to endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13). We have no need to worry about the depths of our troubles or our sorrows. Isaiah gives comfort to all those who belong to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. “Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs, and carry them in His bosom” (Isa. 40:11). “Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried” (53:4), the prophet later writes.

We have no need to fear the loss of salvation, because our Lord assures us of our perfect and absolute security in Him. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me,” He said; “and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:27–28). “He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). We have no need to fear death. “Because I live,” Jesus said, “you shall live also” (John 14:19). Every believer can say with Paul, “To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

According to my gospel does not refer to Paul’s personal opinion about the gospel but to the divinely revealed message of Jesus Christ entrusted to him and that he proclaimed as “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (2 Tim. 1:1). It was the One who was the theme of the gospel he was referring to when he said, “Timothy, keep your eyes on the preeminent Jesus Christ as the Son of God as well as the Son of man, and as Savior as well as Lord and King.”

THE POWER OF THE WORD

for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. (2:9)

A second great motivation for faithfulness is the power of God’s Word. Paul contrasts his own **imprisonment** to the freedom of **the word of God, which is not imprisoned**. As suggested in this translation, the Greek noun behind **imprisonment** is from the verb that is here rendered **is... imprisoned**. Even though Paul was a man under the authority of Jesus Christ, he was subject to **imprisonment** by ungodly men, just as Jesus Himself had been subject to evil treatment by ungodly men during His incarnation. Although Paul was not sinless, as was his Lord, he nevertheless was like his Lord in being guiltless of the charges for which he was imprisoned. Paul was not a robber, murderer, or traitor, even by the standards of Roman law. Yet he was incarcerated as a criminal, probably in the infamous Mamertine prison in Rome, awaiting certain death.

Paul was not, however, lamenting the injustice of his imprisonment. He had already admonished Timothy not to “be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Tim. 1:8). Whether or not he was familiar with Peter’s first letter (Written several years before 2 Timothy), he certainly would have agreed with the attitude of his fellow apostle, who, as

quoted above, wrote, “If when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:20–21). Paul was “well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak,” he testified, “then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).

Paul’s point in the present verse, therefore, is not to complain about his own lamentable condition but rather to point up, by contrast, the sovereign, unfettered **word of God**. The apostle would have agreed fully with the writer of Hebrews, who declared, “The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). As Paul had written the Ephesian church, “The sword of the Spirit... is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17), and this divine “sword” cannot be taken out of the Spirit’s hand—by men, by demons, or even by Satan himself.

There have always been people in the church, and never more than in our own day, who believe that the power of the gospel is restricted by social or political opposition. Consequently, they argue that risking public censure, not to mention arrest and imprisonment for boldly preaching sin, repentance, and the gospel, should be avoided. They counsel discretion and sometimes even compromise in order to make the message more acceptable and, supposedly, more effective.

Many Christians are under the illusion that God’s Word has been influential in the Western world, especially in such democracies as the United States, primarily because of legal guarantees of freedom of religion, and that the fight to keep that freedom is therefore a fight to preserve the power of the gospel. In fact, some Christians who would never think of confronting society with the bold and demanding gospel and being censured for it will strongly fight for some social or political issue in ways that might get them arrested. Religious freedom is certainly commendable, and Christians who enjoy it should be grateful for and take advantage of the opportunities it affords for worship, witness, and service. But the power of God’s Word has never been dependent on man’s protection or subject to man’s restriction. That is precisely Paul’s point. **The word of God is not**, and cannot be, **imprisoned**.

At one time there were some 600 miles of catacombs under the city of Rome, nearly all them dug and used by ten generations of Christians over a period of 300 years. In the early centuries of the church, the catacombs served as meeting and burial places for perhaps as many as four million Christians. A common inscription found on walls there is “The Word of God is not bound.” In his famous hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” Martin Luther declared, “The body they may kill; God’s truth abideth still.”

