

RESURRECTION DAY 2020
A LIVING HOPE!
II TIMOTHY 2:8-13

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Timothy chapter 2 as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Now, tragically, many have taken away what this day is all about, and they call it ***EASTER!***

No, it is not Easter. We need to understand that Easter was a pagan holiday and not a Christian holiday.

Easter, as we know it, comes from the ancient pagan festival of Astarte. Also known as Ishtar or pronounced “Easter.”

This festival has always been held late in the month of April. It was, in its original form, a celebration of the earth “regenerating” itself after the winter season.

The festival involved a celebration of *reproduction*.

For this reason, the common symbols of Easter festivities were the *rabbit*, and the *egg*.

Both are known for their reproductive abilities.

At the center of attention was Astarte, the female deity. She is known in the Bible as the “queen of heaven” (Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-25).

And please understand that these pagan rituals never had any association with Jesus Christ or His resurrection from the dead. Again, they are pagan!

Let me share this with you, it is from Walter Maier who lived from 1893 to 1950 and even some seventy plus years ago he saw what was happening with this day in which we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Listen to what he had to say and see where we are at today.

He wrote,

The UNITED STATES is one of the few countries in which the customary Easter-greetings contain no reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the Greek-speaking world, for example, Christians address one another in the same Easter salutation that rang through the early church, "*Christos anestee!*" "*Christ is risen!*" and with the ancient response, "*Aleethoos Anestee,*" "*He is truly risen!*"

In the Latin church of the first centuries the Easter-greeting was "*Vivit*" "*He lives!*" and the reply, "*Vere Vivit!*" "He lives indeed!"

In Spanish lands Christians say "*Cristo vive!*"

In Germany believers, no matter to which church they may belong, salute one another with exultant joy: "*Der Herr ist auferstanden!*" and the reply, "*Er ist Wahrhaftig auferstanden!*"

Even in Russia, where Communist slogans have not altogether banished the reverence for God's truth, loyal followers of Christ, meeting their kindred in the faith, say, "*Christos Voskres!*" and receive the reply, "*Voistinu Voskres!*"

All these expressions serve one thought and purpose: they glorify the risen Savior.

In our country, however, we say, "*Happy Easter!*" forgetting that the word "*Easter*" may have no connection with the open grave and in no way testifies to the resurrection miracle.

Because the Savior's triumph over the tomb, together with the crucifixion, which preceded it, are the most blessed of all truths, and Christians should follow the angel's command, ***"Go quickly and tell His disciples!"*** instead of limiting their Easter conversation to the subjects of new clothes, spring hats, festive food, holiday programs, post-Lenten parties, we ask you who are the Lord's to help inaugurate and maintain a Christ-exalting movement by which believers in all churches greet one another on this day with the salutation, ***"Christ is risen!"*** and respond, ***"He is risen indeed!"***

- Walter A. Maier, Peace Through Christ

That is my prayer this morning as we look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That we would not be concerned with Easter eggs, Easter bunnies, but in the risen Lord!

In fact, it is our hope or as Paul wrote in Romans 6:4, **"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."**

Because of all that Jesus has done for us, paid in full the penalty for our sins as He was crucified on the cross of Calvary, and then rose from the grave on the third day, we should walk accordingly or walk in that newness of life that comes from Jesus!

I have called our Resurrection study – ***A Living Hope!***

I think this is so important for us to understand, this hope, because, in America, many have lost hope and they are adrift in a world that is leading them nowhere! Let me share this with you, and keep in mind that it is a secular article but listen to what they are seeing. And then I will share with you where our living hope is really found and once we see that, then everything else falls into place.

We are told,

Americans are living through a social crisis. We can see that in everything from vicious partisan polarization to rampant culture-war resentments to the isolation, alienation and despair that have sent suicide rates climbing and driven an epidemic of opioid abuse. These dysfunctions appear to have common roots, but one symptom of the crisis is that we can't quite seem to get a handle on just where those roots lie.

When we think about our problems, we tend to imagine our society as a vast open space filled with individuals who are having trouble linking hands. And so we talk about breaking down walls, building bridges, leveling playing fields or casting unifying narratives.

But what we are missing is not simply greater connectedness but a structure of social life: a way to give shape, purpose, concrete meaning and identity to the things we do together. If American life is a big open space, it is not a space filled with individuals. It is a space filled with these structures of social life - with *institutions*. And if we are too often failing to foster belonging, legitimacy and trust, what we are confronting is a failure of institutions.

