

## 2 TIMOTHY 2:8, 9 REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST!

“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!”<sup>1</sup>

**W**e have just completed Christmas celebrations; we are poised on the cusp of a new year. During the days of Christmas, we celebrated the knowledge that God has shared our condition—God became man. A Christmas text that is too often ignored speaks to this very issue. The Apostle instructed followers of the Christ, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” [PHILIPPIANS 2:5-7]. It is always a good thing to reflect on the meaning of significant events. Thus, as we are about to enter into a new year, I propose that we reflect on who we are and where we are as Christians and as a community of faith.

We were studying through the Pastoral Letters when we entered into the Advent Season. It is appropriate, therefore, to pick up where we left off in order to consider where we have been during the previous few weeks and to anticipate where we should be going in the coming year. As I prepared this message I became conscious that the Spirit is evidently guiding our studies. My reason for saying this is that the text challenges sober reflection on the message we have heard, thinking carefully about the Person we have received as Master of life. Open your Bibles, then, to the Second Chapter of Paul’s final missive to the young preacher of Ephesus. Focus in particular on verses eight and nine where we are commanded to remember Jesus Christ.

The text before us suggests its own outline. There is nothing profound about the thoughts I intend to present in the message today. The message is, however, glorious and it is marked by hope and joy that lends courage born of assurance as we serve throughout the coming year.

**REMEMBER THAT JESUS CHRIST IS ALIVE!** “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead!” Some truths are essential to be always held in mind, especially if one is a follower of the Christ. Among the truths that Christians, and especially pastors, must hold in mind is that Jesus Christ is alive. The Greek behind what we read in our English Bible reveals something we might otherwise miss. When the Apostle says, “Remember,” he uses the present active imperative of the Greek word *mnēmoneuō*. The practical significance of this information is that Paul is calling for a continuous action. Timothy is always to hold fast the knowledge that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. The teaching applies to all who occupy the sacred desk.

It would be easy to conclude that many of preachers in this day have forgotten this truth. Listening to the messages delivered from many pulpits would lead the people in the pews to believe that the speakers really don’t remember that Jesus Christ is alive, if they ever knew this. These speakers may talk about man’s heroic struggles to find his place in the world, or perhaps they present coping mechanisms to deal with the pressures of modern life, or speak of the need for greater equality in the world, the unfairness arising from privilege, the need for economic parity or a thousand other matters beside the truth that Jesus Christ is alive.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**2 TIMOTHY 2:8, 9**  
**REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST**

It is tragic enough when professed leaders of the churches fail to remember that Jesus is alive, but how much more tragic when we allow ourselves to be so beaten down that we forget that Jesus is alive. Child of God, the Lord God is on His throne. Christ Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father; and He still rises to receive His child when that child comes home. This same Jesus hears and answers prayer.

The men who murdered Stephen witnessed him as he surrendered his life and they heard his final words. Perhaps they could ignore the testimony he provided—a testimony that drove them into unthinking rage, but they could never forget the final assertion by this bold martyr. Listen to the account of one who was present that day and never forgot what he witnessed. “[Stephen], full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God’” [ACTS 7:55, 56].

I don’t know what trials you are facing today—I am quite certain that each one listening is either now facing trials or shall face trials in this coming year. I am confident that we who believe the Son of God will experience trials; we will face challenges for which we lack strength. We are cautioned not to be moved by the afflictions we face, because we know that we are destined for such affliction [see 1 THESSALONIANS 3:3, 4]. Never forget that God is on the throne and that He is mighty on behalf of His beloved child; and you are that beloved child if your faith and hope are in Him. Elisha walked with Elijah even to the final day of the old prophets walk on earth. Though Elijah repeatedly tested the younger prophet, Elisha would not leave the aged prophet’s side. He wanted the faith and the courage that Elijah possessed.

This is the story of that final day, focused on the final moments of Elijah’s journey on earth. “When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. And Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.’ But Elisha said, ‘As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, ‘Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?’ And he said, ‘Yes, I know it; keep quiet.’

“Elijah said to him, ‘Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.’ But he said, ‘As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So they came to Jericho. The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, ‘Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?’ And he answered, ‘Yes, I know it; keep quiet.’