John Bunyan wrote his most famous work, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, while jailed in Bedford, England, for preaching the gospel. Yet for several centuries that book was second in sales only to the Bible. Bunyan’s cell window faced a high stone wall that surrounded the prison, making it impossible to see into or out of his cell. On many days, however, he would preach loudly enough for his voice to be heard on the outside of the wall, where hundreds of listeners, believers and unbelievers, eagerly awaited his proclamation of God’s Word, which was unconfined by stone walls or iron bars.

Before the Communist conquest in the late 1940s and early 1950s, there were more than 700,000 Christians in China. During the subsequent “cultural revolution,” at least 30 million

Chinese were slaughtered, including most of the Christians. Yet, after more than forty years of brutal oppression, imprisonment, and executions, the church of Jesus Christ in that vast country has a current membership of an estimated 30 million to 100 million. Although written copies of Scripture are still scarce, the truth of God's Word endures in their hearts. Its power cannot be bound. The more it is assailed, the more it prevails.

Andrew Melville was the successor of John Knox in the Scottish Reformation. On one occasion, a certain official had him arrested and said, "There will never be quietness in this country till half a dozen of you be hanged or banished [from] the country." With perfect composure, Melville fearlessly replied, "It is the same to me whether I rot in the air or in the ground. The earth is the Lord's; my fatherland is wherever well-doing is. I have been ready to give my life, when it was not half as well worn, at the pleasure of my God. I lived out of your country ten years as well as in it. Yet God be glorified, it will not lie in your power to hang nor exile His truth!"

THE PURPOSE OF THE WORK

For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. (2:10)

A third motivation for faithfulness is the divine purpose of the Lord's work on earth before He returns.

For this reason refers to what Paul has said in the preceding verse about remembering the preeminence of Christ and the power of God's word. Those divine motivations gave the apostle the willingness to **endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen**. He is not speaking here of fellow believers, but of God's **chosen** who had yet to **obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus**.

That translates *hina*, which, when used with a subjunctive, as here with *tunchanō* (**to obtain**), indicates a purpose clause. A more exact rendering, therefore, would be "in order **that**" the unbelievers to whom he witnessed might **obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus**. Paul not only suffered because his faithfulness to Christ provoked it but also because, like the Lord, he was "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). His heart reflected God's heart, because, like Peter, he knew with certainty that "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

God's Word clearly reveals that "He chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, [and] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will" (Eph. 1:4–5), that "whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Disregarding other Scripture, some fatalistic interpreters use texts such as those just cited to argue that evangelism not only is unnecessary but presumptuous, claiming that God will sovereignly save those whom He has predestined, regardless of whether or not they hear and believe the gospel. But God's Word just as clearly teaches the necessity of faith for salvation as it does that salvation is by God's free and sovereign grace. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him

from the Father” (John 6:65). But He also said, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever *believes* in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.... He who *believes* in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because *he has not believed* in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16, 18, emphasis added; cf. v. 36). Paul succinctly states those companion truths in the familiar and priceless words “By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).

Scripture also is clear that, despite the Lord’s sovereign calling of men to Himself, He calls those who belong to Him to extend His call to those who have not heard and heeded it. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,” Jesus said, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). We are called to be Christ’s “witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

In his letter to the church at Rome, immediately after declaring that “whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved,” Paul goes on to ask rhetorically, “How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14).

The fact that our finite minds cannot fully understand or reconcile such truths in no way affects their validity. God sovereignly calls every believer in His grace; He sovereignly demands their faith to make His gracious calling effective; and He sovereignly calls those who are saved to be His witnesses to those who are not.

John Wesley traveled by foot or horseback some 250,000 miles, preaching more than 40,000 sermons, and he wrote, translated, or edited more than 200 books. He lived simply and gave away most of whatever income he received. Yet he was continually ridiculed and pelted with stones by ungodly mobs and was ostracized by fellow clergymen in the Church of England. When maligned, he answered, “I leave my reputation where I left my soul, in the hands of God.” He never lost his joy of service or his love for the Lord and for men, both saved and unsaved. One biographer commented, “To Wesley was granted the task which even an archangel might have envied.”