This social crisis has followed upon a collapse of our confidence in institutions - public, private, civic and political. But we have not given enough thought to just what that loss of confidence entails and why it's happening. . . .

We lose faith in an institution when we no longer believe that it plays this ethical or formative role of teaching the people within it to be trustworthy. This can happen through simple corruption, when an institution's attempts to be formative fail to overcome the vices of the people within it, and it instead masks their treachery - as when a bank cheats its customers, or a member of the clergy abuses a child.

That kind of gross abuse of power obviously undermines public trust in institutions. It is common in our time as in every time. But for that very reason, it doesn't really explain the exceptional collapse of trust in American institutions in recent decades. . . .

The few exceptions to the pattern of declining confidence in institutions tend to prove this rule. The military is the most conspicuous exception and also the most unabashedly formative of our national institutions - molding men and women who clearly take a standard of behavior and responsibility seriously. And that can help us see what we might do to help alleviate the social crisis we confront.

- <https://nyti.ms/2VjLiZc>

Here is the root of the problem of hopelessness. It is because people have rejected the true and living God and they are grasping for things that they think they will find hope in, and when one after another of these things fail them, they become hopeless!

Think about floating in an ocean and someone throws you an anchor, is that going to help you? Absolutely not!

And, if time after time someone throws you something that is not going to work, you eventually lose hope and you go under. And, tragically, we see many American's sinking today!

But, if you place your hope in the Lord, He will never fail you! He is our living hope!

You see, it is the Lord who molds and shapes our lives and gives us direction and hope!

Let me share a few verses with you and you will see what I mean. And keep in mind that these are just a few verses that deal with our hope being in the Lord, there are many, many more we could look at.

First of all, in Psalm 38:15 we are told, **“For in You, O Lord, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God.”** Here is the confidence we can have as Christians. That as we cry out to God, He will hear us and thus, no matter what we are going through, our hope is in the Lord and that is a sure thing. It is not that the Lord might hear us, He will, and we rest in that.

Also, in Psalm 71:5-6 we are told, **“For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth. By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother’s womb. My praise shall be continually of You.”**

I don’t know about you, but I know for me, I can see the hand of God on my life over and over again. I have seen His protection, His wisdom that He has given me, I see so much that even as a young person, God was working on my life, drawing me to Him.

And I think if you are honest with yourself, you too can see the Lord’s hand upon your life and as we look and see what He has done in our life, we can rest assured that He is working in our life right now and He will continue to work in our life until we go to be with Him! He is our hope!

Also, in Psalm 119:114 we are told, **“You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.”**

Notice that we rest in the Lord, we take refuge in the Lord because He not only will hide us under the shadow of His wings, but He is our shield of protection as well. And how can we be so sure of these things? Because **“I hope in Your word.”** We can trust what God has said in His Word and there is great comfort, great hope as we do!

And lastly, and like I have said, there are many more we can look at, but in I Peter 1:3-5 Peter tells us, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”**

Notice that our hope for heaven, for the child of God, is all connected to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Remember what Jesus said in John 14:19, **“Because I live, you will live also.”** He is talking about resurrection life.

And this is not an *“I hope I will get into heaven.”* Not at all!

This is *“I know so”* or it is a certain hope that I will get into heaven, not because of what I have done, but because of what He has done! His death and resurrection!

That is what Peter tells us, that there is a place **“reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”**

Do you see that our salvation is based upon the power of God? I hope you do. Our salvation is not based upon us hanging on or being strong enough, or doing this or doing that, but it is based upon the power of God, through faith, and we can rest in that fact that God is more than able to finish what He has started in our lives! He is our ***LIVING HOPE!***

That is what we are going to be looking at this morning and it is so important that we understand all that Jesus has done for us.

I have broken the verses we will be looking at here in II Timothy chapter 2 like this:

RESURRECTION OF JESUS – II TIMOTHY 2:8

PERSECUTION FOR THE TRUTH – II TIMOTHY 2:9-10

THE BOTTOM LINE – II TIMOTHY 2:11-13

ETERNAL LIFE WITH HIM – II TIMOTHY 2:11-12a

REJECT HIM – NO PART WITH HIM – II TIMOTHY 2:12b

HIS FAITHFULNESS – II TIMOTHY 2:13

With that said, let's begin reading in II Timothy chapter 2, beginning in verse 8 and let's see what the Lord has for us on this ***RESURRECTION*** morning as we look at ***A LIVING HOPE!***

II TIMOTHY 2

VERSE 8

Look at how Paul opens up here. He says, “**Remember.**” And that word carries with it the idea of keep on remembering and never forget!

