

Communion

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn to the passage that we read in 2 Timothy 2, 2 Timothy 2, and we read from the beginning of the chapter through to verse 13.

We want to focus our attention this evening briefly on words that we find at the beginning of verse 8, remember Jesus Christ. Now, these are words that, of course, can be applied to our service this evening in a particular way.

We are going to be participating in the Lord's Supper, and the Lord's Supper is a meal of remembrance. It is an opportunity for us as God's people to remember Jesus Christ in a very particular way, remember the death that He died in our place.

Now, the manner in which Paul exhorts Timothy to remember Jesus Christ in our passages is broader in its implications and in its application, but certainly it is appropriate for us to ponder on and reflect on these words this evening.

Now, when we hear those words, when we consider these words being directed to ourselves, and of course, Paul, when he wrote the letter, he was writing it to Timothy. As he writes these words, he has in his own mind very clearly Timothy, and the desire of Paul, that Timothy would take on board this encouragement to remember Jesus Christ.

[1 : 44] But we know that this letter has been preserved for us, and so as these words were directed to Timothy, so they're also directed to us. They're directed to you this evening.

Remember Jesus Christ. I wonder how we respond just even at the very initial level to that exhortation, remember Jesus Christ.

Maybe one response that we could have is, well, you know, how could we possibly forget? We might think at one level it's a redundant exhortation. The implication would seem to be that we could forget Jesus Christ.

Maybe you might say, well, that's not possible. I could never possibly forget Jesus Christ. He is, after all, as believers, He is our everything.

In Him we live and move and have our being. He is our Creator, our Sustainer, our Savior, our Lord. Without Him we are nothing. With Paul we can testify, I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

[2 : 49] Remember Jesus Christ? We might respond, well, how could we possibly forget? But, of course, we do at different levels or in different ways. We don't totally forget the person of Jesus, the name of Jesus, but we don't remember Him as we ought or in the manner that Paul is encouraging us to remember.

And here we can maybe just pause and reflect a little on this word that Paul employs here in verse 8, remember Jesus Christ, or the word translated, remember. Remember, the Greek word that is translated in this way in our passage or in our text is a word that has a breadth of meaning that is broader than, though includes, the idea of remembering.

For us, the idea of remembering principally has the idea or carries the idea of bringing to recollection. You know, we remember an occasion. We remember a birthday party that we participated in or we remember a song that we used to enjoy listening to.

We bring to recollection something. We remember. Maybe something we had forgotten, but there's something that happens and it reminds us and we remember. And the word does have that meaning or can be used in that more limited sense.

But it can also mean, more broadly, the idea of reflecting on or thinking about. So we could understand what Paul is saying to Timothy in those ways or in that sense.

[4 : 25] Reflect on Jesus Christ. Think about Jesus Christ. Now, both of these things, to reflect on, to think about, of course, they're very similar.

They both involve focus and decision and time dedicated for that purpose in a way that perhaps our initial thought as to the meaning of the word remember doesn't.

You know, we don't need to give much time, perhaps, to simply remembering or bringing to our recollection something. But reflecting on, thinking about, does require time dedicated to that purpose.

It requires resolve on our part. It requires decision. I'm going to set aside time to do this. It can't just happen without us deciding to do it.

I wonder if that's something that we do. And I invite you to just consider this or to think about this this evening. In this week that has passed, so we've had since last Sunday when perhaps most of us gathered here.

[5 : 28] In the course of that week, what time has been spent? What time have you spent reflecting on Jesus Christ? What time have you spent, to use maybe language that we don't use so often now, meditating on Jesus Christ?

Is it the case that for many of us that is something we don't often do? In our busy lives or in the lives that we perhaps make more busy than they need to be?

There seems to be time for so many things. Some very important, of course. Some less so. But time set aside to reflect on Jesus, to meditate on the person of Jesus, on what He has done for us, on what He demands of us, and what He is seeking to do in us, to pause and reflect, to meditate, to think about.