George Whitefield, a close friend and fellow worker with John and Charles Wesley during his early ministry, spent thirty-four years preaching the gospel in the British Isles and in America. He made thirteen transatlantic voyages, which were still perilous in those days, and preached at least 18,000 sermons on the two continents. The noted poet and hymn-writer William Cowper—who wrote “Oh! For a Closer Walk with God” and “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood”—penned the following tribute to Whitefield:

He loved the world that hated him.
The tear that dropped upon his Bible was sincere.
Assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife,
His only answer was a blameless life.

That resolute man of God heeded Peter’s counsel to “keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong” (1 Peter 3:16–17).

And **with it**, Paul continues—that is, with “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus”—comes **eternal glory**. In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul presents that truth more fully: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him” (8:16–17).

THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL BLESSING

It is a trustworthy statement: 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; for He cannot deny Himself. (2:11–13)

A fourth motivation for faithfulness to Christ is the promise of eternal blessing.

Paul uses the phrase **It is a trustworthy statement** five times in the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus), but it is found nowhere else in the New Testament. He seems to have used it to introduce a truth that was axiomatic, a truism in the early church that was commonly known and believed. The long sentence beginning **For if we died with Him** and continuing through verse 13 may have been used as a creed in the early church. Its parallelism and rhythm suggest that these two verses (Like 1 Timothy 3:16) may have been sung as a hymn, and it is for that reason that some Greek texts and several modern translations set it in verse form.

If we died with Him may refer to the spiritual death of which Paul speaks in Romans. “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death,” he explains, “in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection,... for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Rom. 6:4–5, 7–8).

But the context of 2 Timothy 2:11 seems to suggest that Paul here has martyrdom in mind. In that case, if someone has sacrificed his life for Christ, that is, has **died with Him**, that martyrdom gives evidence that he had spiritual life in **Him** and will **live with Him** throughout eternity. The martyr’s hope is eternal life after death.

In the same way, **if we endure** persecution and hostility without being killed, we give evidence that we truly belong to Christ and that **we shall also**, therefore, **reign with Him**. That is also the hope of believers who live in difficulty—the eternal kingdom. *Basileuō* means literally to rule as a king (*basileus*). The verb here is the compound *sumbasileuō*, which means to **reign with**. The other side of that truth is that those who do *not endure* give equally certain evidence that they do not belong to Christ and will *not reign with Him*.

Although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,” Paul explained to believers at Colossae, “yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister” (Col. 1:21–23). Only if Christ is Lord of a life, can He present

that life before His Father “holy and blameless and beyond reproach.” The only life that can **endure** is an obedient life. A life that will not serve Him will never **reign with Him**.

Jesus promised the Twelve, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28; cf. Luke 22:29–30). Believers also have positions of authority in the millennial kingdom, as 1 Corinthians 6:2–3 indicates: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?” (1 Cor. 6:2–3). Speaking of all Christians in the final glory, Paul declared, “For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17).

To **endure**, or persevere, with Christ does not protect salvation, which is eternally secured when a person trusts in Him as Savior and Lord. We can no more ensure salvation by our own efforts or power than we first gained it by our own efforts or power.

The next two conditions and promises are negative and are parallel, at least in form, to the preceding positive ones.

First, Paul says, **if we deny Him**, that is, Jesus Christ, **He also will deny us**. The Greek verb rendered **deny** is in the future tense, and the clause is therefore more clearly rendered, “If we ever deny Him” or “If in the future we deny Him.” It looks at some confrontation that makes the cost of confessing Christ very high and thereby tests one’s true faith. A person who fails to endure and hold onto his confession of Christ will **deny Him**, because he never belonged to Christ at all. “Anyone who... does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). Those who remain faithful to the truth they profess give evidence of belonging to God.