What are we to keep on remembering and never forget?

That “**... Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel.**”

In other words, we need to keep on remembering, we are to never forget the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Now please understand that Paul was not reminding Timothy not to forget something like this, not at all. But as you negate this, people will forget!

What Paul was telling Timothy is that this is the foundation of our faith, this is something we are never to let go or hide away. This is the Gospel message; it is the good news that God has come and saved sinful man by His death and resurrection from the dead!

And yet today, we see so many people, so many pastors, so many leaders who are hiding this message away or even ignoring it or saying it did not happen!

Let me show you what I mean. First, listen to what the Pope has to say in regard to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are told,

In his new book and in the periodical he founded, *La Repubblica*, Eugenio Scalfari, a long-time friend of Pope Francis and frequent papal interviewer, claims that the Pope told him that Jesus Christ did not rise bodily from the dead but “in the semblance of a spirit.” . . .

In the Nov. 5 edition of *La Repubblica* and in the introduction to his new book, Scalfari states that Pope Francis said, “He [Jesus] was a man until he was placed in the tomb by the women who recomposed his body. That night, in the tomb, the man [Jesus] disappeared and came forth from the grotto in the semblance of a spirit that met the women and the Apostles while still preserving the shadow of the person, and then he definitely disappeared.” . . .

In October, Scalfari stated in *La Repubblica* that Pope Francis had told him that Jesus incarnate was just a man while on Earth, not both Man and God as the Catholic Church teaches, as well as most Protestant churches.

- <http://bit.ly/2TaU8FN>

So Jesus did not bodily resurrect but spiritually He resurrected. Is that what the Scriptures tell us? Absolutely not!

Listen carefully, this is again so important for us. We are told,

After the resurrection, Jesus was able to eat (Luke 24:42-43). He showed people His hands and feet with the nail prints in them (Luke 24:39; John 20:27), and people even grabbed His feet and worshipped Him (Matt. 28:9).

As the reports of Jesus' resurrection were spreading, Thomas, who was doubting the resurrection of Christ, said, "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." (John 20:25).

Later, Jesus appeared to Thomas and said to him, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing." (John 20:27).

If Jesus' body had not risen, then He would not have feet and hands with the same holes of the nails of the crucifixion. Consider the following verses as further proof that His very body was raised:

"When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw the Lord." (John 20:19-20).

"And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.'" (Luke 24:38-39).

It is obvious that Jesus was raised in the same body in which He died - with the same holes in His hands and feet. We see that Jesus proclaimed He had flesh and bones. Does a 'spirit body' consist of flesh and bones? Not at all.

I have heard it said that Jesus' physical body died, but His spiritual body was raised. If this is so, then does the spiritual body consist of flesh and bones as well as the physical one? It makes no sense. Also, if Jesus did not rise physically, then what happened to His body? Was it dissolved? Was it moved somewhere? There is no biblical account of what happened to Jesus' body other than that it was raised from the dead. Therefore, His body was raised from the dead.

- <http://bit.ly/2STBsv8>

In other words, Jesus rose from the dead in the very same physical body in which He died. This resurrected, physical body was a glorified, spiritual body. The spiritual body is not merely "spirit." The spiritual body is the resurrected, glorified, physical body.

And this idea of the resurrection not ever taking place is also growing. Did you know that a quarter of people who describe themselves as Christians in Great Britain do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, a survey commissioned by the BBC suggests? 25% of Christians in Great Britain do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and if that is true, then what happens when we die? There is no hope and that is the problem, Satan has taken that hope away, a hope that is based in the Scriptures!

Why is this happening? Because churches, pastor's, leaders are not **REMEMBERING**, they are not keeping the Gospel message at the forefront and they are taking away the Word of God and replacing it with worldly ideas, and the outcome, as you can see, is people rejecting the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins!

But for many, they may argue, *“There is no evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so why believe in a fairy tale or a story that is not true?”*

The reality is, if there is no resurrection of Jesus, then we are in trouble. Paul put it like this in I Corinthians 15:12-19, **“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up - if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”**

First of all, if Christ did not rise from the dead then what Paul and the apostles were preaching was empty, there was nothing to it, which brings them to an empty faith!

Secondly, if they were preaching a resurrected Christ and knew that He did not rise from the dead, they didn't see Him, they would be liars and people would have believed a lie!

