

2 Timothy 2:8

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 April 2014

Preacher: David MacPherson

[0 : 00] Easter Sunday has come and gone. So what? The tomb is empty. So what? Jesus is alive. So what?

What are the implications of this reality that the one who was crucified, the one who died, the one who was buried, rose again, was raised from the dead? Where to start in answering such a grand question? I was struck by something I read in a book by Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*. He has a chapter on the resurrection, and he says something that at some levels isn't particularly profound, but seems to recognize a reality. And he says this, In many ways, a very simple statement, but it's a very perceptive one. It's a very deep one. So much of people's attitude or opinion towards Christianity is indeed based on whether they like it. They like Christ's teaching. They like what they see or perceive or consider to be the Christian message. And what Keller rightly says, well, actually, it doesn't matter whether you like it or not. What really matters is whether Jesus rose from the dead. And if He did, then whether you like it or not, this is a message, this is a man with whom you must grapple, and that it would be utmost folly to ignore the resurrection if indeed it is true that Jesus rose from the dead. That's maybe something for all of us to ponder on, but very especially this morning, you're not a Christian, for you to ponder on that. It doesn't matter whether you like the message or not.

It doesn't matter whether you like Christ's teaching or not. Ultimately, it's not hugely important. But what is important is whether or not Jesus rose from the dead. But what about you and me as Christians? Christians, many of us, perhaps plodding along, perhaps struggling to follow Jesus, maybe even suffering for our faith. What difference does a resurrection make to you and me? We believe that it happened. We believe it's true. But what difference does it make to us in our lives and in our discipleship as Christians? What difference does it make to somebody like Sarah Mbuie? Sarah Mbuie, you may have heard of her. She's the nursery school worker in London who was recently sacked for simply answering a colleague's question on what the Bible says about sexuality. She gave an honest answer to the question in that conversation, and before she knew it, she had lost her job.

What difference does it make to her as a Christian that Jesus is alive, that He rose from the dead? Does it make any difference? Well, who can help us out in answering that question? It's always good to listen to an old-timer, to somebody who has been there, who has bought the t-shirt to answer these big questions. Maybe just to illustrate that, and even if you're sublimely indifferent to all matters football, you must have heard about the sacking of David Moyes. Everybody's heard about David Moyes being sacked at Manchester United and the appointment of a veteran player, Ryan Giggs, in his place, if only temporarily. And as we were subjected to a succession of experts giving their thoughts on the matter, a common theme emerged. Ryan Giggs would command the respect of the dressing room.

[4 : 09] The players would listen to him. Why? Well, because of his vast experience, his 962 games for Manchester United, his countless titles and trophies. Ryan Giggs has been there, and he knows what he's talking about.

And so the players will listen. Well, this morning, as we consider this matter, the practical value of the resurrection for struggling and suffering Christians, we are going to take advice from an old-timer, somebody who's been there, somebody who knows what it is to suffer for the faith, to be knocked down, and to fight back up again. And I'm referring, of course, to the Apostle Paul as he writes this second letter to Timothy. Paul is an old man. He's seen it all, and now, far from enjoying a comfortable retirement, is in chains, like a common criminal, as he himself testifies, even in the verses that we've read. This is where he has ended up for his faithfulness to Jesus Christ. What is his crime that has landed him in such circumstances? Well, he loves Jesus, and he can't stop telling

people about Jesus. So, this is a man who knows what he's talking about, who knows what it is to suffer, and who knows what a real and practical difference it makes that Jesus is alive, that he was raised from the dead. Now, our thoughts this morning are going to revolve around a simple exhortation that Paul makes to Timothy, and by extension to us, that we find in chapter 2 and verse 8. Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel. Remember Jesus Christ. This is what Timothy needs to do. It's what we need to do. Now, I don't suppose any Christian would quibble with Paul's call to remember Jesus Christ. But why does Paul, in this letter and at this juncture in this letter, interject this call to remembrance? And what does it actually mean to remember Jesus Christ? I want to consider that by posing three questions that revolve around this exhortation, this call to remember Jesus Christ. The first question is this, when are we to remember Jesus Christ? Now, perhaps an obvious answer would be always, but I think we can answer it somewhat more carefully as we consider the context within which the call is made. When are we to remember Jesus Christ?

But the next question is, what are we to remember concerning Jesus Christ? Because here Paul identifies very specifically two truths that he highlights concerning what we are to remember concerning Jesus Christ.

And then thirdly, and this will really follow on from identifying these two truths, the third question is, why are we to remember Jesus Christ? What purpose does it serve for us so to do? First of all then, let's consider this question, when are we to remember Jesus Christ? Paul's call, Paul's exhortation, is embedded in what we could call a comprehensive exhortation to faithfulness in the midst of tough times.