“Then Elijah said to him, ‘Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.’ But he said, ‘As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

“When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.’ And Elisha said, ‘Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.’ And he said, ‘You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.’ And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it and he cried, ‘My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!’ And he saw him no more.

“Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, ‘Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?’ And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over” [2 KINGS 2:1-14].

I thought of some of the great lessons demonstrated in this account of Elisha’s blessing. We witness the prophet’s persistence in the face of discouragement. Elijah endeavoured to discourage Elisha, but Elisha refused to leave his side. Just so, it often feels as though God is no longer on our side and we grow discouraged. It is almost as though God is challenging us to see if we truly want what we seek. Spurgeon used to say that faith always gives a double knock at Heaven’s door. The lesson—***Don’t give up when the going gets tough.*** The going will inevitably be challenging for that one pursuing Jesus the Master. Follow hard after the Master.

Another lesson that seems to pop out of the account is that the wise follower of Jesus will ***Avoid listening to the conventional wisdom.*** Whenever the child of God hears the phrase, “Everyone knows,” she must be convinced that heeding such a message leads to senescence and ultimately irrelevance. The world advances on the discoveries of those who listened to an inner voice urging them to challenge the old frontiers. In the realm of the spiritual, the child of God hears a word from behind saying, “This is the way, walk in it” [see ISAIAH 30:21]. The sons of the prophets were united in attempting to dissuade Elisha from staying next to Elijah. They asked, “Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you” [2 KINGS 2:3, 5]? Elisha’s response is instructive for us. Each time he responded, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.”

Let me step aside for a moment from the narrative. The Northern Kingdom had apostatised. However, even in the midst of that apostatised community, some still sought God. In the midst of the “Church of the Golden Calf” were some identified as “sons of the prophets.” It is likely that these men had been turned to righteousness through Elijah’s preaching. Often within the apostate church are found courageous men who stand firmly for the cause of Christ. A Savonarola resisting the evils of dissipated Florence, a Luther horrified at the excess of the Roman church, a Spurgeon refusing to go along to get along with a drifting Baptist Union—all alike stood resolute against evil and wickedness. All the while there were well-meaning friends who though stirred at the message they received sought to drag these stalwarts back down to their own reality. These great men sought God rather than listening to the conventional wisdom.

Again, the account provided teaches us to ***Ask great things of God.*** Even when it seems as if our prayers are unheard, faith leads us to trust Him and His mercy. Though our senses tell us that God no longer hears, faith impels us to keep on asking. Remember Jesus’ teaching. “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything’? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” [LUKE 11:5-13]! Our problem is not that we don’t pray; our problem is that we don’t ask ***great*** things of God.

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Above all else, the lesson I urge you to learn is that Elisha did not cease to trust God. Always and ever, Elisha knew that God was alive. Just so, **Know that God is alive**. The first message I preached while teaching at the Criswell Center in Dallas was an exposition of the account of Elijah confronting Ahab, the wicked king of Israel. The old prophet began his message by saying, “As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand” [1 KINGS 17:1]. Literally, Elijah said, “Living is Yahweh, the God of Israel before Whose face I stand...” So long as the prophet remembered that God was alive, he was unconquerable. When he took his eyes off the Lord, he fled for his life. Now, Elisha had learned this same lesson through the time he had spent pouring water on the hands of Elijah; he learned to stand through serving.

Before Elijah was taken up into the heavens, he had rolled up his cloak and struck the Jordan. At this, the river parted, allowing both Elijah and Elisha to cross the river dry-shod. As Elijah was taken up, his cloak fell off, and Elisha picked it up. Elisha’s first act after Elijah was taken up was to stand before the River they had just crossed; and crying out, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” he stuck the water, and the water parted to the one side and to the other, allowing Elisha to cross over. God was alive. This had been Elisha’s testimony each time Elijah tested him, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you” [2 KINGS 2:2, 4, 6]. Now, from this point, he would be living proof that the LORD lives.

Just so, I remind you who listen today that God is alive. The same God Who empowered Paul would stand with Timothy. And the same God Who stood with Savonarola, with Luther, with Spurgeon stands with you today. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. You who are born from above are immortal until He calls you home. Because He lives; you also shall live.