But even worse, if Christ did not rise from the dead then our faith is empty, and we are still lost in our sins!

Martin Luther put it like this, *“Everything depends on our retaining a firm hold on this doctrine in particular; for if this one totters and no longer counts, all the others will lose their value and validity.”*

And Spurgeon wrote, *“If Jesus rose, then this gospel is what it professes to be; if He rose not from the dead, then it is all deceit and delusion.”*

Do you see how important the resurrection of Christ is?

You see, if death had power over Jesus, if He was defeated by death, then Jesus is not God and if He is not God then He can't pay the penalty for our sins!

And, as I have said, our sins are still upon us because if Jesus Christ is not risen, He can't save us!

And Paul takes this to the logical conclusion as he continues on here. He says that if Christ hasn't risen from the dead then those that have died in Christ have perished, there is no hope, life is over!

And then the nail in the coffin if this is true. You see, if we have placed our hope in an empty faith, if we are still in our sins, then we are the biggest fools around!

In fact, we are the most pitiable, the most pathetic people around!

But Paul is not going to leave us in this hopeless condition for he tells us, "**But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**" I Corinthians 15:20.

The Resurrection is so important for us to believe and the Scriptures clearly show us that fact. Let me show you the importance of the resurrection, that it is a major doctrine we are to hold onto.

First of all, *the divinity of Jesus* rests on the resurrection of Jesus – "**and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.**" Romans 1:4.

The sovereignty of Jesus rests on the resurrection of Jesus - "**For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.**"

Romans 14:9.

Our justification rests on the resurrection of Jesus – **“who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”** Romans 4:25.

Our regeneration rests on the resurrection of Jesus – **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”** I Peter 1:3.

Our ultimate resurrection rests on the resurrection of Jesus – **“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”** Romans 8:11.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is so important that our faith rests in the fact that He did rise from the dead!

Most of you remember Houdini, the great magician. Houdini claimed that on the 50th anniversary of his death he would come back from the dead.

Thus, on that date a group of his followers gathered together at his grave site in San Francisco waiting for him to return, and they waited, and waited and nothing happened, maybe he got lost?

You see, the tomb of Jesus is empty, He did rise from the dead and Paul is going to expound on that in I Corinthians 15:20-23, as he tells us, **“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”**

Paul has given us the facts of Christ's resurrection, the eyewitness testimony by telling us that there were over 500 witnesses and many of those witnesses are still alive when Paul wrote this letter. And he spoke of the other witnesses in the beginning of I Corinthians chapter 15 as well, and now he is just restating that fact – Christ is risen!

Now we need to understand this point that Paul makes regarding Firstfruits.

Firstfruits was a Jewish feast that took place on the day after the Sabbath following Passover.

At this feast, which took place in the spring, they would bring a sheaf of grain and wave it before the Lord and it represented a fruitful harvest that was to come as they gave to the Lord. (Leviticus 23:9-14).

Here is the interesting part regarding this feast. Jesus rose from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits and thus, as Paul said in Romans 6:5, **“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”**

Trapp put it like this, “As in the Firstfruits offered to God, the Jews were assured of God's blessing on the whole harvest; so by the resurrection of Christ, our resurrection is insured.”

It is as Paul said in Romans 8:23, **“Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”**

What a glorious promise that God has given to us, that we will be raised in a new body one day!

Why can't these bodies be raised up?

Paul explains that as he shows us that through Adam, we have all be born into that sin nature and with it came spiritual death, separation from God. And these bodies of flesh and blood can't inherit the Kingdom of God because of sin and thus, we must be changed, we must get new bodies for our spirit and soul to dwell in!

So if Jesus did not rise from the dead, neither will we. But – ***CHRIST IS RISEN!***

But what about the evidence, there must not be any and thus, why should we believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Let me share this with you and you will see that there is plenty of evidence if you want to take the time and examine it, as this man did. We are told,

One of those who originally thought the resurrection was simply a myth, only to reverse his position like Morison, was one of the world's leading legal scholars, Dr. Simon Greenleaf. Greenleaf helped to put the Harvard Law School on the map.

He wrote the three-volume legal masterpiece A Treatise on the Law of Evidence, which has been called the “greatest single authority in the entire literature of legal procedure.”

The U.S. judicial system today still relies on rules of evidence established by Greenleaf.