“What about Peter’s denial?” we may ask. “Can a true believer deny the Lord?” (cf. Matt. 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:54–62; John 18:16, 25–27). Obviously believers like Peter can fall into temporary cowardice and fail to stand for the Lord. We all do it in various ways when we’re unwilling to openly declare our love for Christ in a given situation.

Confronted by the cost of discipleship, Peter was facing just such a test as Paul had in mind. Did he thereby evidence a lack of true saving faith? His response to the denial, going out and weeping bitter tears of penitence (Matt. 26:75), and the Lord’s restoration of him in Galilee (John 21:15–17) lead one to conclude that Peter was truly justified, though obviously not yet fully sanctified. And until Pentecost, Peter did not have the fulness of the Holy Spirit. After the Spirit came to live in him in New Covenant fullness, however, his courage, boldness, and willingness to face any hostility became legendary (cf. Acts 1:5, 8; 2:4, 14–36; 3:1–6, 12–26; 4:1–4, 8–13, 19, 21, 31). Peter died a martyr, just as Jesus had foretold he would—faithful in the face of execution for his Lord (John 21:18–19). Tradition holds that, by his own request, he was crucified upside down, because he felt unworthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

So perhaps the answer to the issue of Peter’s denial is that his was a momentary failure, followed by repentance. He did not as yet have the fullness of the Spirit, but during the rest of this life after Pentecost he boldly confessed Christ, even when it cost him his life.

Jesus Himself gave the sobering warning, “Whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 10:33). There is a settled, final kind of

denial that does not repent and thereby evidences an unregenerate heart. After the lame man was healed near the Beautiful gate of the temple, Peter testified to the seriousness of denying Christ. “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus,” he said, “the one whom you delivered up, and disowned [denied] in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But you disowned [denied] the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses” (Acts 3:13–15).

The most dangerous of those who deny Christ are “false teachers... who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them” (2 Peter 2:1). They are, in fact, no less than antichrists. To those who claim to belong to God as Father without belonging to Christ as His Son, John unequivocally says, “Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:22–23).

In the present text, however, Paul’s warning could include those who once claimed Christ but later **deny Him** when the cost of discipleship becomes too high. Such were the “disciples [who] withdrew and were not walking with Him [Jesus] anymore” (John 6:66). It is about such false Christians that the writer of Hebrews says: “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame” (Heb. 6:4–6).

Later in 2 Timothy, Paul describes such false Christians as “lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power” (3:2–5). In his letter to Titus, he says of such people that “they profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed” (Titus 1:16). Continual disobedience inevitably confirms faithlessness by eventuating in denial.

The second negative condition and promise are: **If we are faithless, Christ remains faithful.** In this context, *apisteō* (**are faithless**) means lack of saving faith, not merely weak or unreliable faith. The unsaved ultimately deny Christ, because they never had faith in Him for salvation. But **He remains faithful**, not only to those who believe in Him but to those who do not, as here. God’s divine assurance to save “whoever believes in Him [Christ]” (John 3:16) is followed almost immediately by another divine assurance that “he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). Just as Christ will never renege on His promise to save those who trust in Him, He also will never renege on His promise to condemn those who do not. To do otherwise would be to **deny Himself**, which His righteous and just nature **cannot** allow Him to do.

It was on the basis of Christ’s absolute faithfulness that Paul declared earlier in this letter, “I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2 Tim. 1:12). It was on that basis that the writer of Hebrews

admonished, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering,” and then exulted, “for He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:23).³

Reasons for Enduring Hardship (2:8–13)

VERSE 8 MOVES from analogy to history. Whatever encouragement Timothy may receive from verses 1–7, it is the resurrection of Christ, the promised messianic descendent of David, that provides the strongest motivation. Picking up the references to suffering and imprisonment in 1:8 and the reference to chains in 1:16, Paul refers in 2:9 to his own suffering in chains “like a criminal,” but adds that “God’s word is not chained.” This recalls the ending of Acts, where in spite of his imprisonment Paul preached “without hindrance” (Acts 28:31).