[7 : 59] Notice what he says in verse 3 as he addresses Timothy, endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Endure hardship with us. These are the circumstances in which we then find this call remember Jesus Christ. The circumstances are of painful and difficult service. The circumstances are of persecution and hardship in the service of Jesus Christ. Paul's own circumstances are life-threatening.

We've read of how he recognizes, I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal, like the lowest criminal. That is where I am because of my faithfulness to Jesus.

Things were indeed very bleak. Paul faces imminent death. The infant church has fallen upon perilous times. False teachers were attacking the very foundations of the faith. Defections were sapping the spirit of the believing community in such circumstances. He must remember Jesus Christ. He must fix his eyes on Jesus. He must cling to the person and work of the Messiah. He must stubbornly and unflinchingly lay hold of Jesus. He must remember Jesus Christ. So, when are we to remember Jesus Christ? When times are tough, when we're struggling and suffering, when we're discouraged and tired and enduring hardship.

This is a call for today, a call that rings true when the church is weak and the voices that oppose the gospel would seem to be ever more numerous, ever more strident, ever more convincing, and ever more seemingly successful in silencing our own timid whispers. In such times, we are to remember Jesus Christ.

So, this is a call for you. This is a call for me, that we would remember Jesus Christ. But let's move on and spend a little more time considering the next question, what are we to remember concerning Jesus Christ? Now, here we're primarily concerned with the content of what we are to remember. What particularly about Jesus Christ would Paul have us remember? But first of all, before we turn to that, first of all, very quickly, let's consider the manner of remembrance. And here, my concern is simply to understand the meaning of the Word and consequently establish what exactly we are to do. What does it mean to remember Jesus Christ? Leaving aside for the moment the content that we are to remember that we'll come to presently. The word translated remember is a word that can be translated in a number of related and overlapping ways. It could be translated, keep in mind or bear in mind Jesus Christ. Think about Jesus Christ. Consider carefully Jesus Christ. And the tense that Paul employs is a present imperative is a present imperative that points to the need to presently and continuously to do that which is commanded. We must then presently in the here and now and continuously think about or bear in mind or carefully consider Jesus Christ. That's what we're to do. But having clarified really that, let's move on to our primary concern in answering the question, what are we to remember? And our primary concern is what is the content of what we are to remember? Well, what does Paul say? Remember Jesus

[12 : 23] Christ raised from the dead, descended from David. We are to remember Jesus Christ, the person of Jesus Christ, but Paul stresses two truths in particular concerning his person that we are to remember, raised from the dead and descended from David. Just two truths, and yet sufficient for Paul to describe them as constituting my gospel. This is my gospel. He declares in reference to what he has just said, Jesus Christ raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel. Now, we're going to think about the why of these two truths in particular in a moment, but now we're going to think simply about the truths themselves. So, these two truths, first of all, raised from the dead. Jesus was crucified, he was killed, he was dead, but he was raised from the dead. Now, as is ordinarily the case with this verb, as it is applied to the resurrection, it is in the passive form. Jesus was raised rather than Jesus rose. It wouldn't be incorrect to say that Jesus rose from the grave, but ordinarily in the New Testament, this truth is declared in this way, that Jesus was raised from the dead. And of course, that points to the actions of another. It points to the actions of God the Father, who raised His Son from the dead. Now, why is this significant? Well, the Father's raising of Jesus from the dead constitutes an announcement to the world, to the universe, to powers visible and invisible, to you and me, that Jesus' work of redemption is accomplished. To use His own words that He cried from the cross, it is finished. You see, the death of

Jesus in the absence of His subsequent resurrection is of no saving value to anybody. The death of Jesus on its own, if you wish, does reveal His love and His willingness to save, but it is His resurrection that reveals His power and ability to save. To save sinners, it was necessary not only for Jesus to offer Himself to death, but for Him to pass through death. And it is the reality of Jesus raised from the dead that reveals and confirms that His saving work has been accomplished, successfully accomplished.

This is one truth that Paul highlights, stresses in this context of suffering and struggling Christians, and we'll come back to that to think about why this truth is important. But let's notice the second truth that He also highlights. Jesus Christ raised from the dead, descended from David. Now, the resurrection, the reality of Jesus as one who has been raised from the dead, is a truth that we can understand as being central, and we can understand why Paul would make reference to that. That makes sense.