While teaching law at Harvard, Professor Greenleaf stated to his class that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was simply a legend. As an atheist, he thought miracles to be impossible. In a rebuttal, three of his law students challenged him to apply his acclaimed rules of evidence to the resurrection account.

After much prodding, Greenleaf accepted his students' challenge and began an investigation into the evidence. Focusing his brilliant legal mind on the facts of history, Greenleaf attempted to prove the resurrection account was false.

Yet the more Greenleaf investigated the record of history, the more stunned he was at the powerful evidence supporting the claim that Jesus had indeed risen from the tomb. Greenleaf's skepticism was being challenged by an event that had changed the course of human history.

Greenleaf was unable to explain several dramatic changes that took place shortly after Jesus died, the most baffling being the behavior of the disciples. It wasn't just one or two disciples who insisted Jesus had risen; it was all of them. Applying his own rules of evidence to the facts, Greenleaf arrived at his verdict.

In a shocking reversal of his position, Greenleaf accepted Jesus' resurrection as the best explanation for the events that took place immediately after his crucifixion. To this brilliant legal scholar and former atheist, it would have been impossible for the disciples to persist with their conviction that Jesus had risen if they hadn't actually seen the risen Christ.

In his book *The Testimony of the Evangelists*, Greenleaf documents the evidence that caused him to change his mind. In his conclusion he challenges those who seek the truth about the resurrection to fairly examine the evidence.

Greenleaf was so persuaded by the evidence that he renounced his atheism and became a committed Christian. He believed that any unbiased person who honestly examines the evidence as in a court of law will conclude what he did - that Jesus Christ has truly risen.

- <http://bit.ly/2uqor2R>

And for each of us who believe, we must earnestly contend for this faith that has been entrusted to us. The Gospel message is so important to us as the great 18th century British philosopher, John Locke, wrote, "Our Saviour's resurrection is truly of great importance. In Christianity, so great that his being or not being the Messiah stands or falls with it."

Also, listen to what one commentator said about this. He wrote,

Timothy Keller has written: “If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn’t rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said?” If Jesus really defeated death, that gives credence to every claim he made. If Jesus did not defeat death, every claim he ever made is proven false. In the words of Jaroslav Pelikan: “If Christ is risen – then nothing else matters. And if Christ is not risen – then nothing else matters.”

- Stephen T. Um, 1 Corinthians – The Word of the Cross, p. 255

Thus, as Paul told Timothy and the Holy Spirit is saying to us, we need to **Remember** and keep on remembering and never forget that Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary for our sins and rose on the third day, all according to the Scriptures and because He rose we too will be raised in a glorified body one day!

VERSES 9-10

Keep in mind that Paul is trying to encourage Timothy to continue on and preach the Gospel message and to do this Paul tells him, ***“The world can persecute me, imprison me and even kill me, but it can never stop the power of God’s Word from doing its work.”***

May we remember that truth. In Isaiah 55:9-11 we are told, **“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”**

God’s Word does not return void, but it will accomplish what He sent it to do, not always what we think will happen, but He has control of things and He has His plans.

And as you stand up for the things of God, as you speak forth the Gospel message, as you stand up for righteousness, as Paul said, **“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”** II Timothy 3:12.

Think about it. At one time there were some 600 miles of catacombs under the city of Rome, nearly all of 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.”***

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 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.

During World War II, eleven missionaries were martyred on the Island of Panay in the Philippines.

One of these was Dr. Francis Rose, who had penned these poignant and challenging words in what is commonly called "The Martyr's Hymn." It goes like this,

*All human progress up to God
Has stained the stairs of time with blood;
For every gain for Christendom
Is bought by someone's martyrdom.
For us he poured the crimson cup,
And bade us take and drink it up.
Himself he poured to set us free.
Help us, O Christ, to drink with thee.
Ten thousand saints come thronging home,
From lion's den and catacomb.
The fire and sword and beasts defied;
For Christ, their King, they gladly died.
With eye of faith we see today
That cross-led column wind its way
Up life's repeated Calvary.
We rise, O Christ, to follow Thee!*

- Dr. Francis Rose, The Martyr's Hymn

Keep in mind that Paul, writing these words to Timothy, was chained, locked in prison, but he also understands that no matter what may happen, God's Word is not chained!