This is what Paul is urging Timothy to do, remember Jesus Christ. Of course, Paul is urging Timothy to remember Jesus Christ in a particular context and situation, and specifically one in which Timothy is being exhorted to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Then in verse 3, we rejoin with me in suffering like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. This is the context in which Paul is urging him to remember Jesus Christ.

[7 : 02] I think that context can help us to understand why Paul highlights certain truths concerning Jesus that Timothy is particularly to remember. So, I want us to consider briefly what Paul says to Timothy in these words and what surrounds these words.

Remember Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus Christ. To consider them in the following way or from the following perspectives. The importance for Timothy of, first of all, suffering for the gospel, of remembering the gospel, and of owning the gospel.

So, suffering for the gospel, remembering the gospel, and owning the gospel. We begin with this call or this need to suffer for the gospel.

In verse 3, we read, as I've just read a moment ago, Join with me in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Now, suffering for Christ is a recurring theme in this letter to Timothy.

Paul begins the letter. Almost as he introduces the letter, he urges, he encourages, he invites Timothy to suffer for Jesus. Notice in verse 8 of chapter 1, So, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me, his prisoner.

[8 : 22] Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God. Join with me in suffering for the gospel. So, at the very beginning of the letter, there is this urge directed to Timothy to suffer for the gospel.

So, he continues to focus on this duty in this chapter that we've read in chapter 2. And then he concludes the letter in the same vein at the very end of the letter, or towards the end of the letter in chapter 4 and verse 5.

We read, But you keep your head in all situations. Now, that's sound advice for all of us. Keep your head in all situations. But then he goes on, Endure hardship or suffering.

Do the work of an evangelist. Discharge all the duties of your ministry. The implication being that so many of these other responsibilities or duties involved hardship.

And if he was to fulfill them, then necessarily it would require him being willing to endure hardship. And what kind of hardship, what kind of suffering are we talking about?

[9 : 28] Well, as we read the letter, we discover that it's of the most intense and even life-threatening character. You know, Paul, at the beginning of the letter, we noticed a moment ago, invites Timothy to join with me in suffering.

And we know what Paul was suffering as he even wrote this letter. Paul was, as he reminds us, or as he makes clear in the very letter, was at this very point, languishing, chained like a criminal.

We've read that in chapter 2 and verse 9. For which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal.

He's a victim of Nero's persecution. And he's suffering in some cold and dank dungeon or prison cell. Indeed, even in this letter, a reminder of just that physical suffering he was enduring is seen in one of the favors, I suppose, he asks of Timothy in chapter 4.

And in verse 13, we read, When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas. And why does he ask for that? Because he's cold.

[10 : 46] He's suffering from the cold of the prison cell. And so he asks that a cloak be brought to provide him a measure of relief in his suffering. This is the kind of suffering that he is saying to Timothy, Join with me in this.

Endure hardship in the manner that I am enduring hardship. Paul is on death row. And Timothy, as a prominent leader of the church, could expect similar treatment.

If he had been spared such treatment thus far, well, it was by the grace of God. But he could reasonably expect that the time would come when he too would suffer in similar fashion.

Suffering the hardship of persecution, but also the hardship of opposition from within. Something that Paul knew much of. Perhaps the very people he might have imagined would be supportive of him.

Yet often the ones who turned their back on him and criticized him and questioned him. The hardship of material necessity. Of not having what you might consider to be the most basic of provision.

[11 : 50] Maybe imagining, well, if only I was doing something else. If only I would dedicate myself to some other task, my circumstances would be so much more comfortable.

Suffering for the gospel. Paul uses the language of enduring hardship as a soldier. And we know that soldiers, certainly soldiers on active duty, on the front line, will on occasions go hungry.

They will be abandoned as others retreat. They're shot at. And, of course, they often die. That is the lot of a soldier. And Paul urges Timothy to endure suffering in that manner as a soldier.

And it's enough to make anybody think twice. The temptation to give up is a very real one. And so Paul encourages Timothy in this way. He urges him to remember Jesus Christ.

Remember Jesus Christ. In the midst of your suffering. In the midst of your hardship. In the midst of the temptation to throw in the towel. To look for an easier route. He says, remember Jesus Christ.