But this second truth, it's less immediately obvious why Paul would stress this second truth, descended from David. What is the significance of Jesus being described in such a way as descended from David? David was the archetypal king of Israel, but significant and successful though he was, of far greater interest, is what God promised to David concerning one of his descendants. We've already made reference to this as we've been speaking to the children. And we've read in 2 Samuel chapter 7 of the promise that God makes to David concerning one who would follow Him. We're not going to read that passage again, but as you just remember what was said in that reading. It's very clear that the words that are directed to David point both to his son Solomon, who would build the temple, and reference is made to Solomon building the temple, but very clearly in the words of God to David, there is reference to one who goes beyond Solomon, one who could not be Solomon because he is described in terms that simply could not apply to Solomon. One is spoken of whose reign would be eternal, whose reign would be forevermore, and clearly this goes beyond Solomon. And so there is this promise given to David of one who would be descended from him, one who was indeed to be the promised Messiah, a king. And of course this is a theme that we find repeatedly in the Old Testament, and time doesn't allow us to explore the many times that it is spoken of. But let's just think of one other occasion where we read of this promised Messiah king descended from David in the prophet Jeremiah, and in chapter 23, and in verses 5 and 6, what do we read? The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous branch, a king who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called the Lord our righteousness. Paul is identifying Jesus as the promised Messiah king, and is declaring that Jesus, having been raised from the dead, now not only lives but reigns. You see, this is the truth that is being added for Timothy to consider.

[18 : 52] He's saying to Timothy, it's not just that Jesus is alive. That's amazing. But remember, he's not only alive. He now reigns. He governs. He is the promised Messiah, a king. Paul says to Timothy as he endures hardship, remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. Paul directs Timothy's gaze, and he directs our gaze to the risen Jesus, to the glorified Jesus, to the exalted Jesus, to the regal lordship of the resurrected Jesus, to Jesus Christ as Lord

of the universe, to Jesus Christ to whom all authority on heaven and on earth has been given, to Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, to the one who reigns, to the one who reigns and who reigns forevermore, who reigns here and who reigns now. This is the one upon whom Timothy must fix his gaze as he struggles and suffers in the face of vicious opposition and persecution. Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.

This is what we are to remember. But that leads us into an intimately connected third question. Why are we to remember Jesus Christ? And why in particular are we to remember the two truths that Paul highlights, that we have just noted, that Jesus is both risen and reigning?

I think we can, at least in a measure, encapsulate Paul's purpose in stressing these truths in particular with three words. And the three words are encouragement, empathy, and example. Now remember Paul's purpose. He is exhorting Timothy to faithfulness in the midst of hardship and suffering. And in that context, and with that purpose in mind, he calls on him to remember Jesus Christ.

And why he focuses on the two truths that we've seen can be, as I repeat, summarized in these three words, encouragement, empathy, and example. First of all, in remembering Jesus Christ, there is encouragement for Timothy and for us. It's as if Paul is saying to Timothy something along these lines.

[21 : 31] He's saying, look, Timothy, times are hard. There's opposition. There's persecution. But take heart. Jesus suffered too. He endured hardship too. He was killed. But he was raised from the dead. And he's alive today. The Lord you serve, Timothy, is a risen, death-conquering Lord. Be encouraged by that reality.

Be encouraged by that truth. But Paul says more. He says, Timothy, remember, Jesus is not only alive, he also reigns. He is the promised descendant of David. He's in charge. He rules. He governs.

He ultimately will decide my fate and your fate, not our enemies, not the authorities, not even Caesar himself. King Jesus is the boss. That is what Timothy must remember in the midst of his struggles and his suffering. Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David, the one who is alive and the one who reigns. We think again of Sarah Mbui, who has decided or will decide her fate, her offended colleague, her spineless employer, an employment tribunal, or maybe even a high court judge in due course.

Ultimately, none of them will determine her fate, but rather the one descended from David, the one descended from David, he will decide, he will determine, and he will honor those who honor him. Because he reigns, because he is on the throne, because he rules the world. And so, in remembering Jesus Christ, there is encouragement for those who struggle, for those who suffer, for those who are opposed, and those who endure hardship for the faith, encouragement. But in remembering Jesus Christ, Timothy and believers through all times will also discover and experience empathy. Timothy, in fixing his eyes on the Lord of the universe, is to remember that the Lord of the universe is that man Christ Jesus. In the words of Rabbi Duncan, the dust of the earth on the throne of heaven, the one who sits on the throne and reigns, is Jesus, Yeshua, a man descended from David.

[24 : 22] It's interesting, and I think also significant, that on the only other occasion where Paul describes Jesus Christ Jesus as a descendant of David in Romans chapter 1 and in verse 3, he does so in the context of highlighting Jesus' humanity. Notice what he says there at the beginning of Romans. Let's read from the beginning just to pick up the thread of what Paul is saying. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures. And then notice what he says, this gospel regarding his son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David. This is the only other occasion Paul speaks of Jesus as a descendant of David, and he does so to highlight his humanity. And so I think here too, where Paul says to Timothy, remember Jesus Christ descended from David. Yes, remember him primarily.