Paul turns in verse 10 to his own willingness to endure anything necessary “for the sake of [*dia*] the elect” (see 1 Tim. 5:21 on the “elect angels”; Titus 1:1 on “the faith of God’s elect”). The words that follow, “that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory,” have elicited discussion. The whole concept of election stands to the side of the present passage, because Paul’s emphasis here is not on the matter of election, predestination, and the sovereignty of God, but on the need to *facilitate the salvation* of the elect. However one may address the matter of election, the conversion of a person involves the faithful ministry of the saving gospel.

Paul’s question in Roman 10:14—“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in.... And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”—is relevant here. The words “with eternal glory” are unusual in that they combine a word (“eternal”) that refers to God only once in the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim. 1:17) and five times to the believer’s eternal life (see 1 Tim. 1:16; 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:10; Titus 1:2; 3:7) and another word (“glory”) that, apart from this passage, only refers to glory of God (1 Tim. 1:17; 3:16; 2 Tim. 4:18). The present verse leads into the “trustworthy saying” of verses 11–13 since living and reigning with Christ involves participation in his eschatological glory.

The “trustworthy saying” (v. 11) is one of five in the Pastoral Letters (see comments on 1 Tim. 1:15; see also 3:1; 4:9; Titus 3:8). The present saying is the only one that can be called poetic. The structural features are obvious, particularly the “we” ...”him” pattern and the protasis (“if”) and apodosis (consequence) alternation. The repeated “with” (representing the verbal prefix *syn*) occurs in three of the first four verbs. The use of the word “endure” in verse 10 is apparently the trigger that causes Paul to include verse 12a (with no *syn*). The other verbs allude to biblical teachings about dying and raising with Christ (esp. Rom. 6:3–11) and participation with Christ in his coming reign (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 5:10; 20:6; 22:5).

While verse 11 can have overtones of martyrdom, the fact that in the Romans passage just cited Paul has already written strongly about spiritual identification with Christ in his death, the

³ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [2 Timothy](#) (pp. 54–65). Chicago: Moody Press.

spiritual allusion is the most natural reference. Given the fact that this saying is clearly intended as an encouragement to endure in view of all that has preceded it in 1:8–2:10, the words about dying and living also have a hortatory force. That is to say, Paul is not merely stating a spiritual or theological fact; he is calling on the reader to experience what it means to die with Christ.

Paul is not simply thinking of something historical, though it is based on the historical death of Christ, and certainly not of something physical, for we have not actually been put to death. Rather, there is a personal identification with Christ in his death, portrayed in baptism, that is supposed to mark the end of the *sinful kind of life* we previously lived. But this calls for a conscious “dying” with Christ: “In the same way, count [or consider] yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11). If 2 Timothy 2:11 deals with the kind of death and life referred to in Romans 6, the future tense “we will also live” refers to our present life in Christ (cf. Rom. 6:8).

In verse 12 the endurance is, by its very nature, lifelong. The reigning is not something of a spiritual nature in this life, but is eschatological. The word “disown” is a possible translation of the Greek *arneomai*, but since we tend to use it with regard to a parent disowning a son or daughter, it could give the wrong impression. The Greek word also means “to deny, refuse” or simply “to say no”; “repudiate” may be a proper translation here. Most of the occurrences of this word are in the Gospels, where we can find help for understanding its meaning here. In Mark 8:34, for example, Jesus teaches that we should deny ourselves, and verse 38 speaks of being ashamed of Christ and of his words.