The hymn writers have written truthfully of this glorious truth. Alfred Henry Ackley was challenged by a young Jewish student during an evangelistic meeting, “Why should I worship a dead Jew?” Ackley’s response was to write the Gospel hymn, “He Lives.”<sup>2</sup>

“I serve a risen Saviour; He’s in the world today;  
I know that He is living, whatever men may say;  
I see His hand of mercy; I hear His voice of cheer,  
And just the time I need Him He’s always near.

“He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way.  
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know He lives. He lives within my heart.”<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the 1960s the United States was going through a difficult period. The Vietnam War was at its peak, student unrest was creating tension throughout the nation and the drug culture was at its height. The “God is Dead” movement was prominent among many churches. It was at this point that Bill and Gloria Gaither were passing through a dry period in their faith. Gloria was expecting their third child, and she recalls thinking, “Brother, this is really a poor time to bring a child into the world.” Her response was to remember that Jesus lives, resulting in a hymn that has become classic among the faithful.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth W. Osbeck, **Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions** (Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI 1996), 128–129

<sup>3</sup> Alfred H. Ackley, “He Lives,” 1933

<sup>4</sup> Osbeck, op. cit., 129–130

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“How sweet to hold a newborn baby  
And feel the pride and joy he gives;  
But greater still the calm assurance:  
This child can face uncertain days because Christ lives.

“Because He lives I can face tomorrow,  
Because He lives all fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future  
And life is worth the living—  
Just Because He lives.”<sup>5</sup>

You may remember the name Graham Staines. Staines was a Baptist missionary who had worked for thirty-four years with sufferers of leprosy in India. His name entered the roll of martyrs when he and his two young sons, Philip, ten, and Timothy, eight, were burned to death by a rampaging mob of Hindus as they slept in their car. The mob of about forty men doused his car with kerosene and set it ablaze. At a memorial service for her husband and two sons, his wife Gladys and her daughter led the congregation in singing this triumphant hymn.<sup>6</sup>

“Because He lives I can face tomorrow,  
Because He lives all fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future  
And life is worth the living Just Because He lives.”

**REMEMBER THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE GOD-MAN!** “Remember Jesus Christ, the offspring of David!” The opening words of the letter to the Christians in Rome reads as follows, “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” [ROMANS 1:1-4]. The Apostle sought to ensure that those reading this letter, or those who would hear the letter read, would know that the missive focused on Jesus as very God in human flesh. The message delivered in this letter would point to Jesus as the unique God-man.

Later in this same letter, the Apostle spoke of his Jewish heritage and the heartache that attended the nation’s rejection of the Messiah. As translated in a recent copy of the Word<sup>7</sup>, he testified, “As a Christian, I’m telling you the truth. I’m not lying. The Holy Spirit, along with my own thoughts, supports me in this. I have deep sorrow and endless heartache. I wish I could be condemned and cut off from Christ for the sake of others who, like me, are Jewish by birth. They are Israelites, God’s adopted children. They have the Lord’s glory, the pledges, Moses’ Teachings, the true worship and the promises. The Messiah is descended from their ancestors according to his human nature. The Messiah is God over everything, forever blessed. Amen” [ROMANS 9:1-5].

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<sup>5</sup> Gloria Gaither and William J. Gaither, “Because He Lives,” 1970

<sup>6</sup> Mark Water, **The New Encyclopedia of Christian Martyrs** (John Hunt Publishers Ltd, Alresford, Hampshire 2001), 918

<sup>7</sup> **GOD’S WORD Translation** (Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, MI 1995)

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It is a wonderful thing to know the Jesus is alive. However, we sometimes forget that He is very God. Jesus' final words to His disciples were a charge that is binding on all of His people. This charge continues to this day, though it is too often ignored among the churches of this day. Before He gave that Great Commission, Jesus comforted the disciples by testifying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me" [MATTHEW 28:18].

Jesus spoke of this authority throughout the days of His ministry. On one occasion, Jesus taught Jewish interlocutors, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" [JOHN 5:19-29].