[12 : 55] So suffering for the gospel is one aspect from which we can consider this exhortation. But also, very explicitly, remembering the gospel. Verse 8, we read, Remember Jesus Christ.

Remember Jesus Christ. He says, raised from the dead. Descended from David. This is my gospel. The heart of the gospel. The heart of the good news. Is a person. The person of Jesus Christ.

He's not only the better of the good news. He is the good news. Jesus Christ. The eternal Son of God. Who gave His life in the place of sinners. Remember Him.

Says Paul. In the context of his own suffering. What particularly is Timothy to remember concerning the gospel? Well, perhaps the most obvious thing that he should bring to mind.

That he should reflect on. Is that Jesus suffered before him. When Timothy reads these words. In the midst of his suffering and fears. What is to come to mind?

[13 : 52] Well, that Jesus suffered before him. He is to remember that Jesus suffered. That Jesus walked the road of suffering. That Jesus suffered to the uttermost. That Jesus understands the suffering of Timothy.

As one who has been there. And indeed has been well beyond anything that Timothy has or will endure. The suffering of Jesus is to serve as an encouragement to Timothy.

And to us to endure. What is he to remember with regards to the gospel? Well, that Jesus suffered. But also that Jesus triumphed.

Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead. Jesus triumphed through suffering and over death. He suffered even to the point of death.

But the story did not end there. He triumphed over death. He rose triumphant. Or more precisely, he was raised triumphant. The father actively vindicating his son as he raises him from the dead.

[14 : 52] Timothy is to be encouraged by the bigger picture. He too will triumph through and over suffering. He too will be vindicated by God himself.

He is to remember that Jesus suffered. That Jesus triumphed. But also that Jesus reigns. There again in verse 8. Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead. Descended from David.

Now this seems perhaps at one level an odd thing to place in a verse that is almost providing a synthesis of the gospel. You know, Paul goes on to say, this is my gospel.

You might say, well, if I had to summarize the gospel in 20 words, perhaps this wooden figure descended from David. Not that it's not true, but we might think, well, it's not so central to a summary of what the gospel is.

And yet here Paul speaks of it clearly as something he considers to be at the very core of what the gospel is. And of the identity of Jesus descended from David.

[15 : 52] Now this reference to Jesus' descent from David is not so much with the intent of stressing his true humanity. Though it does point in that direction. But rather of identifying Jesus as the promised eternal king.

Whose reign would endure forever and ever. We know the promises that were made concerning David. And David's greater son whose kingdom would endure forever and ever. And here we have Jesus identified as the one descended from David.

We're reminded of the prophetic words of the prophet Isaiah. In chapter 9 and verse 7. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom.

Establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. Timothy has defined strength. Not only in the promise of future triumph and vindication.

But in the present reality that Jesus, the eternal, defeated king, is reigning now. Now, he's seated on the throne now. You know, something that we're being vividly reminded of as we consider the book of Revelation on Sunday mornings.

[17 : 02] The Lamb of God. The Lamb who was slain now in the center of the throne. Reigning presently and absolutely over the universe. He rules now. Not Nero.

Not those who would bring suffering and persecution on Timothy and God's people. They don't hold the upper hand. Though they may appear to. Jesus rules supreme. And this truth is to grant Timothy and it is to grant us confidence and boldness in the face of suffering and hardship and opposition in the measure that we face it.

This is the gospel. Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for sinners, was raised from the dead and today governs supreme over principalities and powers.

Suffering for the gospel. Suffering for the gospel. Remembering the gospel. And then finally, owning the gospel. There in verse 8, in the second half of the verse, the last sentence or part of a sentence of verse 8, Paul expresses himself in an intriguing way.

In a very intense and passionate way. But also an intriguing way. When he says this, this is my gospel. You know, he's given a kind of outline, a skeleton of gospel truth in what has gone before.

[18 : 14] And then he declares, this is my gospel. There is ownership of the gospel. This is my gospel. It's not simply the gospel. This is my gospel.