The primary truth that is drawn from the fact that he is descended from David is that he is the reigning king. But also it reminds you that the one who reigns is a man descended from David, the God-man.

And as such, he is one who understands you, who can sympathize with you, who empathizes with you in your own humanity, in your own suffering, in your own struggles. Paul is saying to Timothy, take heart, remember Jesus Christ. He understands. He's been there. He is a man who has

suffered, who has endured.

He can and does empathize with you. Of course, we have this same reality, this same encouragement in the words of the writer to the Hebrews as he speaks of Jesus in chapter 4 from verse 15.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet was without sin.

[26 : 34] Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. So, encouragement and empathy as Timothy remembers Jesus Christ. But in remembering Jesus Christ, there is also, thirdly, example. Paul is directing Timothy to the resurrection and reign of Jesus Christ, but his resurrection and reign, his victory and vindication followed on and were the outcome of his suffering. This is the God-ordained order, suffering followed by victory. Listen to Jesus himself, the risen Jesus, explaining this God-ordained order. Remember Jesus on the day that he rose again and as he walked on the road to Emmaus, accompanied by the two disciples, and he opened up the Scriptures that they might understand.

What does he say? What is one of the things he says to these two disciples? He says this, Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory? Did not the Christ have to suffer these things? Did not the Christ have to suffer these things? Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory? We tend to think of the divine necessity of Christ's suffering, relating to the fact that His suffering and death were necessary to secure our forgiveness. There was, we might call, an atoning necessity. In the words of Hebrews, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. It was necessary, in that very real sense, for Jesus to suffer and to die. And that is, of course, true. But I think here Jesus is saying more, or He is enriching that truth. He is recognizing that in order for Him to enter His glory, to be exalted to the highest place, to sit on His throne, it was necessary that He had to suffer first. And what has all this got to do with remembering Jesus Christ as our example? Well, Paul is explaining to Timothy that Jesus' life and death and resurrection and glorification constitute in some measure the model or example for the believer. We, of course, don't walk the same walk that Jesus had to walk. Our death certainly is not an atoning death, but there is a sense, and it is one that is clearly presented to us in the New Testament, that Jesus' suffering life, followed by vindication and victory, serves as a model, as a root map, if you wish, for us also. If there were any doubts that Paul has this in mind, then they are surely dispelled by what he goes on to say in his trustworthy saying. There in what follows in the passage in verse 11, here it is a trustworthy saying, if we died with Him, we will also live with Him. If we endure and implied with Him, we will also reign with Him. He died, so you must die. He endured hardship, so you also must endure hardship. And as you do, what will follow is life and reign. Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David, and in the midst of your struggles and frustrations and suffering, be encouraged by His present reign. Experience the sympathy and empathy of your Lord who understands what you are going through, and follow His example as you tread the path of enduring hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

[30 : 34] But let me end by asking you a question. Is this your gospel? Notice what Paul says, and what we've already commented on just very briefly. There in the second half of verse 8, having called on Timothy to remember Jesus Christ, having identified these fundamental truths concerning Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David, he then says, this is my gospel. This is my gospel.

Is Paul claiming authorship or ownership of the good news? By no means. But what he is doing is identifying himself in the most intimate way with the good news. This is my gospel. This is my hope for life and eternity. This is my message. I have no other. This is my calling. My gospel. This is my gospel.

And the question that I have for you this morning is a simple one. Can you also declare this is my gospel? God pray and grant that it might be so. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning and we do thank you for your word. We thank you for the call that is presented to us, even this morning, that we might remember Jesus Christ. Help us to remember him. Help us to remember him in the manner that you would have us remember. Help us to think about and to consider carefully these great truths concerning his person, that he is the one who was raised from the dead, that he is the one who is descended from David, the one who reigns and who reigns forevermore. We pray that this would be for us of practical value and help in our lives and in our

walk as Christians, that we would be encouraged to know that the one we follow reigns, the one we follow is sovereign over all, that we would experience and understand and appreciate that though he is high and exalted, he knows us and understands us and sympathizes with us and that we would also be challenged to walk that path, that we would know what it is and be willing to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, walking in his footsteps. And these things we pray in his name. Amen.

Now let's sing again and we'll sing Psalm 110. Again, this is a Psalm that picks up on this theme of the Messiah, a King. Psalm 110, we'll sing the whole of the Psalm. It's on page 300. No, that's not right. Psalm 110.

On page 149. On page 149 of Sing Psalms, Psalm 110, and we'll sing to the tune, Busser, the Lord said to my Lord, sit here at my right hand until I make your foes a stool on which your feet feet may stand. And singing the whole of the Psalm, and we'll stand to sing.