Jesus shared our condition; thus, we may be confident that He understands our struggles. The writer of the Book of Hebrews reminds us, "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" [HEBREWS 4:14]. Yet, He is very God, as the Word testifies repeated. As we have already seen, Paul would say of the Christ that He is "God over all" [ROMANS 9:5]. Peter identifies Jesus as "our God and Saviour" [2 PETER 1:1]. This lends understanding to the Apostle's statement, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" [PHILIPPIANS 2:5-10].

We do not say that Jesus is God and forget His humanity. Jesus is God, to be sure. Neither do we say that Jesus is man and ignore His divinity—He did take on flesh and He did share our human condition. Rather we say Jesus is the unique God-man, fully God and fully man. It is important to remember that Jesus has always been God—He did not become God, He has always been God. This is John's testimony of Jesus. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" [JOHN 1:1-3]. The other truth that must be acknowledged is that Jesus will always be man. He did not cease to be man at His resurrection. The testimony of the angels was "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way you saw Him go into heaven" [ACTS 1:11]. Witnessed by others, He is recognised as "the Son of Man" [see ACTS 7:56; REVELATION 1:13-17]. He promises to one day eat with us and drink wine with us [see MATTHEW 26:29].

**REMEMBER THE GOOD NEWS THAT WE PREACH!** “Remember Jesus Christ as preached in my gospel!” The Gospel of Christ the Lord is often obscured by the modern tendency for pastors to speak of coping skills. We live as though the purpose of the sermon is to enable complacent people to live more complacent lives with greater competence. We preachers appear convinced that our goal is to ensure that our listeners are undisturbed in the rush of daily life. Among the homiletic texts I studied in years past was a famous book entitled, “Preaching to Felt Needs.” The thesis, a concept which seems to predominate in modern homiletical studies, is that we must address felt needs rather than rearranging the needs of a fallen race to match the divine will.

I was inviting some people to join us in a recent service. Another preacher was standing there as I invited a couple of friends who do not regularly attend any church when I made the comment, “I assure you that I will make you uncomfortable.” Immediately, several listeners broke out in laughter and my fellow elder commented, “I’ve got nothing to say.” I insisted that my goal is to disturb the undisturbed. I pray my preaching bears me out in this matter. I sometimes feel like the old southern preacher who had a tendency of being somewhat befuddled in his speech. He was preaching from **MATTHEW 10:8**; but instead of quoting the passage as it is written he blurted out, “I came to heal the dead, raise the devil, cleanse the sick and cast out the lepers.” Sometimes I wonder if we wouldn’t be more effective in that way.

We bring a message of life. That life, however, is found only in Christ the Lord. Remember that the Good News of life in the Beloved Son always begins with the bad news of mankind’s fallen condition. It is a dark truth that many wish to forget, but it is nevertheless true that “You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” [**EPHESIANS 2:1-3**].

The Apostle compiles an especially dark catalogue of the human condition in the Letter to Roman Christians. In the third chapter of that missive we read, “It is written:

‘None is righteous, no, not one;  
no one understands;  
no one seeks for God.  
All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;  
no one does good,  
not even one.’  
‘Their throat is an open grave;  
they use their tongues to deceive.’  
‘The venom of asps is under their lips.’  
‘Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.’  
‘Their feet are swift to shed blood;  
in their paths are ruin and misery,  
and the way of peace they have not known.’  
‘There is no fear of God before their eyes.’”

[**ROMANS 3:10-18**]

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At the end of the chapter Paul concludes, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [ROMANS 3:23].

This is our situation from birth. With the Psalmist we are compelled to confess, “I was brought forth in iniquity” [PSALM 51:5a]. We were “without hope and without God in the world” [see EPHESIANS 2:12b HCSB]. We were helpless; we were lost. At this point God revealed His mercy. In the Letter to Roman believers, Paul writes of God’s goodness toward mankind. He writes, “While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” [ROMANS 5:6-8].

Looking again to the dark passage to which I previously alluded in the Ephesian Letter, we read of God’s mercy. Listen to the beautiful statement of grace and mercy. “God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” [EPHESIANS 2:4-10].