Now, Paul is not saying that he is the author of the gospel. He's not claiming intellectual property rights over the gospel as he defines it.

Nor is he suggesting that what he has declared is his version or take on what the gospel is. And while others may see things differently. What does he mean then when he declares, this is my gospel?

Well, certainly maybe a couple of things that we can suggest or stress. When he says this is my gospel, he's declaring, he's testifying that this is the gospel that has saved me. It's the gospel that saved Paul.

And so he describes it as my gospel. It's good news for me. Not simply objectively good news, but it's my good news. It's the gospel. Jesus is the Savior who has saved me.

[19 : 15] And so he speaks of it in this very intense and personal way. This is my gospel. And before we go any further, and we're really coming to a conclusion, but before we come to that conclusion, it's right and it's always appropriate to just pose that question to each other and to ourselves.

Can we express ourselves in that way? Can you express yourself in that way? Can you speak of the gospel and say, this is my gospel? This is the good news that I have discovered that has saved me.

This is my gospel. When we participate in the Lord's Supper, really, that's what we're saying. That's what we're testifying to. We're declaring, this is my gospel. This is my Savior.

This is my Jesus. He died for me. Not just for me. We participate with others and we rejoice in being part of a community of faith. But there is that intensely personal appropriation that is necessary and important that we find and we detect in the language of Paul.

Paul says, this is my gospel. Jesus is my Lord and my Savior. Do you have a story to tell of what the Lord has done and is doing in your life?

[20 : 28] Can you identify with this language of ownership of the gospel? So, I think that's one sense in which Paul expresses himself in that way or the sense that is intended by expressing himself in that way.

This is my gospel. But I think perhaps also it has the sense of this is the gospel that he preaches. This is my gospel. This is the gospel that I preach. This is the gospel that I declare.

This is the good news that I share with others. This is my message. I know no other. I have no other. This is my gospel. This is the good news I proclaim to all.

And that too should be true of us, that we can speak of the gospel in those terms. This is my gospel. This is the message I have. I have no other. I have no other message to share with a sinful world.

But this is the message that I have. This is my gospel. This is my story. This is the truth that has been given to me, that has saved me, but that I now can share.

[21 : 29] And with others. As we participate in the Lord's Supper this evening, it's good to reflect on that first sense of Paul using that expression, this is my gospel.

Jesus is my Savior. He died for me. And that is right and proper. And it's good for us to reflect on that and be grateful for that. But if that's where it ends, if it doesn't then continue to that other sense of this is my gospel that I will share with others.

I will leave this place. And as I have been blessed, as I have received, so I will share. Then there is something very amiss in our conception of the gospel.

If it ends with our receiving and enjoying and appreciating, but goes no further than that. This is my gospel, my Jesus, but the one I share with others also.

I don't know what is going on in your life. I don't know what problems or difficulties or challenges you may be facing. It can be difficult to live and serve as a believer, as a Christian.

[22 : 36] And we, in those circumstances, we take to ourselves this encouragement of the words that Paul directed to Timothy and through Timothy directs to us.

Remember Jesus Christ. And as we remember him this evening at the Lord's table, may we be fed and nourished and emboldened to, as we receive, so go out into a world needy of this good news concerning our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your Word. We do pray that we would take to heart this encouragement to remember Jesus Christ.

We thank you for the opportunity to do so even this evening, and very particularly in participating in the Lord's Supper. But we pray that in this week that begins, if it's true of us, and if we are honest with ourselves, and if we look back on the week that has passed, and if we just to ourselves recognize that we have spent little time reflecting on Jesus Christ, on thinking about who He is and what He has done for us, that we would acknowledge that, but look ahead into this week that has begun, and determine in our own hearts to use the time that you give us to set aside from the many duties that we have and important and necessary responsibilities to set aside time to remember Jesus Christ, to reflect on His person, to think about all that He is and all that He has done for us.

We pray that with Paul we would know what it is to be able to declare humbly and yet joyfully, this is my gospel. This is the gospel that saved me, and this is the message that I have and have been given to share with others.

[24 : 40] And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.