This background is useful in understanding the transition from Paul’s words about being ashamed in 2 Timothy 1:8, 12, which, in turn, provides background for 2:12. First John 2:20–23 pointedly connects lying and rejecting the truth about Christ with denial. We know from 1 Timothy 5:8 and Titus 1:16 that denial can be expressed in actions even when it is not articulated. Either speech or action is possible here in verse 12. It is therefore striking that while Christ will repudiate the person who repudiates him, verse 13 tells us that if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot repudiate himself. More important, we can conclude from verse 13 that not only will our Lord not deny us in words, but also he will not disown us in deeds. This fact forms the basis (*gar*) for his continuing faithfulness toward us even if we are faithless.

Since the verb *apisteo* (v. 13) can mean to disbelieve or to be unfaithful or disloyal, opinions differ as to its meaning here. But its meaning must be in contrast to what God is. He is *pistos*, which cannot mean believing (God does not “believe”) but “faithful.” Thus the NIV translation (“if we are faithless”) is correct. In summary, verse 13 affirms God’s consistency and integrity. Although human beings may not keep faith with God, he will not break faith with us because he cannot be inconsistent with himself. It is difficult to know with certainty what Paul has in mind when he speaks of God’s faithfulness. Is it being faithful to his people, to his own righteousness, or to his judgments? Since all three are true and supported throughout Scripture, we do not lose any truth by leaving this question open here. What is most striking is that the saying of verses 11–13 concludes with a magnificent statement about God’s character: He cannot repudiate himself!⁴

⁴ Liefeld, W. L. (1999). [1 and 2 Timothy, Titus](#) (pp. 248–250). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Bridging Context

WITH GOOD REASON this section is frequently quoted and preached on. It is straightforward, positive, and graphic. It includes illustrations from common life, doctrine, and a memorable “trustworthy saying.” There is a series of imperatives that summarize Timothy’s responsibilities: “Be strong” (v. 1), “entrust” (v. 2), “endure hardship with us” (v. 3), “reflect” (v. 7, referring back to the illustrations of vv. 3–6), and finally “remember” (v. 8). Because Christian ministry and witness will always require the elements of strength and endurance mentioned in this passage, it calls for the attention of Christians in every age and place.

Principles. Embedded in this passage are at least two important principles. (1) The sound teaching Timothy has learned from Paul is to be passed on to those capable of transmitting it to other generations. This is the lifeline of Christianity. It has been said that Christianity is only one generation away from extinction. While that is improbable, it is theoretically true in that unless the life, faith, and teachings of vital Christianity are actively committed to the next generation, Christianity could become a footnote of history (cf. Jesus’ question in Luke 18:8).

(2) Serving Christ is hard work, requiring total commitment. That is the message of the military, athletic, and agricultural images. However great the power of the Holy Spirit, unless Christians are wholly dedicated to the Lord and personally committed to his work, the channels through which the Holy Spirit wants to work will be clogged and atrophied. The fact that Paul urges Timothy in verse 7 to “reflect on what I am saying” and that he needs God-given “insight” into it show that these teachings require more than superficial assent.

Paul’s gospel. As elsewhere, Paul follows his personal exhortations about commitment with a reference to doctrine, in particular the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ, the descendent of David the King. He goes so far as to call this “my gospel,” because he is committed to it, serves it, and to a large extent has fashioned its contours. Because of his passion for this gospel and the Savior for whom he suffered and was imprisoned, he once again refers to his own experience and to the importance of endurance.

The closing “trustworthy saying” is sobering, because we could infer from it that if we do not fulfill the conditions (e.g., dying with Christ), we will not live with him. In fact, we can look to verse 10 and ask whether there are those who would not receive salvation if Paul or others had *not* “endure[d] everything for the sake of the elect.” But this passage is not so much intended to raise such questions as it is to spur Christians on to faithfulness.