I am but a servant appointed to deliver the message that has been assigned by the Lord Christ. I do not carry a message born of my own fertile imagination; the message I bring is assigned by Him who appointed me to this task. The message I bring will not be welcomed by the denizens of this fallen world; by nature they attempt to make themselves acceptable to God. My message declares that no one can make himself or herself acceptable; rather each must come humbly before Him who is very God and Lord of life. Those who receive the message are forgiven every sin against God, adopted into the Family of God and declared righteous in His sight. However, none who are accepted as righteous have anything of which they may boast. With the Apostle, Christians testify, “Far be it from me to boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” [GALATIANS 6:13].

**REMEMBER THAT THE GOOD NEWS IS UNBOUNDED!** “Remember, the word of God is not bound!” As he wrote this final letter that would be included in the canon of Scripture, the Apostle was incarcerated. Bound to a legionnaire at all times, he could not move except at the sufferance of those who guarded him. This permits us to understand the context in which he writes: “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal” [2 TIMOTHY 2:8, 9a]. Suffering because of one’s faith in the Living Son of God began almost as soon as the Christ began to proclaim the message of life. To this day, wicked men attempt to stifle the message of life.

Islamists vigorously pursue their efforts to extirpate Christians from the lands that the Jihadists now control. Though they once numbered in the hundreds of thousands in Syria, Iraq and Iran, Christians have been fleeing these lands to escape the terrifying horrors of Islamic persecution. Government leaders attempt to muzzle the faithful in in China, Viet Nam and Cambodia. The bureaucrats appear fearful that the Faith of Christ the Lord will expose the illegitimacy of the regimes governing these nations. Increasingly, evil individuals openly express their intent to silence the public witness of Christians in North America.



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What we must always remember is that message we carry is destined to succeed. This Gospel will advance, confronting all mankind precisely because the Word of God is not bound. During his first imprisonment in Rome, the Apostle had spoken of what God was doing even while Paul was in prison. “I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

“Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice” [PHILIPPIANS 1:12-18a].

Such a one as this cannot be defeated. He bears the eternal Gospel, a message that God has decreed shall succeed. And so the Apostle rejoices, even in prison. He continues, testifying, “I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account” [PHILIPPIANS 1:18b-24].

What would you say if you were gaoled because of faith in the Son of God? How would you respond? I doubt that any of us actually know what we would say; neither can we imagine how we would respond if our freedom was restricted because we are Christians. We dare not boast of what we would say or do. It is enough to rely on the promise of Christ given to His disciples. The Master cautioned disciples, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” [MATTHEW 10:16-20]. The promise given then applies to His people to this day.

Nevertheless, I trust we draw courage and inspiration from the response of the Apostle in his final imprisonment. Writing Timothy, Paul would draw this final missive to a close saying, “Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books and above all the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen” [2 TIMOTHY 4:9-18].

**2 TIMOTHY 2:8, 9**  
**REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST**

Imprisoned, and yet free! Bound, and yet at liberty! My prayer for the people of God is that whatever the circumstance, we will live as free people. My prayer for you is that you will know the power of the Spirit of God at work in your lives. My prayer is that you may be courageous, standing firm for this cause destined to succeed though before the might of this world this cause appears weak. My prayer is Christ's glory be revealed through our lives.

This prayer can only be answered in your life if you know Christ as Lord. I do not call you to join the church if you have never been born from above. Union with the congregation of the righteous is for those who are redeemed. I do not call you to take a stand in baptism if you have never placed faith in the Son of God. Open confession in the waters of baptism has meaning only after one has been born from above. This Good News of life in Christ the Lord must first be received before you can ever hope to stand. This is the reason I conclude the message week-by-week with a call for all to receive this message of life. Our God has promised, "If you openly agree with God that Jesus is Master over your life, believing with full confidence that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be set free. It is with full confidence that one believes and is made right with God, and though open acceptance of Jesus as Master that one is set free." Paul concludes that wonderful passage by citing a promise delivered by Joel. "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved" [see **ROMANS 10:9-13**]. May the Lord our God grant repentance to all He shall call to life. May He open each heart to faith in His Son. May He do so now. Amen.