Paul is admonishing Timothy and us to keep speaking forth God's Word no matter what may come our way, as Jesus said in John 16:33, "**These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.**"

And thus, Paul is basically telling Timothy, "*Just as I have endured persecution, beatings, hardships etc. that people might be saved, even so you my dear son in the faith follow my example and serve the Lord with that kind of all out commitment, for nothing is more important than the salvation of the lost and eternal glory.*"

And I truly believe that is what the Lord is telling us, to earnestly contend for the faith, don't compromise what you believe, but live and speak it forth!

And that leads us to **THE BOTTOM LINE**, and like I said as we opened up our study, I have broken this section down into three parts. Let's read through these verses here in II Timothy 2:11-13 and then we will dig into these verses.

VERSES 11-13

Paul is quoting an early Christian hymn known by Christians in his day and thus, Timothy was familiar with it.

The first point here is this. **ETERNAL LIFE WITH HIM** and Paul puts it like this, "**. . . For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. . .**" II Timothy 2:11-12a.

This hymn starts out with a promise of resurrection life for those who have died in Christ. Paul is speaking of persecution for our faith and that is what he might have in mind here, those who were martyred for their faith in Christ, but I also think it goes even beyond that, to all those who have died in Christ, believers!

Now here is where some get confused. It is this word “**endure**” and they say that if we don’t hang in there, if we don’t hang on, we can lose our salvation.

First of all, the word “**endure**” comes from two Greek words “hupo” (under) and “meno” (remain).

That means this Greek word literally means, “*to remain under.*” And the idea here is that of persevering under the pressure of persecution, not forsaking Jesus when things get bad, even in the face of death!

Thus, Paul says, “**If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.**”

Paul is not saying that this is a condition for us keeping our salvation, if we endure, not at all!

He is saying that it is an evidence of our salvation if we endure to the end.

Which then leads to our next point, those ***WHO REJECT HIM – NO PART WITH HIM.*** Paul put it like this, “**. . . If we deny Him, He also will deny us.**” II Timothy 2:12b.

Here Paul is speaking of those who deny Jesus, who reject Him and thus, He will deny them! They are not saved!

And the idea here is that someone who professes to be a Christian and eventually denies the Lord and forsakes the Lord, it is evidence that they never really knew the Lord in the first place! They were never saved.

You see, the word, “**faithless**” in the Greek means, “*without saving faith.*” Thus, they were never saved.

And Paul’s point is simple and very clear. If someone who calls themselves a Christian denies the Lord, forsakes the Lord, then that person will be denied by the Lord someday, when they stand before Him. In other words, Jesus will say to that person, “*I NEVER knew you!*”

And then we see *HIS FAITHFULNESS* and that is found in II Timothy 2:13, “**If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.**”

The point is this. All that the Lord is can never be based upon our faithfulness or what we have to say. Just because some deny the Lord doesn’t change anything about the Lord, He is who He is!

Here’s the thing. Even if someone rejects the Lord after saying that he was saved, even if he denies Jesus and walks away from Him, like I have said, it has nothing to do with the reality of who Jesus is and the truth of the Christian faith He came to bring into the world! Please understand that!

Look at what we have seen this morning.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the Gospel message. It all centers around His death and resurrection and apart from it, we are still dead in our trespasses and sins, we are hopeless!

But, as we looked the evidence, we saw that it is overwhelming that He did rise from the dead and thus, our hope is in Jesus. You see, since He rose from the grave, we too will rise in glory one day with a new resurrection body!

And we also have to understand that as we go out with the Gospel message, the world will try to silence our words. Persecution is just part of the Christian life, don't compromise your faith but earnestly contend for the faith that has been entrusted to you – ***THE GOSPEL MESSAGE!***

And yes, there will be those who accept Christ as we have, and the promise to us is we will live and reign with Him one day.

On the other end of the spectrum are those who have denied the Lord, turned away from Him and the Lord will deny them before the Father, He will tell the Father, ***“I never knew that person!”***

And, in spite of all that, no matter what people may say about the Lord, it doesn't change who He is and what He has done for us, never forget that!

Remember how we opened up, as Paul said, **“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel.”** II Timothy 2:8.

In other words, keep on remembering, never forget, keep this the main thing, that Jesus Christ has died and rose from the grave.

In fact, in II Timothy 2:14, Paul said, **“Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.”**

Again, Paul is saying don't get into foolish disputes, you have the truth, don't be ashamed to speak it, keep the main thing the main thing!

Also, as we opened up this morning, we spoke of how many Christians in different parts of the world greeted each other on Resurrection morning, not with ***“Happy Easter!”*** but with ***“Christ is risen!”***

And the response back was? ***“He is risen indeed!”***