The importance of faithfulness. In the centuries before the advent of media resources that keep us informed of the activities of preachers and other Christian leaders around the world, most Christians knew only of the ministry of their pastor and other local servants of God, such as Sunday school teachers and parish nuns. Occasionally, perhaps, the ministry of some missionary, bishop, or itinerant preacher came to their attention. People revered those local men and women of God, whose saintly lives one would expect to be rewarded by God, though also in such small circles, any “warts” were also evident.

Today, by contrast, the average Christian hears much about of many talented figures across the continent and overseas who have reputations for extraordinary gifts and ministries. But we

have little personal knowledge of these giants. Whether a person is a parish priest, the head of an international organization, or the feisty host of a Christian talk show, each one stands before the God who alone can look on the heart. We have little ability to judge who is truly obeying him from the heart, discarding worldly enticements. We do not know who is truly faithful, who is playing according to God's rules privately as well as publicly, and who actually works hard in all conditions, under sun and rain, cultivating the soil of the church and fostering the growth of Christians. It is possible to preach, lead, and give out information and opinion without necessarily being inwardly spiritual or effectively bringing others along in their faith.

God's servants are judged for their faithfulness, not for their accomplishments. Who of the preachers among us has not uncomfortably heard compliments about our sermons, while being conscious of our flaws and "feet of clay," or heard others lauded for their sermons when we are aware that they also share our sinful humanity? The sharper our swords or the more finely tuned the amazing computers of our brains, the more real is the temptation to think in terms of our accomplishments rather than of personal spiritual diligence and faithfulness.

This passage deals with the seriousness of our commitment to Christ. Note that eternal life is not dependent on our faithfulness in Christian service; the Lord remains faithful (v. 13). However, the place a Christian will have in the future reign of Christ is dependent on one's endurance for him. Jesus himself said, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven" (Matt. 10:32–33). The word rendered "disown" (or "deny") in that passage is the same as the one translated "disown" here in 2 Timothy 2:12. However distant the possibility may be that any given Christian may disown the Lord or become unfaithful to him, that possibility is left open here. Assurance comes in the last lines. Even if we prove unfaithful, the Lord will be faithful to his own promise, his covenant sealed with his own blood. Thank God for the commitment of Christ to us (v. 13) that undergirds this whole passage!

"Christian Unbelief" was the title of a talk I once heard on the subject of the tendency of Christians to assent mentally to certain doctrines but not believe them to the extent that they change their lives. It can also describe the attitude of those who have read verses 11–13, but have assumed that even if they do not follow Christ as diligently as others do, they will have an equally blessed future reigning with Christ. If Scripture means anything, it means that there *will* be a difference. This series of conditions and consequences teaches that there *are* consequences.

It is regrettable that, for a good part of the twentieth century, liberals, who did not believe in the authority of the Bible, nevertheless emphasized Christian ethics; whereas evangelicals, who were stronger in their faith in the biblical text, tended to neglect its teachings on ethics. A comparable statement may be made regarding Christians' responses to this passage. Even though it has a poetic flavor and employs images, it contains teachings that accord with other biblical statements—as, for example, Jesus' words concerning losing our lives for his sake and being rewarded for what we have done, when the Son of Man comes in glory (Matt. 24–25).⁵

⁵ Liefeld, W. L. (1999). [*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*](#) (pp. 251–253). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Contemporary Significance

DISCIPLING AND MENTORING contemporary believers. The contemporary Christian has advantages over those of prior generations in that helps for the Christian life are available on all sides. Christian bookstores are stocked with devotional and motivational works. Christian magazines, websites, and small groups are among the resources available to help us in our daily lives. Whereas Timothy had little to read besides Paul's personal letters, possibly an early form of the Gospels, and whatever Old Testament Scriptures were available to him, we have armloads of books and CDs.

The vivid imagery of verses 1–7 has been taken up and expanded in contemporary writings. The same is true for doctrinal works and books on apologetics and Christian evidences to support faith. In contrast, first-century citizens of Ephesus would have had little to help affirm and support their faith. The affirmation of verse 8, "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David," would have been especially valuable to them. Today Christians can help one another immensely by recommending and sharing books and other materials on the basics of the faith. Christians need to gather consciously resources about their faith and proactively declare the truths about Christ and the gospel.

What young Timothys today need especially is personal mentoring, but not merely mentoring in the sense of giving information and offering guidance. Too often that becomes a means of control and the reproduction of ourselves in the other, accompanied by all our agendas and opinions. We may think that we have disciplined or mentored a person when they adopt our outlook on things, pray like we do, witness like we do, and, if it is a pastoral relationship, preach like we do. (The word "clone" comes to mind.)

That is not what Christian discipling and mentoring are about. To mentor a Timothy means to be available, to spend time with him or her, and to seek to facilitate rather than to control the use of that person's distinctive gifts. An athlete runs the race alone, but does so after months and perhaps years of training and encouragement. And not only the coach, but other friends and family may have a part in that encouragement along the way. In Paul Timothy had a person who was close to him, who listened and understood him, who recognized his individual giftedness, and who had confidence in him.

Faithful evangelism. It is awesome in the true sense to think that around the world today are Christians in all strata of society and in diverse ethnic groups who are faithful to the Lord. Some are people with little education and only a basic knowledge of the gospel but who put many of us to shame by their faithfulness to the Lord in incredibly difficult circumstances.

At the same time, many Christian organizations are working to facilitate the transmission of the truth from one generation to another. The work of the Navigators is well known, a ministry that from its inception sought to implement verse 2 in an organized way. It is a verse that can be applied not only to "one-on-one" transmission of biblical truth, but also to the larger, more complex ministry of churches, missions, and educational institutions like seminaries. Strong seminaries do not guarantee vital churches, but they do educate men and women who, if they are spiritual and faithful to the Lord, can lead churches in the proper direction. Sloppy theology and professional expertise that lack heart and wisdom, however, are not going to accomplish the task.

Whether, then, we do it personally, corporately, or institutionally, Christians need to be consistently obedient to these verses in order to provide for successive generations of disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The most successful evangelistic outreach will last only a generation if we do not diligently teach others “to obey everything” Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:20).

Monitoring results in a mobile society. At the same time as information is so widely available about our faith, our relationships with those with whom we share it are often more superficial than used to be the case. People move with greater frequency. Employment situations rapidly change. Younger generations move out rather than live in extended families (in spite of the number of young adults who are tending to stay at home until marriage). Our occasional contacts with people are fleeting, such as with fellow passengers on an airline flight. Therefore, those who are hardworking farmers in the imagery of verse 6 may never know on this earth whether seeds they have planted have taken root and grown. If we endure hardship for the sake of the elect (v. 10), we may not know whether our efforts have been rewarded in changed lives.

There is, therefore, a strong eschatological dimension to this passage. Faithful Christians may not see the results or reap its rewards until heaven. We must depend all the more heavily on the promises of this passage as well as respond in faith to its commands. Perhaps the reader of this commentary, like the author, has had the joy from time to time of learning how a word of witness, a conversation, a sermon, or perhaps something written in years previous had a significant effect on someone’s life.

I received a phone call at supper time some time ago that began with the words, “I won’t take time away from your dinner, but I want to thank you for the articles you wrote in *Decision* magazine.” The caller was a neighbor who had previously showed little interest in spiritual things. A remarkable story followed about a desire that had surfaced several times over her lifetime to get to know God. One episode involved eagerly receiving *Decision* magazine, only to store it away for a more convenient time. Eventually, in her retirement, she took out the magazines and unexpectedly came across my articles. She had no idea that my wife and I had been praying for her. A few years after that, we—and then they—moved away. Had these moves taken place before she found the articles, we may not have known this side of heaven what God had done in her life.⁶

⁶ Liefeld, W. L. (1999). [*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*](#) (pp. 253–255). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.